

Association of Town Centre Management  
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# Invoice



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Invoice Number:	82222
Invoice Date:	20/01/2022
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Our Ref:	COOKSTO

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# The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022

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## SCOPE OF CONSULTATION

### SCOPE OF THIS CONSULTATION

This consultation seeks views on proposed amendments to the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (“the 2015 Order”) to take account of proposed changes to the current Department for the Economy DfE performance indicator and standards included in the 2015 Order.

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

These proposed amendments relate to Northern Ireland only.

## BASIC INFORMATION

This consultation covers proposals by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to amend the current (DfE) performance indicator and standards included within the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The proposed amendments cover revisions to the Performance Indicator and Standards placed on councils in relation to DfE's policy area of job promotion through a business plan development programme.

### BODY/BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSULTATION

This consultation is being undertaken by the Local Government & Housing Regulation Division in the Department for Communities (DfC) (which is the responsible department for specifying, under s89 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, local government performance indicators and standards). However the policy in respect of these proposed amendments is the responsibility of DfE.

### DURATION

This consultation is open from 21 December 2021 to 28 February 2022.

### ENQUIRIES

For any enquiries about the consultation please email the Department at:

**[lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk)**

or write to:

Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Consultation,  
Department for Communities,  
Local Government & Housing Regulation Division,  
Level 4,  
Causeway Exchange,  
1-7 Bedford Street,  
Town Parks,  
Belfast,  
BT2 7EG

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**HOW TO RESPOND**

Please email your consultation response to:

**lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk**

or post to:

Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Consultation  
Department for Communities,  
Local Government & Housing Regulation Division,  
Level 4,  
Causeway Exchange,  
1-7 Bedford Street,  
Town Parks,  
Belfast,  
BT2 7EG

When you reply it would be very useful if you could confirm whether you are replying as an individual or submitting an official response on behalf of an organisation.

If you are replying on behalf of an organisation please include:

- your name,
- your position in the organisation (if applicable),
- the name of your organisation,
- an address (including postcode),
- an email address.

<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSE</b>	<p>We will consider the responses received and publish an outcome report on the Departmental website.</p> <p>In line with good practice and sustainable development, this document has been published electronically.</p>
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<p>A range of alternative formats are available upon request from this Department.</p> <p>Please email the Department at: <b>lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk</b></p> <p>Or write to:</p> <p>Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Consultation, Department for Communities, Local Government &amp; Housing Regulation Division, Level 4, Causeway Exchange, 1-7 Bedford Street, Town Parks, Belfast, BT2 7EG.</p>

<b>HOW WE CONSULT</b>	
<b>CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES</b>	<p>The consultation is being conducted in line with the Fresh Start Agreement (<b>Appendix F6 – Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation - Engagement</b>). These eight steps give clear guidance to Northern Ireland departments on conducting consultations.</p>
<b>FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS</b>	<p>We value your feedback on how well we consult. If you have any comments about the consultation process (as opposed to comments about the issues which are the subject of the consultation), including if you consider that the consultation does not adhere to the values expressed in the Eight Steps to Good Practice in Public Consultation - Engagement or that the process could be improved, please address them to:</p> <p>Local Government Performance Indicators and Standards Consultation, Department for Communities, Local Government &amp; Housing Regulation Division, Level 4, Causeway Exchange, Town Parks 1–7 Bedford Street, Belfast, BT2 7EG</p> <p>Email: <a href="mailto:lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk">lgpdconsultations@communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Please title your correspondence as <b>“Feedback on the Consultation Process”</b>.</p>

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**PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY  
AND ACCESS TO  
CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

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

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679.

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

DfC is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide and DfC's privacy notice, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data, can be found at: **<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/dfc-privacy-notice>**.

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## **1. Purpose of the Consultation - Scope and timeframe**

- 1.1 This consultation covers proposals to amend the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the 2015 Order) to include the Department for the Economy's (DfE) proposed revised performance indicator and standards in respect of economic development.
- 1.2 The proposed amendments cover revisions to the performance indicator and standards placed on councils in relation to DfE's policy area of job promotion through a business plan development programme.
- 1.3 The closing date for submitting responses is 28 February 2022.
- 1.4 The Department will consider and respond to comments it receives during this consultation.
- 1.5 Responses are invited to this consultation about any aspect set out in this paper.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 Act) put in place a framework to support continuous improvement in the delivery of council services, in the context of strategic objectives and issues that are important to those who receive the services. Councils are required to gather information to assess improvements in their services and to report annually on their performance against indicators which they have either set themselves or that have been set by departments.
- 2.2 Section 89 of the 2014 Act allows the Department for Communities (DfC), by Order, to specify performance indicators and standards for councils in order to improve the exercise of their functions. This can include performance indicators and standards which other Departments deem relevant and have requested DfC to include within such an Order.

- 2.3 The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the 2015 Order), which is currently in operation, was made under section 89 of the 2014 Act. The 2015 Order acts as the legislative vehicle for 3 other departments to set performance indicators and standards for councils, being:

- the Department for the Economy (DfE) – in respect of business start-up activity
- the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) – in respect of planning
- the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) – in respect of waste management

- 2.4 DfE has requested that its performance indicator and related standards in the 2015 Order be amended.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The current Economic Development Indicator included in the 2015 Order relates to the number of jobs promoted through business start-up support. This is a calculated figure based on the number of client-led business plans created through the Northern Ireland Business Start-Up Programme (NIBSUP), also known as the Go for It (GFI) programme.
- 3.2 The job promotion standards, in the 2015 Order, were developed from a five-area model by DfE in conjunction with Invest NI, informed by an economic appraisal on the Regional Start Initiative (RSI, forerunner to NIBSUP), which set rates for each area based on their potential to deliver. The key variable in this model is the number of business plans approved, to which a conversion rate is applied to determine job creation figures.
- 3.3 When the Transfer of Functions to local government took place in April 2015, DfE set the job targets based on the 2011-2015 Programme for Government (PfG) target, to create 6500 local jobs, or 1625 jobs per year, which was then split across each council area, approximately following the RSI programme split. These targets have remained in place since that date.
- 3.4 The new GFI programme, which began on 1 April 2021, recently received approval from Invest NI for funding under the European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) measure for Local Economic Development (LED). Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council will be the council lead for this GFI programme. As a consequence of this new programme being introduced, the 2015 Order needs amended.

## 4. Details of proposed amendments

- 4.1 This section contains details on the proposed amendments to the 2015 Order. A draft of the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 and related Statutory Guidance have been prepared (see Annex A and B respectively) and we would welcome comments on both these drafts.
- 4.2 This consultation proposes to retain the current Economic Development indicator at this time, and to amend the standards to reflect the outcome of research undertaken and agreed with councils in 2019. The Economic Development indicator of number of jobs created remains in line with the draft PfG and draft Industrial Strategy. Additionally, the primary focus of support under the European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) measure for Local Economic Development is job creation and interventions supported by the Measure will need to deliver against this.
- 4.3 The proposed revised standards are based on an independent review of the NIBSUP/ GFI job target figures commissioned by the councils in 2018. The review proposed a new rationale for allocating job creation targets by council area, using data such as recent business start programmes in Northern Ireland, NI Statistic and

Research Agency data for NI job creation by council Area, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data for job creation by council area and DfE Data for job creation by council area.

- 4.4 The data compiled was then used to create a Proportionality Formula that could be applied to each Council area to produce a jobs target range for each area. The following three indices are used:
- the proportion of NI Small Businesses within Council Areas
  - the proportion of NI Micro Enterprises within Council Areas
  - the proportion of NI Business Births by Council Area
- 4.5 Each of the 11 councils considered the proposed figures for their respective area and the agreed standards were provided to DfE by the GFI administration team for the purpose of replacing the existing statutory targets.
- 4.6 Details of the proposed standards, by council area, can be found in the draft amendment Order (see Annex A).
- 4.7 DfE confirmed with the GFI team prior to this consultation that the targets remain appropriate and current for use as Statutory Standards. They will remain under review.

4.8 DfE acknowledges that in the future there may be developments in approach around indicators of local economic development and business start-up in line with wider developments in the policy ecosystem, and looks forward to working in partnership with local government as future policy direction is developed. In particular, while the current proposed standards relate directly to activity funded through the GFI programme, there will be a range of activity undertaken by Councils that support new businesses that is not necessarily reflected in the current figures. DfE would be keen to understand and reflect this wider activity through future standard-setting, based

on appropriate research and data. It is, however, important to update the current standards now, based on the available data, to align with the GFI programme which commenced in April 2021.

4.9 Finally, the use of business plans created through the programme as a proxy for jobs created is retained in the current proposal, as this also aligns to the approach in the GFI programme. Future research in the appropriate measure to be used to either approximate or verify jobs created is an area that DfE will be interested in exploring in any future review.

## 5. Impact Assessments

5.1 As DfE is responsible for the policy relating to the proposed amendments it has completed all the required impact assessments. Copies of these can be found at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/impact-assessments-consultation-local-government-order-2015>.

5.2 DfE has confirmed that it considers that the draft Order does not contain proposals to change policy in a

substantive way, therefore, no adverse impact on the categories of person in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are identified.

5.3 DfE has confirmed that it has not conducted a regulatory impact assessment as the proposed changes will have no regulatory impact.

5.3 DfE has confirmed that it considers that the proposed amendments in the draft Order will not have any differential impact on people living in rural areas.

## **6. Human Rights**

6.1 The Department believes that the proposals set out in the draft Order are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

## Annex A

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### STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

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**2022 No.**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

*Made* - - - - *XXst/nd/rd/th Month 2022*  
*Coming into operation* - - *X XXst/nd/rd/th Month 2022*

The Department for Communities<sup>(1)</sup> makes the following Order in exercise of the powers conferred by section 89(1) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014<sup>(2)</sup> and now vested in it<sup>(3)</sup>.

In accordance with section 89(2) of that Act, the Department has consulted councils and such associations or bodies representative of councils, such associations or bodies representative of officers of councils and such other persons or bodies as appear to the Department to be appropriate.

#### **Citation and commencement**

**1.** This Order shall be cited as The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 and shall come into operation on XXst/nd/rd/th Month 2022.

#### **Amendment of The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

**2.** The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015<sup>(4)</sup> shall be amended in accordance with Article 3.

**3.** For Schedules 1 (economic development indicators) and 2 (economic development standards) of the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 substitute Schedules 1 and 2 within the Schedule.

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(1) Formerly known as the Department for Social Development; see the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 c.5 (NI).

(2) 2014 c. 8 (N.I.)

(3) See S.R. 2016 No. 76, Article 8 of and Schedule 5 to the Departments (Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 transferred functions to the Department for Communities which were previously exercisable by the Department of the Environment

(4) S.R. 2015 No. 327

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## “SCHEDULE 1

Article 2

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

Council	Indicator reference number	Indicator
All councils	ED 1	The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity <sup>(1)</sup>

(1) Business start-up activity means the delivery of client led business plans under the Council-led Northern Ireland Business Start-up Programme (NIBSUP) or successor programmes.

## SCHEDULE 2

Article 2

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

<i>Council</i>	<i>Standard reference number</i>	<i>Standard</i>
	EDS 1	To promote in each financial year the following number of jobs through business start-up activity <sup>(1)</sup>
Antrim and Newtownabbey		80
Ards and North Down		123
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon		182
Belfast		325
Causeway Coast and Glens		128
Derry and Strabane		140
Fermanagh and Omagh		170
Lisburn and Castlereagh		116
Mid and East Antrim		111
Mid Ulster		153
Newry, Mourne and Down		173

(1) Business start-up activity means the delivery of client led business plans under the Council-led Northern Ireland Business Start-up Programme (NIBSUP) or successor programmes”

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

This Order amends The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 by updating Schedules 1 (economic development indicators) and 2 (economic development standards).

## Annex B

### **DRAFT GUIDANCE**

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND STANDARDS**

1. The statutory performance indicator and standards have been set by the Department for the Economy (DfE) as part of the governance and performance management arrangements for the economic development functions transferred to local government in 2015. It is critical to ensure that these functions are carried out, and are seen to be carried out, in a clear, fair and consistent manner and that best practice is applied across the district councils.

2. The Indicator and Standards have been prepared under the Northern Ireland Business Start-Up Programme (NIBSUP), also known as the Go for It (GFI) programme. In order to ensure consistency and reliability of performance data, reporting on the performance indicator and standards will be carried out centrally by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council as GFI coordinating team and reported to DfE. DfE will publish or arrange for this performance data to be published on an annual basis.

3. This will allow for accurate comparison between Councils across performance indicators and standards and will provide the DfE Minister and the public with assurance over the performance. Central reporting will also ensure that DfE continues to meet its statutory obligations under the Code of Practice for Official Statistics when reporting performance at the Regional level.

### **DATA COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **Northern Ireland Go For It Programme 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023**

4. The GFI team will submit monthly data lists to DfE within 5 working days of the end of each month, in relation to

- the number of business plans completed for each Council area within Northern Ireland
- the number of equivalent jobs promoted within each Council area

### **REPORTING AND MONITORING**

5. The reporting and monitoring arrangements are as follows:

- Invest NI will audit a random sample of all transactions associated with Business Start including initial meetings, workshops and business plans
- The GFI team has its own internal audit procedure which is undertaken on a 20% basis of all transactions and quality of business plans
- The GFI team produces a monthly report for Invest NI by way of ensuring compliance with data integrity, funding and quality of business plans
- Performance of individual council areas will be tracked and documented on a monthly basis forming the basis of monthly meetings between Invest NI and the GFI team.
- Validation of monthly quantity of Business plans will be completed by an external agency on an annual basis

## **VALIDATION OF DATA**

6. The data validation arrangements are as follows:

- The GFI team will conduct quality validation on 20% of the plans produced each month
- The plans will be selected at random from the final agreed monthly file.
- The key areas of validation will be in keeping with the Terms of Reference agreed with Invest NI and the validation process will:
  - ensure that the plan includes a robust set of financial projections consistent with the project described in the plan
  - ensure that analysis of the plans (specifically financial information) identifies any significant issues and specific commentary should be made where issues exist
  - ensure the plan is evidenced-based, with a minimum of 10% of the first year's sales justified in the market section. This should be supported with customer names and contract values
- In addition, the validation process will be used to identify best practice
- A summary of the validation will be prepared by the GFI team each month and be made available to Invest NI and Councils.

Available in alternative formats.

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## Appendix 3

<b>Report on</b>	Council draft response to Department for the Economy consultation on proposals to amend performance indicator and standards in the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Thursday 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2022
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	P Moffett, Assistant Director: Org. Development, Strategy & Performance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	L Jenkins, Performance & Quality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To inform members on Council's response to the consultation that covers proposals by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to amend the current (DfE) performance indicator and standards included within the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 to include the Department for the Economy's (DfE) proposed revised performance indicator and standards in respect of economic development ).
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p><b>Statutory Performance Improvement Indicators /Standards.</b></p> <p>Under the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards Order (Northern Ireland) 2015), statutory performance indicators and standards have been set as part of the performance improvement arrangements for district councils. Performance measures have been specified for the functions of: Economic Development, Planning and Waste management, on which to report annually, as part of the performance improvement arrangements for district councils. The aim of the performance measures is to promote the improvement of service delivery for the functions specified.</p>
2.2.	<p><b>Proposals to Amend the Order in Respect of Economic Development</b></p> <p>The Department for Communities has commenced a consultation on proposals to amend the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 to include the Department for the Economy's (DfE) proposed revised performance indicator and standards in respect of Economic Development (refer to Appendix One - The Local Government (Performance</p>

	<p>Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022). The proposed amendments cover revisions to the performance indicator and standards placed on councils in relation to DfE’s policy area of job promotion through a business plan development programme. This consultation closes on 28 February 2022.</p> <p>The consultation is being undertaken by the Local Government &amp; Housing Regulation Division in the Department for Communities (DfC) (which is the responsible department for specifying, under s89 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, local government performance indicators and standards). However the policy in respect of these proposed amendments is the responsibility of DfE.</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p>	<p><b>Context of proposals to change the Orders’ standards (jobs promotion) - following on from the Capaxo Review (June 2020)</b></p> <p>Mid Ulster District Council welcomes the Department for the Economy (DfE) proposals to amend the current (DfE) performance indicator and standards, (refer to Appendix Two). Included within the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (hereby referred to as the Order) in relation to DfE’s policy area of job promotion through a business plan development programme. The proposals to change the Orders standards follow on from the Capaxo Review (June 2020 – an independent review commissioned by Councils of the Northern Ireland Business Start Up Programme (NISUPB), also known as the Go For it Programme (GFI) target figures). The review had proposed a new rationale for allocating job creation targets by Council area using a broad range of data to create a proportionality formula that could be applied to each Council area to produce a jobs target range for each area.</p> <p>The proposed standards aim to amend and hence reduce Mid Ulster's statutory standard to 153 jobs (job creation) from April 2022, from the current standard of 210 contained within the Order since 2015. Council have supported the revised targets as they more accurately reflect the changed economic realities of the sub-region, including high employment and the loss of migrant population.</p> <p><b>Delivery Start Up Support Model Post March 2023.</b></p> <p>With NIBSUP ending in March 2023, significant work is being undertaken to identify and scope mechanisms for future delivery. In 2021, an initial review was undertaken to consider what the future business start-up support model should comprise, based on good practice research from other locations. Over recent months the 11 Councils have been working on an Options Analysis and Belfast City Council (acting as lead) has commissioned research to inform the delivery of business start-up support post-2023 and undertake a Business Case for this. Looking ahead, there is a case for substantive change to the approach to both the delivery and the performance measurement of future mechanisms of support.</p> <p>This case for change is also driven by the new business funding and support landscape and also significant new policy imperatives, including the ambitions</p>

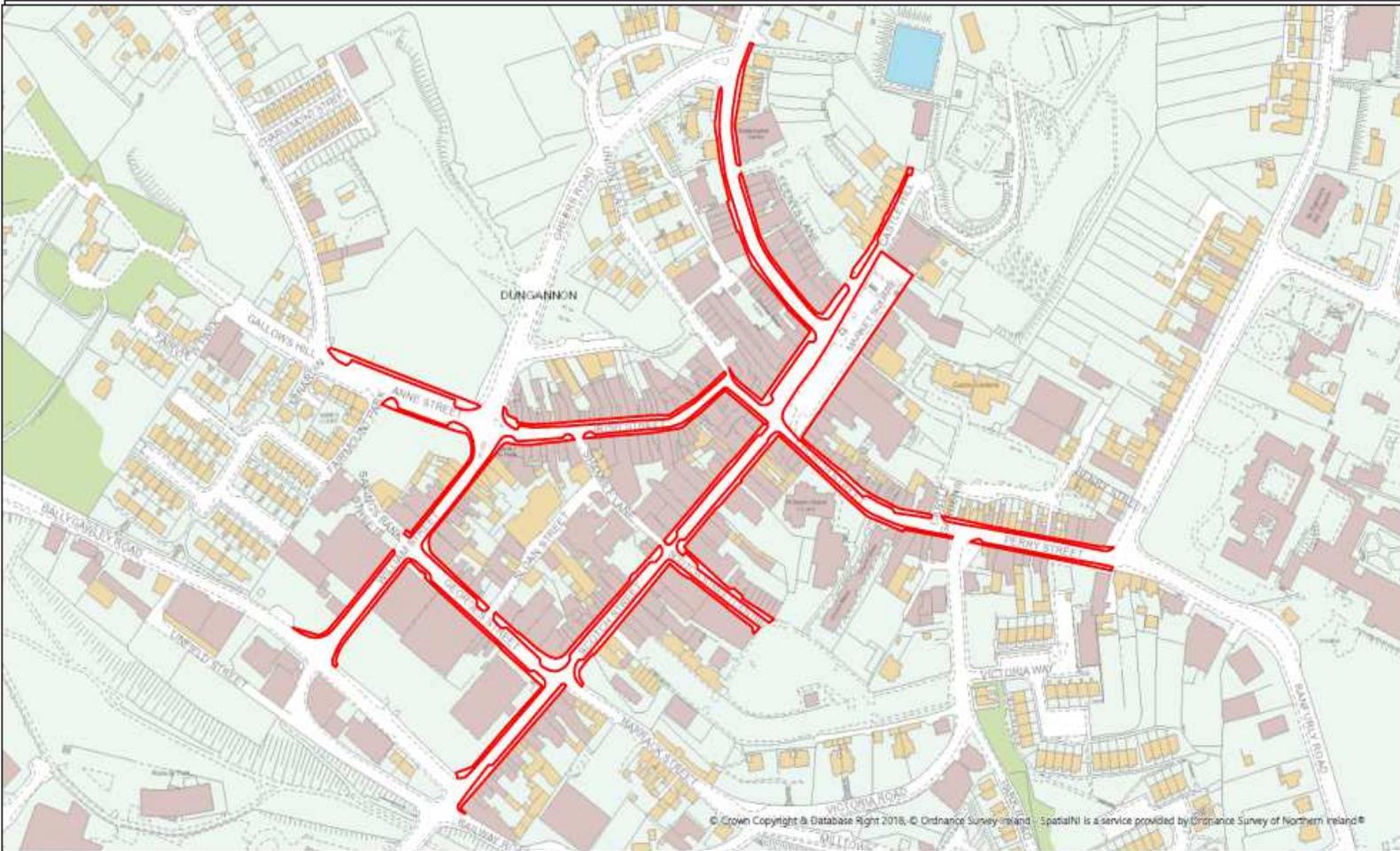
3.3	<p>articulated in DfE’s ‘10x Economy Vision’, highlighting the importance of fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and supporting new business development, DfE’s Recovery Action Plan, the City/Growth Deals, and in DfC’s own policy arena, the focus of Employability NI on establishing local Labour Market Partnerships in each Council area.</p> <p><b>Targets and Performance Indicators Post March 2023</b></p> <p>The current Statutory Order requires the reporting of ‘the number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity (defined as ‘the delivery of client led business plans under the Council-led Northern Ireland Business Start Up Programme or successor programmes’). Council agrees the proposed targets and associated performance indicators outlined in relation to the Mid Ulster District are appropriate only for the final year of the NIBSUP i.e. 2022/23. However, the targets and performance indicators post-March 2023, must be re-shaped to ensure they reflect the range of outputs of the new support offering.</p> <p>Council would urge the Departments for the Economy and Communities, and also Invest NI, to work collaboratively with Council Working Groups and SOLACE during the design process for this new entrepreneurship support programme, which must include the development of new, relevant and appropriate targets and indicators, and also to ensure that resources are also secured to support its delivery.</p>
4.0	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: N/A</p> <p>Human: N/A</p>
4.2	<p><b><u>Screening &amp; Impact Statements</u></b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: N/A</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: N/A</p>
5.0	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	<p>Members reflect on and adopt the Council’s draft response to the consultation to amend the current (DfE) performance indicator and standards included within the Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015 to include the Department for the Economy’s (DfE) proposed revised performance indicator and standards for economic development specific to Mid Ulster district</p>
6.0	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>

Appendix One: Consultation The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022

Appendix Two: Council's response to the consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, in respect of Economic Development

## Appendix 4

# Dungannon



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

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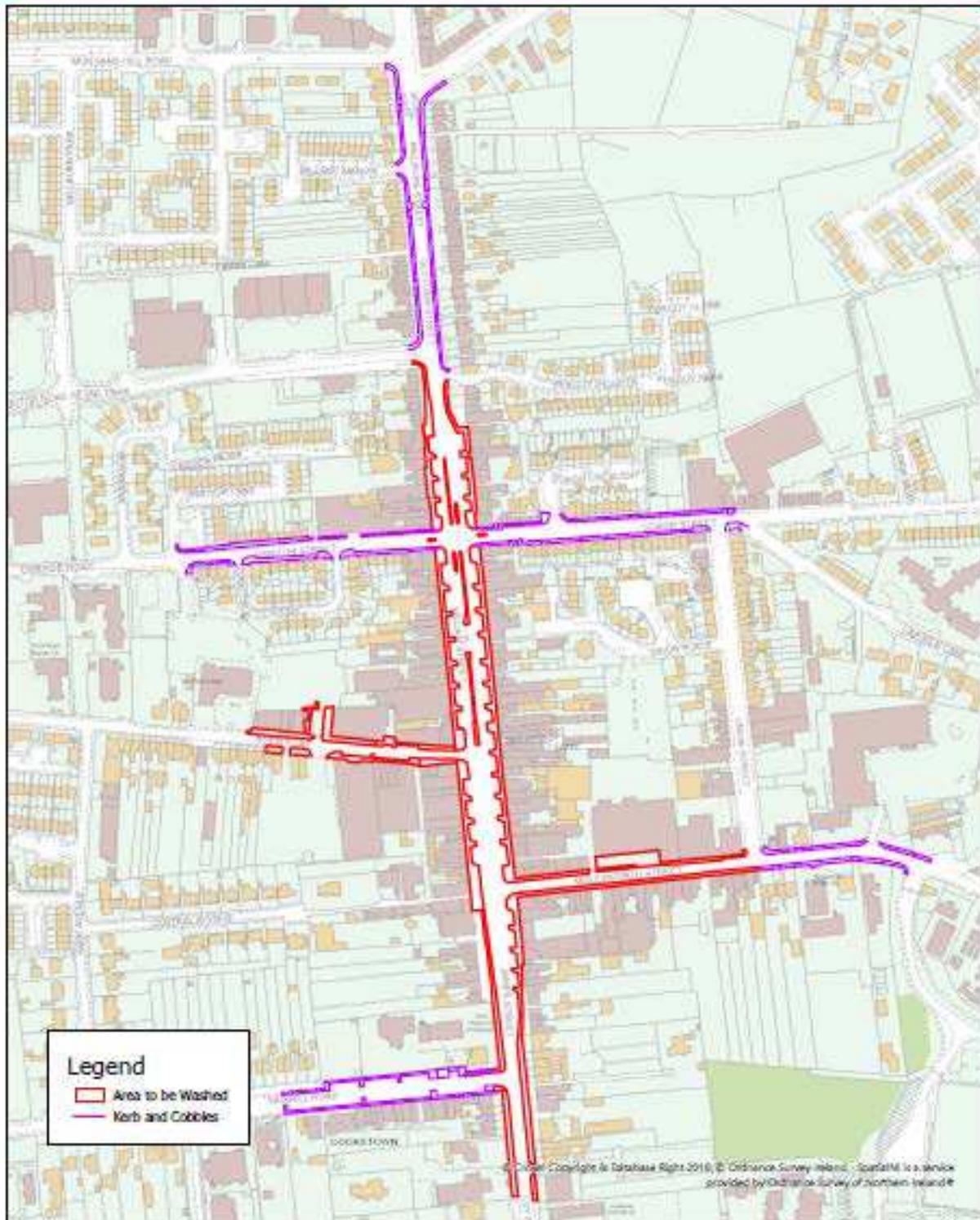
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# Cookstown



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**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

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# Magherafelt



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**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

**Appendix 5**

# Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership

## 2022-23 Action Plan

February 2022

**Draft v1**



**food for  
thought**

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## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1. Introduction

1. Mid Ulster is one the most entrepreneurial regions in Northern Ireland - home to over 9,200 locally grown businesses and representing the highest concentration of enterprise outside of Belfast.
2. Almost twice as many people in Mid Ulster are employed in the manufacturing sector than is the case in any other council region, making Mid Ulster the manufacturing centre of Northern Ireland, with key sub-sectors including advanced manufacturing, engineering, agri-food and construction.
3. As a highly progressive and ambitious local authority, Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) supports its industries with clear priorities established in its Corporate and Economic Development plans. The Council recognises that people and skills are the lifeblood of a thriving business sector, and employability and skills development sit centre-stage in its strategic planning.
4. In 2017 the Council launched the Mid Ulster Skills Forum – an industry-led multi-stakeholder skills collaboration network that was a first of its kind in Northern Ireland. The development & implementation of its Skills Action Plan (Figure 1) led to the Council winning the 2018 NILGA award for the Best Enterprise Initiative.



*Figure 1: Mid Ulster Skills Forum & Skills Action Plan*

5. One of the Skills Forum's most celebrated success stories has been the establishment of its highly successful spin-out - MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth and Advancement).
6. This award-winning collaborative growth network, led by some of the region's most capable industry leaders, has grown from 8 initial companies to a network of almost 65 companies, making it Northern Ireland's largest skills collaboration network, responsible for the creation of over 200 apprenticeships in the last two years.
7. In short, MUDC is no stranger to pioneering innovative approaches to skills development, and it is in this context the Council has launched its industry-led Labour Market Partnership in October 2021, as part of the Department for Communities' (DfC) Employability NI programme.



### 1.1.1. Background to the Labour Market Partnership

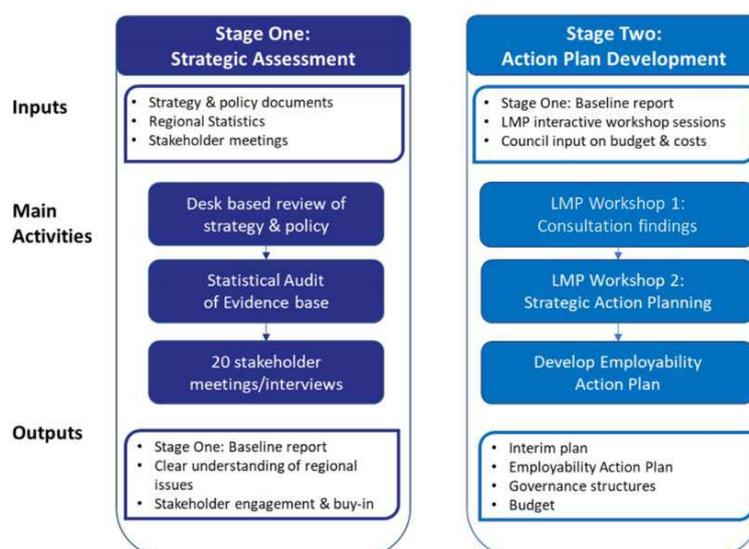
8. Employability NI (ENI) is DfC's new approach to the design, procurement and implementation of a fresh suite of employability provisions/initiatives to support people into meaningful employment.
9. Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is a key design strand of ENI, building collaborative multi-agency partnerships to:
  - Understand local market needs;
  - Improve employability outcomes;
  - Reduce economic inactivity.
  - Improve local labour market conditions; and
  - Design & deliver targeted interventions.
10. Food for Thought were appointed to assist MUDC with the development of its one-year LMP Employability Action Plan for 2022/23.

### 1.1.2. Purpose of this document

11. The purpose of this document is to summarise the findings of a strategic review undertaken between October and December 2021, and to set out Mid Ulster LMP's inaugural one-year action and proposed budget for 2022/23.
12. Subject to approval by the Council and DfC, this Action Plan will be implemented by Council officers and its appointed delivery partners under the oversight of the Mid Ulster LMP.

## 1.2. Approach to developing the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership 2023 Action Plan

13. Figure 2 sets out the approach taken to the development of the 2023 LMP action plan.



**Figure 2: Mid Ulster LMP action plan approach**

14. The plan has been developed through two key stages:

**Stage One: Strategic Assessment** – consisting of:

- a desk-based review of existing local and regional strategies and policies;
- a review of the statistical evidence relating to the health of the labour market and nature of economic activity in the Mid Ulster region; and
- a series of interviews with 35 senior leaders representing all relevant key stakeholders with an interest in the labour market and employability issues in the region.

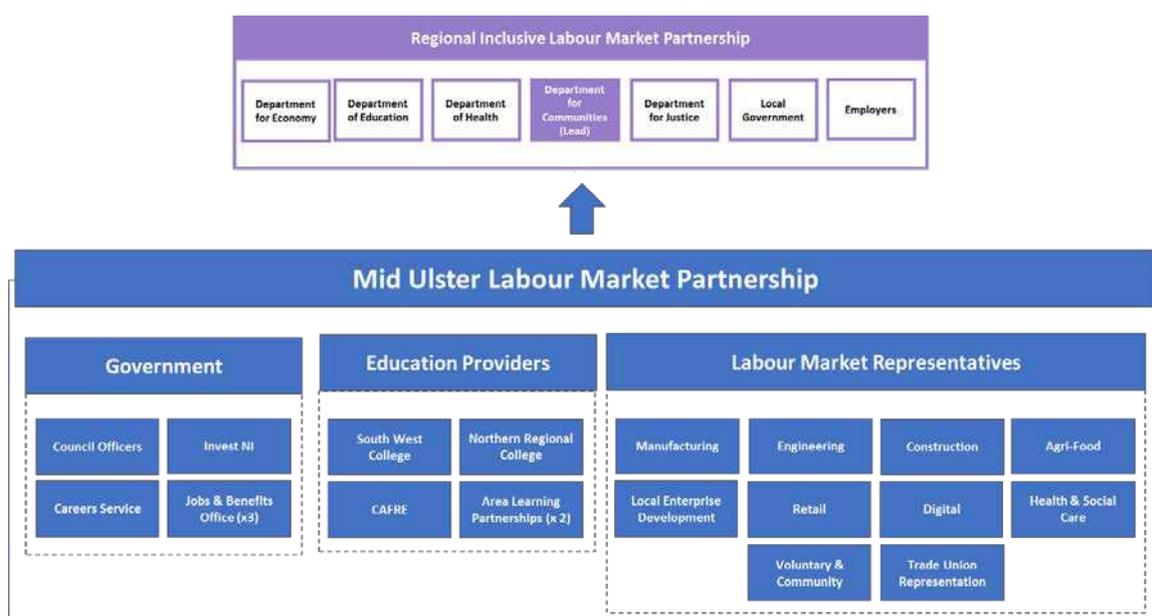
**Stage Two: Action Plan Development** – building on the findings from Phase One, a series of workshops were held with the Mid Ulster LMP to:

- Understand emerging priorities and key themes;
- Perform a “turn the curve” review on key performance metrics to define relevant interventions that can deliver a positive impact and outcomes; and
- Agree a draft action plan and budget for approval.

15. The key outcomes and deliverables from this assessment process are the 2023 Employability Action Plan (see Section 6), and the associated 2023 LMP budget (See Section 7). A final outcome from the project will be the definition of governing sub-group structures and their associated terms of reference.

### 1.3. Constitution of the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership

16. Building on the success of its original Skills Forum, MUDC has designed its LMP as an industry-led initiative that is inclusive of all relevant government, education, and labour market stakeholders (see Figure 3 below).

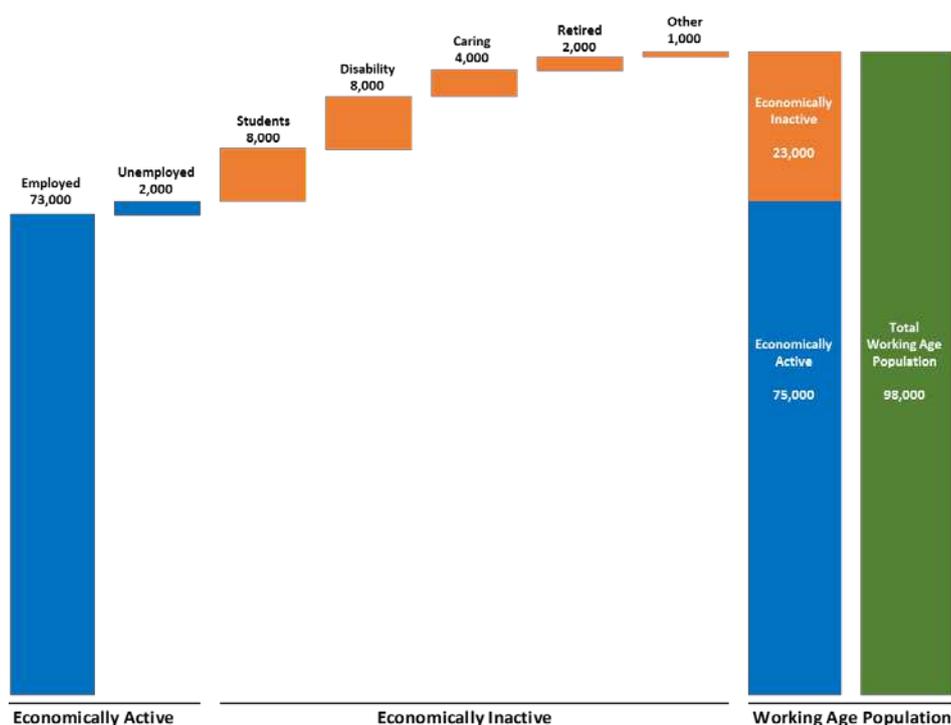


**Figure 3: Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership structure**

17. The LMP is chaired and vice-chaired by two prominent industry leaders, and over half of the LMP members consist of representatives from all the major employment sectors in the region.
18. Mid Ulster benefits from a highly accomplished academic sector, and the LMP includes school teacher representation (through the two Area Learning Partnerships), and representation from the Further Education sector, including South West College (SWC), Northern Regional College (NRC), and the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE).
19. Government representation includes Council officers from MUDC's economic development and community planning teams, along with representatives from Invest NI, Careers Service, and DfC's three Jobs and Benefits Offices (JBOs) located in the region.

#### 1.4. Mid Ulster – a hardworking, economically active population

20. Figure 4 below illustrates the profile of Mid Ulster's working age population.



**Figure 4: Mid Ulster's Working Age Population Profile**

##### *Economically active*

21. Despite the setback from Covid-19, the region continues to have the third highest employment rate in Northern Ireland, with over 75% of the working population in employment.
22. Unemployment in the district has risen slightly as a result of Covid-19, but overall, the rate remains relatively low at an estimated 2.3%.

##### *Economically inactive*

23. 23.4% of the adult working age population are economically inactive, with over a third of that figure relating to the students living in the region (8,000 people).

24. The focus of the 2023 LMP action plan will be to:
- address the covid-19 related rise in unemployment and job benefit claimants; and
  - focus on the design and trial of new employability initiatives to further improve levels of economic activity and increase the employment pool in Mid Ulster.

### 1.5. Summary of the Strategic Action Plan for 2022-23

25. The Mid Ulster LMP has established an ambitious action plan for its inaugural year, requiring a budget of £518,375, of which £468,375 will be funded by DfC, and £50,000 will be funded from a complementary fund offered by the Department for the Economy (DfE) for 2023.
26. The LMP strategic action plan for 2022-23 is summarised under the three strategic priorities set out below.

Strategic Priority 1	To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership
Key Activities:	<b>SPI.1:</b> Regular LMP meetings scheduled, and sub-structures defined with clear Terms of Reference.
	<b>SPI.2:</b> Management and administrative resource appointed by the Council.
	<b>SPI.3:</b> Invest in standardised regional statistical reporting to monitor LMP impact (UUEPC).
	<b>SPI.4:</b> Undertake a construction sector employability and skills review.
	<b>SPI.5:</b> Publish the LMP action plan.
	<b>SPI.6:</b> PR & Marketing activity to promote the LMP, launch initiatives, and celebrate key achievements via digital and non-digital channels.
	<b>SPI.7:</b> Annual employers survey as a local monitor of skills and labour demand.
	<b>SPI.8:</b> Annual survey of the LMP members to assess knowledge and satisfaction levels.
	<b>SPI.9:</b> Review the 2023 plan, & forward plan 2024-2026.

Strategic Priority 2	To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally
Key Activities:	<b>SP2.1:</b> Appoint a Project Officer to support employer engagement and LMP programme delivery.
	<b>SP2.2:</b> Sector-focused Employability Academies co-designed between Industry and FE: manufacturing (4); Construction (2); Agri-food (2); H&SC (2); and Hospitality (2).
	<b>SP2.3:</b> HGV academy - support industry supply chains by addressing HGV driver shortages (Category C & E).
	<b>SP2.4:</b> Employer-led Disability Inclusion programme pilot to increase the number of disabled people in paid employment.
	<b>SP2.5:</b> NICMA approved Childminding basic training academy.
	<b>SP2.6:</b> Mid Ulster Careers & Employability Portal as a key shared resource to resolve the disconnects in the labour market.

Strategic Priority 3	To support delivery of Employability NI
Key Activities:	<b>SP3.1:</b> Map all existing employability and skills interventions available to MUDC employers.
	<b>SP3.2:</b> Improve employer & participant knowledge and access to existing employability and skills services.

## 2. Findings from the consultation process

### 2.1. Consultation scope

27. The original consultation plan to engage at least 20 key stakeholders was expanded to include over 30 stakeholder groups to ensure the LMP action planning process secured input from a broad range of perspectives from relevant parties with an interest in the labour market and employability issues in the Mid Ulster region. Figure 5 below summarises the stakeholder groups involved.

### Extensive stakeholder engagement exercise completed on time in full

#### All key industry sectors represented:

- Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Construction
- Tourism
- Digital
- Retail
- Agri-food
- Social care
- Enterprise
- Invest NI
- Enterprise Centre

- Education & Careers
  - Schools (ALP & Careers)
  - FE Colleges
  - Careers Service
- Community
  - JBOs
  - Community Groups
  - Community Development
  - Union
  - Council Members & Officers



*Figure 5: LMP stakeholder consultation groups*

### 2.2. Key messages from employers

28. The predominant recurring theme from industry consultation focused on the growing “People Crisis” facing every sector in the region.
29. The main messages from industry confirmed that:
- Large numbers of jobs vacancies currently exist and are not being filled;
  - Businesses are having to decline customer orders due to the lack of people, resulting in a loss of revenue and a negative impact on the region’s productivity; and
  - Service sectors are under severe pressure – Health & Social Care, Hospitality, and Retail are caught in a vicious circle as lower staffing levels creates greater pressure on a reduced workforce, which in turn leads to increased absence and staff turnover.
30. Key contributing factors to these issues relate to:
- Loss of migrant workers – EU exit and changes in the foreign exchange rate has resulted in the loss of over 26% of the EU migrant workforce in Northern Ireland in the years running up to Brexit.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as net emigration continues these resources are not being replaced.
  - Government Job Schemes are not aligned to employer’s needs – for example, JobStart is limited to:

<sup>1</sup> Labour Market Force reports

- 16-24 year olds, which are not the dominant age profile within Mid Ulster’s economically inactive; and
- New post vacancies – when Mid Ulster employers are in desperate need to fill existing vacancies.
- Employers feel a lack of support in addressing the people crisis, and consider they are ill-informed as to the status and capabilities of the economically inactive:
  - “We have no engagement with JBOs” – a recent survey of over 60 local Mid Ulster businesses revealed that just 5% of companies said they were satisfied with the level of engagement from JBOs<sup>2</sup>; and
  - Industry representatives consider greater assistance is needed to employ people from backgrounds of long-term economic inactivity or with greater personal support needs. Employer awareness of existing support schemes such as Access to Work, Workable NI and WEP (Work Experience Programme) is low.
- Employers consider there is misalignment between industry needs and education and skills strategies, with employer-held perceptions that:
  - careers advice over-promotes university pathways;
  - alternative career paths are under-promoted, as they conflict with school budget pressures.
- Employers recognise that education and government bodies cannot track the pace of industry change without assistance, and that employers have a responsibility to provide resource and support to those involved in education, careers, and the economically inactive.

### 2.3. Key messages from employability and skills partners

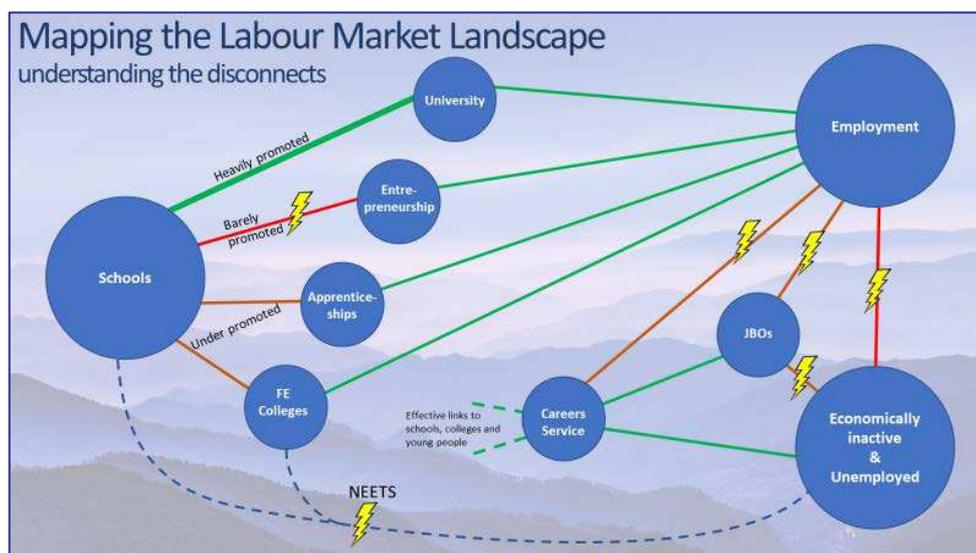
31. The recurring theme from discussions with those stakeholders responsible for improving skills and employability outcomes focused on a need for Industry to provide clearer and more timely information on the skills needs within the employment sector.
32. Key findings from this stakeholder group conclude that:
  - Employer requirements change at a very fast pace – employers need to provide regular updates on skills demand and in a consistent format;
  - Employers need to invest in resources & digital content that will attract and inspire individuals to take up work;
  - Employers need to provide more meaningful engagement and mentoring to encourage individuals to participate and remain in employment; and
  - Employers need to offer realistic compensation - offering young person/apprentice rates will not attract 16-18 year old people into employment.

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<sup>2</sup> MEGA, Post-Covid strategic action plan, Member’s survey – 2021.

## 2.4. Mapping the labour market landscape

33. Having completed the consultation exercise, it is apparent that a number of disconnects exist between the major stakeholders that will need to be addressed if an LMP employability action plan is to be successful.



**Figure 6: Disconnects in the labour skills and employability market**

34. Whilst disconnects may have existed in the past, these have been significantly amplified during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mid Ulster LMP members have identified that improved use digital technology and online media channels in the form of an online careers and employability portal presents an opportunity to improve information flow and knowledge sharing across all parties engaged in the skills supply chain.

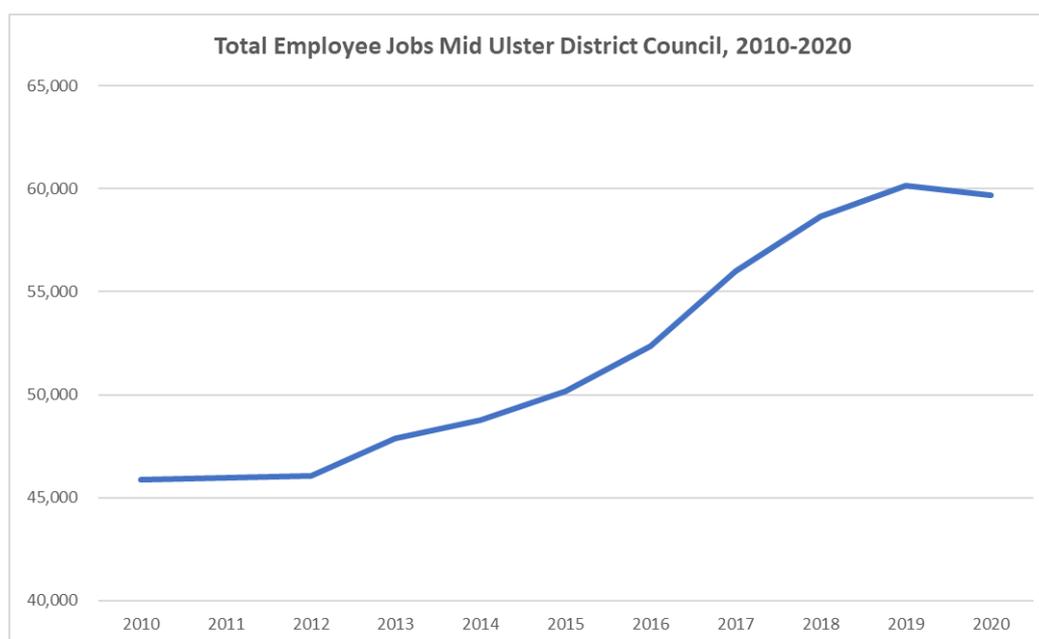
## 2.5. Summary of key findings from the consultation phase

35. In summary, the consultation phase of the LMP strategic planning process concludes in two key observations:
1. **Address the People Crisis** – the availability of people is a major constraining issue for Mid Ulster’s continued economic growth – the region is facing a people crisis that is already impacting on economic recovery; and
  2. **Improved connectivity and information flow** across the skills and employability supply chain is critical to support more effective collaboration on employability and skills issues.
36. These findings, combined with the outcome of the statistical audit and strategic review have helped shape the proposed LMP action plan for 2023.

### 3. Findings from the Statistical Audit

#### 3.1. Overview of Mid Ulster

37. Mid Ulster is one the most entrepreneurial regions in Northern Ireland - home to over 9,200 locally grown businesses and representing the highest concentration of enterprise outside of Belfast.
38. Almost twice as many people in Mid Ulster are employed in the manufacturing sector than is the case in any other council region, making Mid Ulster the manufacturing centre of Northern Ireland, with key sub-sectors including advanced manufacturing, engineering, agri-food and construction.
39. This concentration of high growth manufacturing businesses has resulted in Mid Ulster experiencing the fastest pace of employee job creation of any council area in Northern Ireland, growing at 23.3% (11,384 new jobs) between 2014 and 2019 compared to a total Northern Ireland growth rate of 10.9%.
40. Figure 7 illustrates that job creation growth continued year on year for over ten consecutive years until the Covid-19 pandemic hit in early 2020.

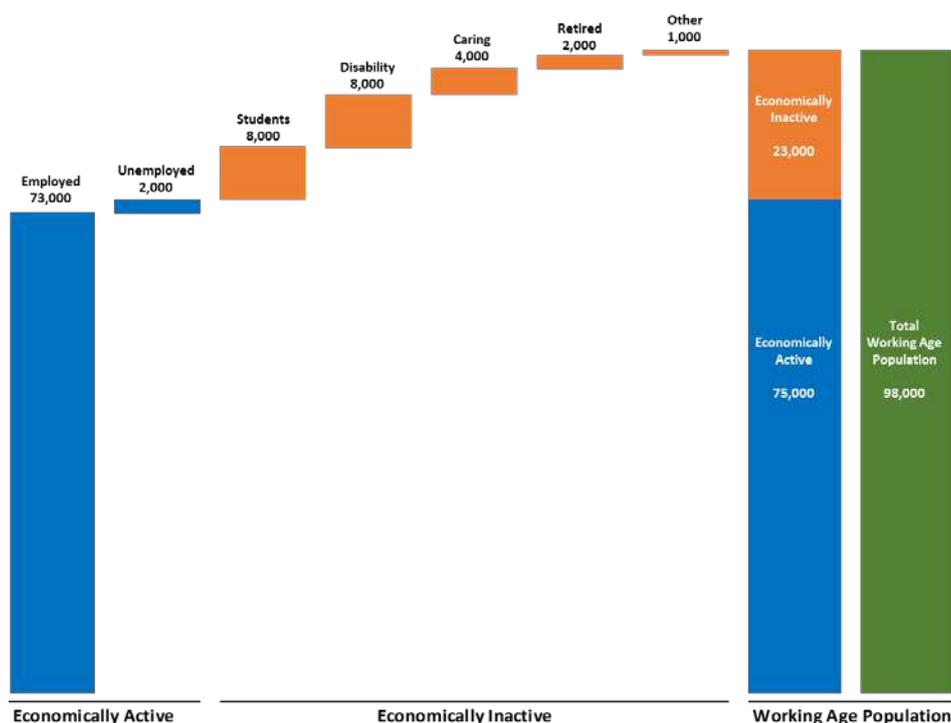


**Figure 7: Mid Ulster Job Creation. Covid-19 has broken 10 consecutive years of growth**

## 3.2. Profile of the Mid Ulster working population

### 3.2.1. Mid Ulster – a hardworking, economically active population

41. Figure 8 below illustrates the profile of the Mid Ulster working age population.



**Figure 8: Mid Ulster's Working Age Population Profile**

#### *Economically active*

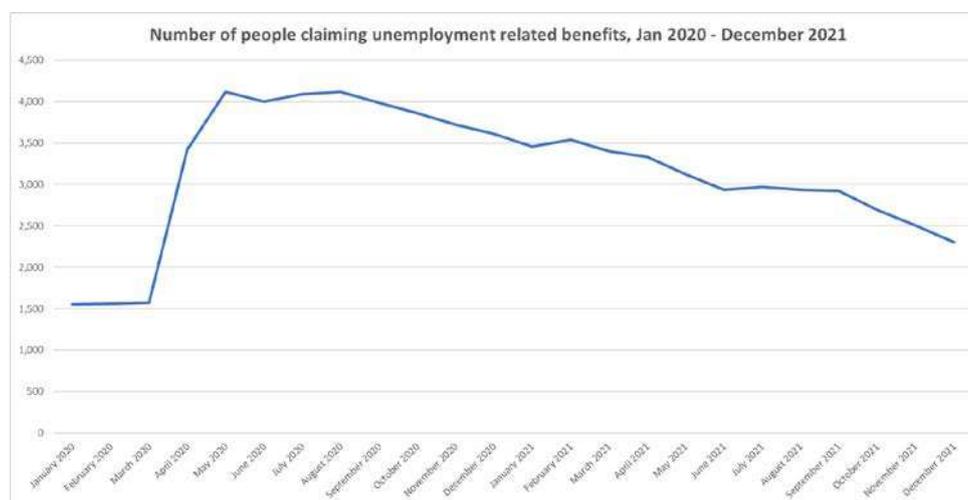
42. Despite the set-back from Covid-19, the region continues to have the third highest employment rate in Northern Ireland, with over 75% of the working population in employment.
43. Unemployment in the district has risen slightly due to Covid, but overall the rate remains relatively low at an estimated 2.3%.

#### *Economically inactive*

44. 23.4% of the adult working age population are economically inactive, with over a third of that figure relating to the students living in the region (8,000 people).
45. Adjusted for students, the economic inactivity rate is just 15.3%, with the main drivers being:
- Health issues and disability – 8.2% (estimated 8,000 people);
  - Family caring commitments – 4.1% (estimated 4,000 people); and
  - Retired & other reasons – 3.0% (estimated 3,000 people).

### 3.3. Job claimants

46. As with other Council regions, Covid-19 caused a significant spike in job benefit claimant numbers in early 2020, when the claimant numbers rose from a pre-Covid baseline of 1,555 claimants to a peak of 4,120 in May 2020.

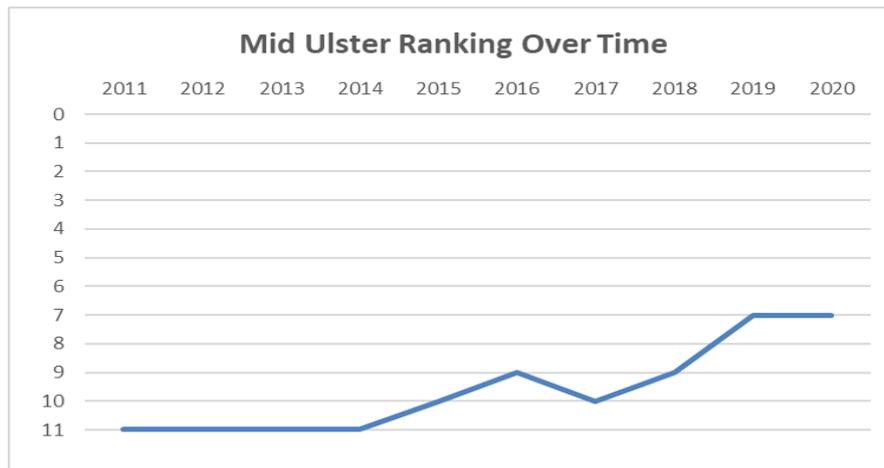


**Figure 9: Mid Ulster Job Claimant numbers**

47. Despite industry making a rapid recovery from the disruption caused by Covid-19, the job claimant numbers have remained persistently high. The ending of the Furlough scheme in September 2021 had no negative impact on employment and claimant numbers have continued to fall on a gradual basis.
48. It was noted during the consultation phase that one of the main contributing factors to the slow reduction in job claimant numbers has been removal of the enforcement of Universal Credit conditionality requirements. JBOs have been unable to use normal enforcement processes to encourage claimants to re-engage with employment, and although conditionality requirements were recently reintroduced in December 2021, it is understood that full enforcement has not yet recommenced.
49. As a result, the job claimant levels reported for December 2021 remain 48% above pre-covid levels (750 people) This persistently elevated job claimant number makes little sense in the context of a labour market that is struggling to fill vacancies. The Mid Ulster LMP has identified this issue as a priority focus point for its 2023 employability action plan.

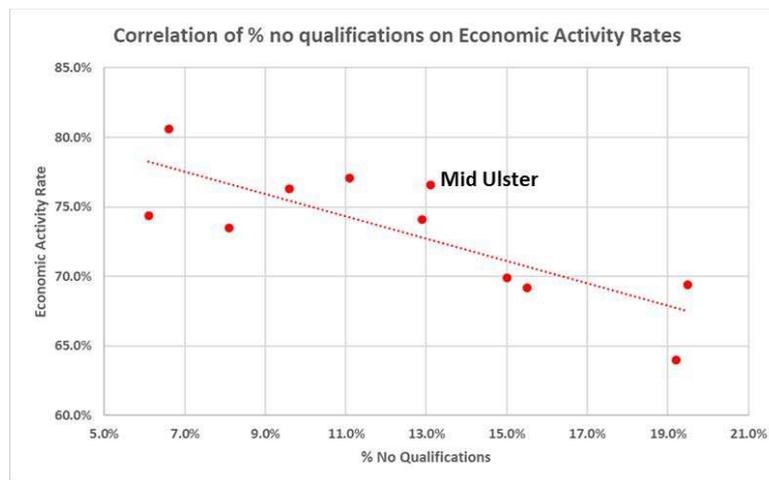
### 3.4. Qualification achievements

50. Historically, Mid Ulster has consistently ranked as the Council region with the highest percentage of its residents having no formal qualifications.
51. However, as shown in Figure 10 overleaf, over the past five years the region has made significant progress, rising from a persistent ranking of being the Council with the highest percentage of working age residents with no qualifications, to an improved mid-table position of 7<sup>th</sup> place.



**Figure 10: Mid Ulster Council District ranking for % no qualifications**

52. This improvement is considered to be due to two main factors:
- the retirement of older workers who tend to have lower levels of formal qualifications having been educated in an era when many left school without sitting examinations; and
  - an upward trend in educational participation among young people, combined with the success of many of the support programmes now in place to ensure adults have the opportunity to acquire qualified skills.
53. Whilst Mid Ulster continues to have a relatively high proportion of adults with no qualifications at just over 13% of the population, this does not mean the workforce is unskilled and Mid Ulster’s economic activity rate is better than might otherwise be expected owing to the strength of the manufacturing sector and the entrepreneurial business activity in the region.

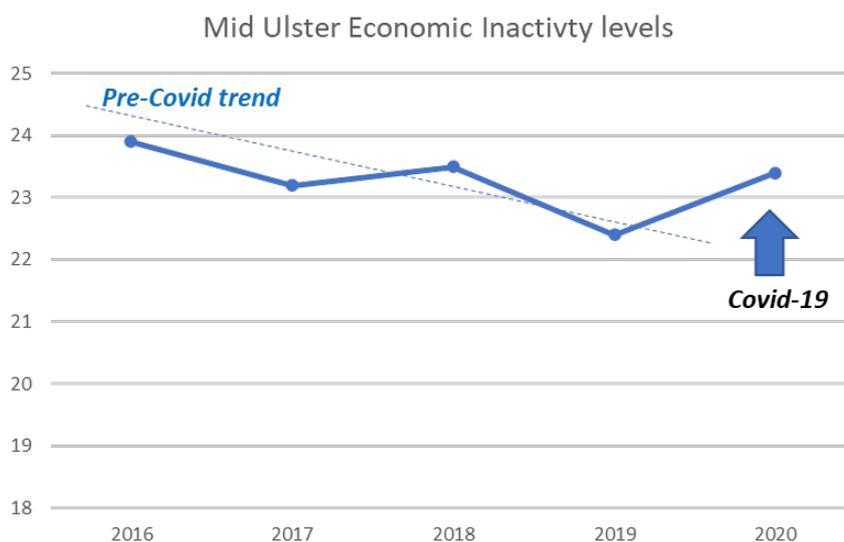


**Figure 11: Correlation of economic activity and % no qualifications**

### 3.5. Economic inactivity

#### 3.5.1. Trends in economic inactivity over time

54. Figure 12 below shows the proportion of economically inactive residents in Mid Ulster had been showing signs of modest improvement in the years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Figure 12: Mid Ulster economic inactivity rates**

55. However, Covid-19 has interrupted that trend, causing a 1% increase in economic activity (from 22.4% to 23.4%) - the equivalent of a year-on-year increase of 4%.
56. That said, Mid Ulster continues to rank as the third most economically active region in the province with economic inactivity some 3.6% below the Northern Ireland average.

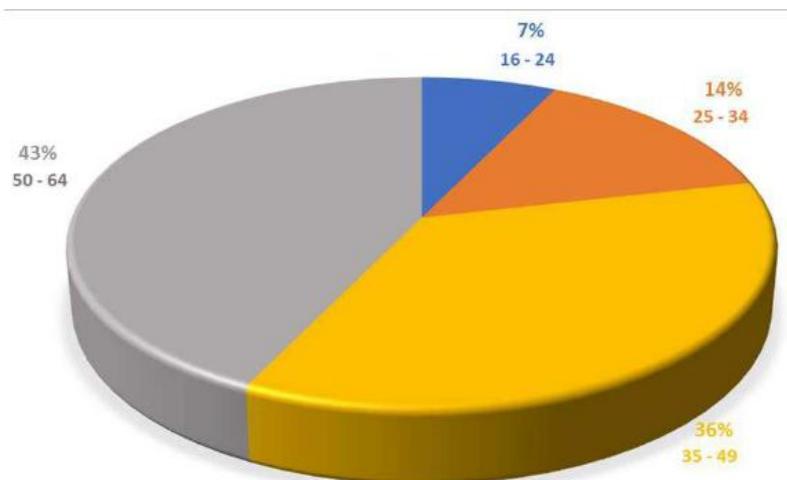
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 numbers	
Lisburn and Castlereagh	20.2%	22.3%	21.1%	17.4%	19.4%	18,000
Newry, Mourne and Down	24.3%	31.5%	31.0%	24.4%	22.9%	26,000
<b>Mid Ulster</b>	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>23,000</b>
Antrim and Newtownabbey	19.5%	19.5%	19.9%	20.6%	23.7%	21,000
Mid and East Antrim	23.9%	26.2%	25.5%	23.9%	25.6%	20,000
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	25.4%	24.9%	22.9%	25.7%	25.9%	34,000
Ards and North Down	22.5%	22.0%	25.5%	25.3%	26.5%	25,000
Belfast	26.1%	30.6%	32.7%	30.5%	30.1%	66,000
Causeway Coast and Glens	34.0%	33.8%	29.3%	29.9%	30.6%	26,000
Fermanagh and Omagh	29.7%	30.1%	27.0%	33.1%	30.8%	22,000
Derry City and Strabane	37.6%	36.9%	34.1%	30.4%	36.0%	34,000
<b>NI</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>27.6%</b>	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>26.2%</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	<b>314,000</b>

Source: NISRA

57. This presents an interesting challenge for the Mid Ulster LMP. With some of the lowest rates in the province for unemployment and economic inactivity, novel solutions will be needed to safeguard and improve on what is a relatively strong starting position.

### 3.5.2. Age profile of the economically inactive (excluding students)

58. Figure 13 below shows the age profile of the economically inactive in Mid Ulster.



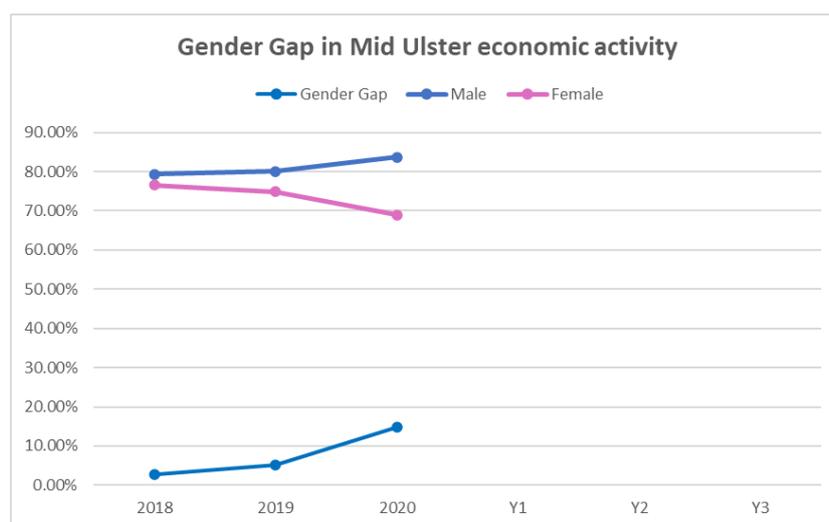
**Figure 13: Age Profile of Mid Ulster's economically inactive (excluding students)<sup>3</sup>**

59. Adjusted for students, 7% of Mid-Ulster's economically inactive are aged 16-24. This represents an estimated 1,000 young people – an important cohort of particular interest to the LMP action plan as there are long term benefits to be gained from interventions that engage this population at an early stage in an effort to reduce the economic inactivity trends in the longer term.
60. Half of Mid-Ulster's economically inactive are in the prime working age group of 25 to 49 (7,500 people). A high proportion of this category are likely to be constrained by caring commitments with dependent children or the elderly, with the balance mainly constrained by health related issues.
61. Just over 40% (6,500) of Mid Ulster's economically inactive are aged 50+. It is known from separate analysis that 2,000 of these residents are retired, and as such are less likely to be attracted back to the workplace. Of the remaining 4,500, whilst there will be many reasons for inactivity, it is probable that a higher proportion of these people will make up some of the estimated 8,000 Mid Ulster residents registered as economically inactive due to disability and ill-health.
62. As the LMP considers its plans to address economic inactivity, gaining improved insight into the profile of the people involved will be critical to the design of interventions targeted at specific population groups.

<sup>3</sup> The 16 – 24 age group consists of 9,000 economically inactive – this has been adjusted based on a general assumption that the region's 8,000 students are all in that age bracket. In reality that will not be the case and makes no allowance for mature students, but for discussion purposes the difference is not likely to be material.

### 3.6. Economic Activity Gender Gap

63. In recent times, Mid Ulster's gender difference in economic activity had been slim - in 2018 it was just 2.7%.
64. However, as Figure 14 shows, this gap had started to grow pre-Covid, and Covid has subsequently driven a significant decrease in female economic activity, possibly as a result of unequal shouldering of responsibility for increased childcare requirements arising from Covid-19 lock-downs and home schooling, and shielding of vulnerable at-risk citizens with underlying health issues.



**Figure 14: Mid Ulster's growing economic inactivity gender gap**

65. In the same time period, male economic activity has increased, with the net effect of opening an almost 15% gap in economic inactivity between men and women in the region.
66. The 2023 employability plan may present an opportunity for the Mid Ulster LMP to encourage women to return to work, either through targeted recruitment to interventions that will support a return to work (e.g., sectoral academies), or by encouraging an improved provision of childcare in the region.

### 3.7. Disability Employment Gap

67. This review has conducted an analysis of the Disability Employment Gap across the eleven council regions – calculated as the difference in employment rates for those individuals with a recorded disability, compared to those with none.
68. Figure 15 overleaf shows this to be Mid Ulster's worst performing statistic, having the largest Disability Employment Gap of any region at 50.1%.

	Employment rate		Disability Employment Gap
	People with disabilities	People without disabilities	
Newry Mourne And Down	46.9%	80.6%	33.7%
Causeway Coast And Glens	40.9%	76.6%	35.7%
Mid And East Antrim	43.6%	79.9%	36.3%
Antrim And Newtownabbey	45.5%	82.0%	36.5%
Ards And North Down	43.1%	80.5%	37.4%
Lisburn And Castlereagh	46.3%	86.5%	40.2%
Fermanagh And Omagh	34.8%	76.3%	41.5%
Derry City And Strabane	33.8%	75.7%	41.9%
Belfast	32.7%	78.9%	46.2%
Armagh City Banbridge And Craigavon	35.6%	83.3%	47.7%
<b>Mid Ulster</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>81.8%</b>	<b>50.1%</b>
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>80.3%</b>	<b>42.2%</b>
<b>UK</b>			<b>27.9%</b>

Figure 15: Mid Ulster’s disability employment gap

69. An opportunity clearly exists for Mid Ulster to improve on this statistic, and there may be merit in collaborating with a higher performing Council region to benefit from any lessons that may be learned from successful interventions elsewhere. As a neighbouring Council region that shares access to NRC as a Further Education partner, Mid & East Antrim (the third best performing Council region in this field) may present a logical choice as a collaboration partner.

3.7.1. De-bunking manufacturing as a potential driver for DEG

- 70. Given that Mid Ulster employs almost twice as many people in the manufacturing sector than any other council region, an analysis was made to check for any correlation between the size of the manufacturing labour market (as potentially a more physically demanding / hazardous employment sector), and the disability employment gap.
- 71. On first review, figure 16a would indicate a strong correlation between the percentage of the workforce employed in manufacturing and the size of the Council region’s disability gap

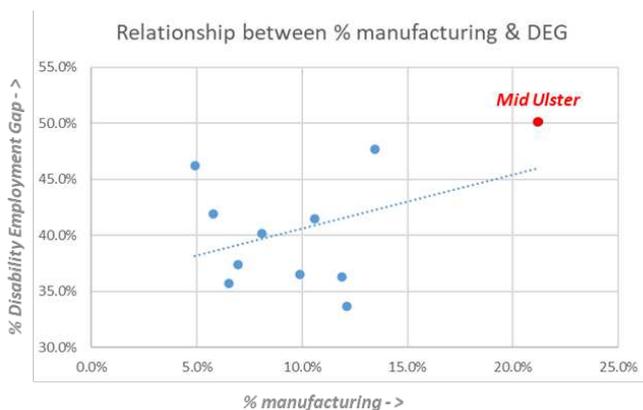


Figure 16a: % Manufacturing & DEG

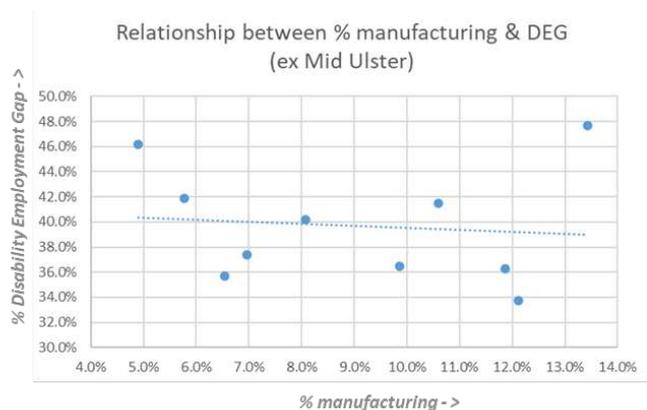


Figure 16b: % Manufacturing (Excluding Mid Ulster) & DEG

72. However, as Mid Ulster has both the highest percentage of its workforce employed in manufacturing, and also the highest Disability Employment Gap, Mid Ulster creates an outlying anomaly, which when removed would indicate there is no significant correlation between % manufacturing and the Disability Employment Gap (Figure 16b).

## 4. Summary of findings from the strategic assessment

### 4.1. Introduction

#### *Labour market demand*

73. Covid-19 has had a profound health and socio-economic impact on society over the past two years, and EU exit has simultaneously exerted additional stress factors, with Northern Ireland having lost at least 26% of its EU migrant workforce in the years running up to Brexit.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as net emigration continues these resources are not being replaced.
74. Access to people is now considered to be the single biggest threat to economic recovery. The effects are felt in virtually every sector, and the impact is immediately apparent in Mid Ulster. In the course of this consultation several sectors report ***they are already turning down customer orders*** or are at risk of not being able to fulfil customer orders in the future.
75. Left unchecked, the low availability of people and skills in the region may mean the next few years will prove challenging for many businesses in Mid Ulster. As a consequence the region is at risk of not realising its full economic potential, or in a worst-case scenario may face a further reduction in economic activity due to business relocation, scale-back, or closure if labour and skills availability issues cannot be addressed.

#### *Employability and skills supply*

76. Mid Ulster unemployment is currently low, but Covid-19 has had an impact and there are an additional 750 people on job benefit support compared to pre-Covid levels. Economic inactivity has also increased by 1% equating to almost 1,000 additional people no longer actively contributing to the economy. Interventions are necessary to “turn the curve” on these statistics if Mid Ulster is to course-correct towards positive economic recovery and growth.

### 4.2. Focusing on strategic outcomes

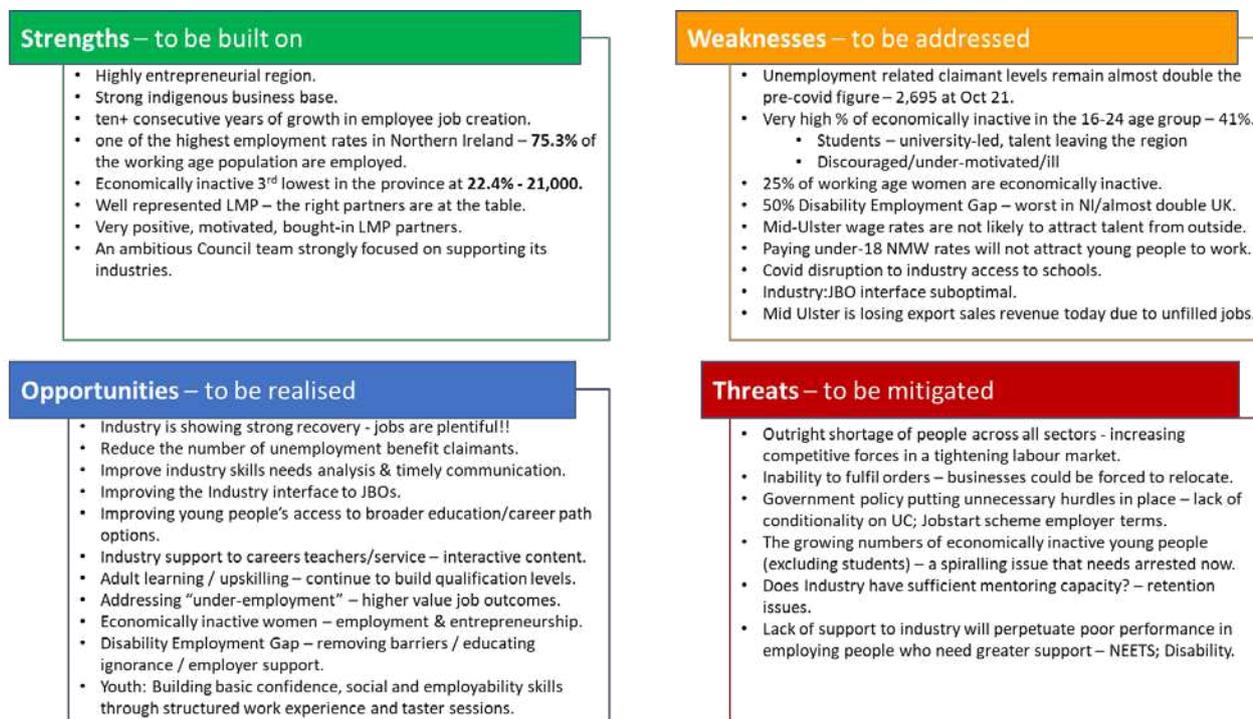
77. As a key strand in the delivery of Employability (NI), the aim of the Labour Market Partnership is to help improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by working to develop relevant interventions that will impact on a number of relevant Programme for Government outcomes, including:
- Outcome 3: ‘We have a more equal society’
  - Outcome 6: ‘We have more people working in better jobs’
  - Outcome 8: ‘We care for others and help those in need’
78. The Mid Ulster LMP action plan for 2023 has been defined using an Outcomes Based Approach to deliver against these strategic goals.

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<sup>4</sup> Labour Market Force reports

### 4.3. Mid Ulster LMP SWOT analysis

79. The SWOT analysis below summarises the findings from the Mid Ulster LMP strategic review.



*Figure 17: Mid Ulster LMP SWOT analysis*

80. The 2023 action plan will focus on the development of interventions that meet the key findings summarised in the SWOT, whilst at the same time:

- avoiding duplication or overlap with existing local or regional initiatives;
- ensuring the need for any initiative is well evidenced;
- clearly defining how success will be measured;
- developing a plan that makes best utility of a finite budget across a very diverse LMP stakeholder group;
- ensuring the plan can be delivered in a year; and
- Ensuring the plan focuses on well-invested initiatives that target a select number of priority groups, with an expectation that other groups can be the focus of investment in action plans to follow in the future.

81. Mid Ulster LMP’s strategic priorities and key themes for 2022-23 are summarised in Figure 18 overleaf.

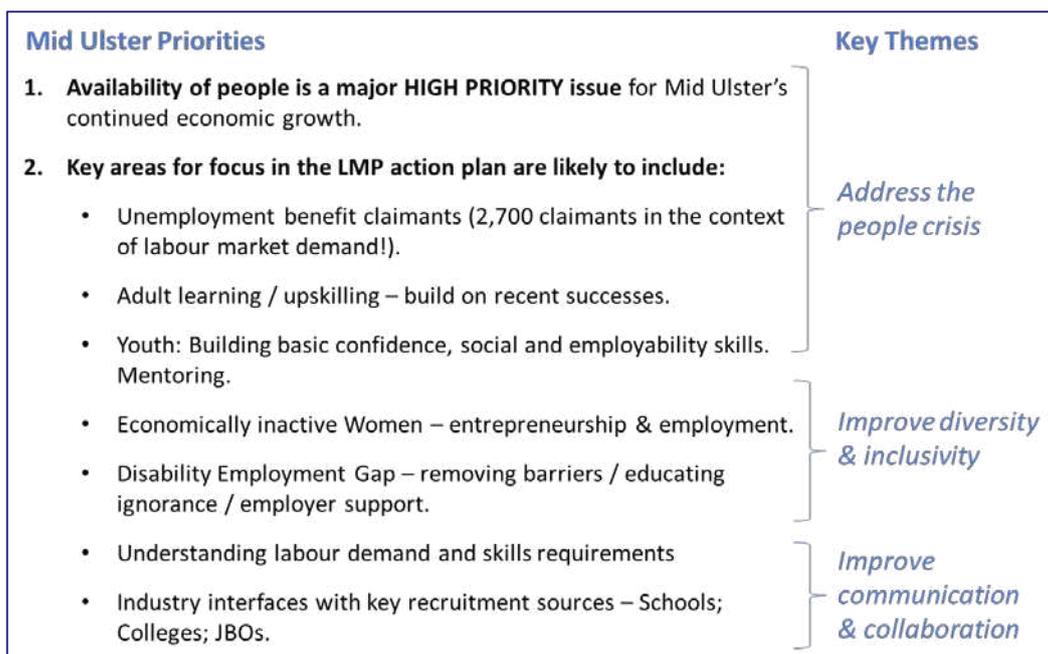


Figure 18: Mid Ulster LMP’s strategic priorities and key themes for 2022-23

#### 4.4. Defining the interventions - turning the curve

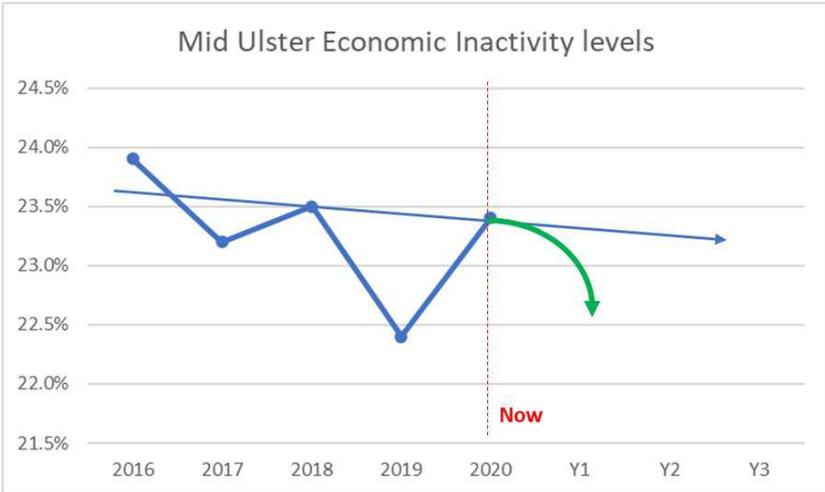
82. An outcome-based approach has been used to address the following local priorities in 2023.

##### 4.4.1. Turning the curve on: Job Claimant numbers

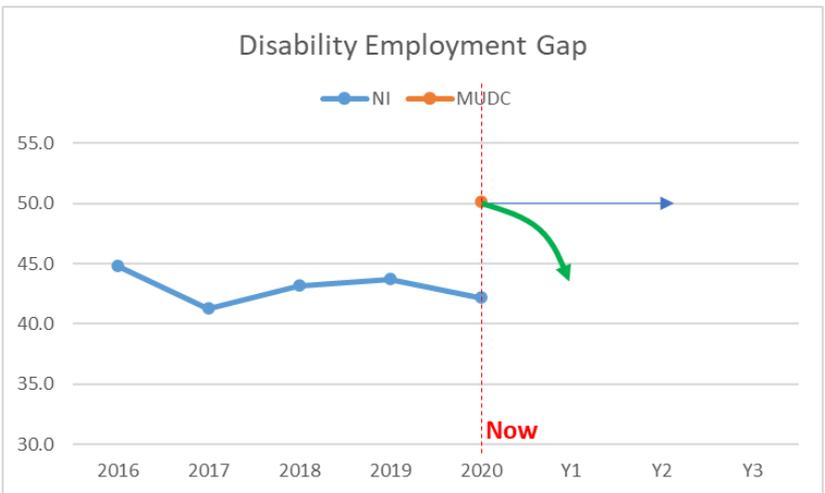
83. The Mid Ulster labour market urgently needs to reverse the increase in job claimants arising from Covid-19.

<p><b>1/ Understanding the baseline.</b> Covid-19 caused a spike in job claimant numbers, which has been slow to reduce despite industry demand.</p> <p>Source: Nomis</p>	<p><b>2/What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UC conditionality has not been enforced.</li> <li>• Reduced engagement with claimants.</li> <li>• Disconnects in the labour market.</li> <li>• Covid-19 causing people to re-evaluate priorities.</li> </ul> <p><b>3/ What can be done?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce Universal Credit conditionality requirements.</li> <li>• Sector focused employability academies to re-engage people in work.</li> <li>• HGV academies to upskill.</li> <li>• Sectoral specific deep-dive reviews.</li> <li>• Development of improved access to careers and employability information.</li> </ul> <p><b>4/ How do we measure success?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in # job claimants</li> <li>• Improvement in Employment rate.</li> <li>• Improvement in economic inactivity rates (excluding students).</li> </ul>
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4.4.2. Turning the curve on: Economic Inactivity

<p><b>1/ Understanding the baseline.</b>                  Covid-19 caused a spike in economic inactivity, interrupting a previous trend of continuous improvement.</p>  <p>The graph shows economic inactivity levels starting at approximately 23.9% in 2016, dipping to 23.2% in 2017, rising to 23.5% in 2018, falling to 22.4% in 2019, and spiking to 23.4% in 2020. A blue line with an arrow indicates a projected path for Y1, Y2, and Y3, which is slightly lower than the 2020 level. A green arrow points downwards from the 2020 data point, indicating a target for improvement.</p>	<p><b>2/What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 has caused:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An impact on quality of life – increased stress, anxiety, long-covid, and other health issues.</li> <li>• increases in caring responsibilities (shielding, home school).</li> <li>• people to re-evaluate life priorities possibly encouraging retirements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>3/ What can be done?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector focused employability academies to encourage people to return to work.</li> </ul> <p><b>4/ How do we measure success?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement in economic inactivity rates (excluding students).</li> </ul>
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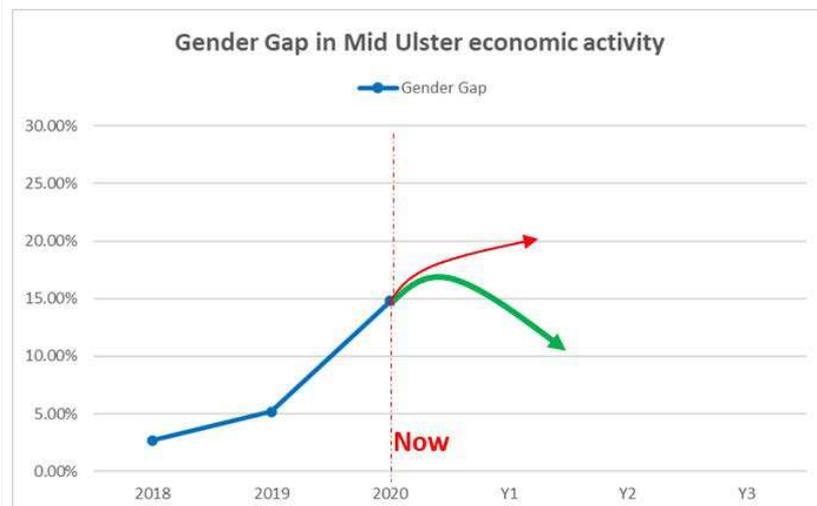
4.4.3. Turning the curve on: The Disability Employment Gap

<p><b>1/ Understanding the baseline.</b>                  Mid Ulster has the highest disability employment gap of any Council region in Northern Ireland.</p>  <p>The graph compares the Disability Employment Gap for NI (blue line) and MUDC (orange line). NI's gap fluctuates between 41 and 45, while MUDC's gap is consistently higher, around 50. A vertical dashed line at 2020 is labeled 'Now'. A green arrow points downwards from the 2020 data point for MUDC, indicating a target for improvement.</p>	<p><b>2/What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 has caused an impact on quality of life – increased stress, anxiety, long-covid, and other health issues.</li> <li>• Underlying employability issues for those individuals with long-term life-long health needs.</li> <li>• Employer misperceptions and a poor understanding of available support mechanisms.</li> </ul> <p><b>3/ What can be done?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage employers on an employer-led disability employment programme.</li> <li>• Engage sectoral expertise to educate employers on the existing supports available to business.</li> <li>• Develop case studies and promote improved employer action to deliver a more equal society and help those in need.</li> </ul> <p><b>4/ How do we measure success?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the disability employment gap.</li> <li>• Increased number of jobs held by individuals with long-term/life-long health needs.</li> </ul>
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#### 4.4.4. Turning the curve on: The Economic Inactivity Gender Gap

##### 1/ Understanding the baseline.

Mid Ulster has a growing gender gap in economic activity, which has reached 15%, having spiked by 10% - a 200% increase during the Covid-19 pandemic.



##### 2/What factors are causing the problem?

- Covid-19 has caused an increase in caring responsibilities (shielding, home school).
- This may have led to a disproportionate impact on female economic activity - unequal distribution of caring responsibilities across genders.

##### 3/ What can be done?

- Sector focused employability academies to encourage women to reskill and return to work.
- Female focused employability programmes.
- Female entrepreneurship programmes.
- Improved access to childcare.

##### 4/ How do we measure success?

- Improvement in female economic activity levels leading to a reduction in the gender gap.

#### 4.5. Developing a feasible 2023 action plan

84. In developing the 2023 action plan, the Mid Ulster LMP acknowledges the need to focus on the delivery of a discrete number of high-priority initiatives that are realistic and achievable in an inaugural year in which resources need to be appointed to new posts, and the LMP governance structures and sub-groups have to form and develop effective working relationships.
85. In this context, not all initiatives identified in the course of the strategic review have been taken through into the 2023 action plan, and a number of ideas will be reserved for the development of future action plans.

## 5. Mid Ulster LMP 2023 action plan

### 5.1. Alignment to strategic priorities

86. The Mid Ulster LMP action plan has been designed to align with the Strategic Priorities (SPs) defined by DfC in the development of the LMP programme, namely:
- **Strategic Priority 1** – To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area - actions & associated costs relating to the formation and administration of the LMP, and its ability to determine future labour market needs;
  - **Strategic Priority 2** – To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally - Local initiatives to “turn the curve” and address specific points of need as identified in this strategic review; and
  - **Strategic Priority 3** – To support delivery of Employability NI - actions that can support the more effective delivery of Employability NI e.g., promotion and referral to existing regional initiatives.
87. A range of indicators have been selected to assess delivery under each of these strategic priorities.

### 5.2. Baseline information

88. The Mid Ulster LMP will impact on the following set of indicators from the baseline position stated below.

Strategic Priorities	Indicators to which Local LMP makes a contribution (Source)	2021/22 Baseline
<b>Strategic Priority 1:</b>  To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area	Form local multi-agency partnership comprised of members from relevant stakeholders.	100% (LMP).
	Ensure effective attendance of the LMP members.	0%. Target: 80% (LMP).
	Development and effective delivery of local LMP Interim Action Plan to meet priority needs, by reviewing available statistical information and engaging key stakeholders.	0%. Target: 100% (LMP).
	Facilitated main partnership meetings and sub-group meetings.	4 LMP meetings. 0 sub-groups. Target: 6 main meetings; 3 subgroup meetings.
	LMP returns submitted on time and in order to DfC.	0%. Target: 100% (LMP).
	Recruit staff to manage the LMP.	0%. Target: 100% (LMP).

Strategic Priorities	Indicators to which Local LMP makes a contribution (Source)	2021/22 Baseline
	Secure standardised regional statistical reporting to assess and measure the outcomes and impact of the LMP (UUEPC).	0. Target: Bi-annual reporting.
<b>Strategic Priority 2:</b>  To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally	Increased Employment.	75.3% employed. 59,681 employee jobs. 2,305 claimants.
	Reduce Economic Inactivity.	23.4%.
	Increase Workforce Diversification.	50.1% Disability Employment Gap. 14.8% gender gap. 68.9% female economic activity.
	Increase uptake of employability / skills training programmes in manufacturing, agri-food, construction, health & social care, and hospitality.	Baseline: 0. Target: 230 participants engaged in LMP programmes.
<b>Strategic Priority 3:</b>  To support delivery of Employability NI	Promotion of regional projects/initiatives and building confidence through locally based engagement.	No baseline. Target: 1 register of projects / initiatives developed and locally promoted. 100% LMP members better informed.
	Contribute to development of regional projects/initiatives.	No baseline. # of Mid Ulster initiatives adopted regionally.
	Contribute to public facing events and supporting effective engagement.	No baseline. Target: 1 job & careers fair. 300 careers fair participants.

## 6. Action Plan

Strategic Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area							
<b>Indicators:</b> # LMP meetings (LMP). % LMP attendance (LMP). % LMP members with increased awareness of local employability and labour market issues (LMP). % LMP members who feel supported in their role (LMP).							
Theme	Aim & Description	Key Activities	Start	End	Resource or cost	Performance Measures	Reporting Quarter
LMP delivery	Effective delivery of the LMP action plan through the formation of the LMP, and the sub-groups to oversee the 2023 action plan.	<p><b>SPI.1:</b> Regular LMP meetings scheduled, and sub-structures defined with clear Terms of Reference.</p> <p><b>SPI.2:</b> Management and administrative resource appointed by the Council.</p> <p><b>SPI.3:</b> Invest in standardised regional statistical reporting to monitor LMP impact (UUEPC datasets).</p> <p><b>SPI.4:</b> Undertake a construction sector employability and skills review.</p> <p><b>SPI.5:</b> Publish the LMP action plan.</p> <p><b>SPI.6:</b> PR &amp; Marketing activity to promote the LMP, launch initiatives, and celebrate key achievements via digital and non-digital channels.</p> <p><b>SPI.7:</b> Annual employers survey as a local monitor of skills and labour demand.</p> <p><b>SPI.8:</b> Annual survey of the LMP members to assess knowledge and satisfaction levels.</p> <p><b>SPI.9:</b> Review the 2023 plan, &amp; forward plan 2024-2026.</p>	April 2022	Mar 2023	<p><b>Staff Resource + SPI.1:</b> £2,000 venue &amp; catering costs.</p> <p><b>SPI.3:</b> £10,000 UUEPC costs.</p> <p><b>SPI.4:</b> £15,000 Ext. consulting.</p> <p><b>SPI.5:</b> £1,700 publication costs.</p> <p><b>SPI.6:</b> £5,000 Marketing &amp; PR.</p> <p><b>SPI.7:</b> £10,000 Ext. consulting.</p> <p><b>SPI.9:</b> £15,000 Ext. consulting.</p>	<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 x LMP meetings.</li> <li>• 3 x sub-group meetings.</li> <li>• 1 x published 2023 plan.</li> <li>• 1 x Sector skills review.</li> <li>• 1 employer skill survey.</li> <li>• 1 LMP annual review.</li> <li>• 1 x 3-year plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>How well did we do it?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80% attendance at LMP meetings.</li> <li>• Bi-annual reporting on regional employability and economic statistics.</li> <li>• Annual skills demand forecast.</li> </ul> <p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% LMP members better informed.</li> <li>• 100% education sector informed on skills need.</li> <li>• 6 construction firms - skills needs mapped.</li> <li>• 100% LMP members feel supported in role.</li> </ul>	1,2,3,4
Skills demand planning	Ensure the LMP is the single regional structure responsible for coordinating all employability and labour market initiatives in Mid Ulster.						
PR	<p>Undertake a construction sector specific review to identify and inform current and future employability and skills supply v employer demand to which future employability initiatives can be targeted.</p> <p>An annual survey of employers will be undertaken to understand and inform education partners on skills demand, vacancies &amp; future expected growth.</p> <p>Increase public knowledge of the LMP through comprehensive and robust PR and Marketing campaigns (via both digital and non-digital platforms).</p>						
Future LMP plan	Review end of year progress & develop a new 3-year plan.						

**Strategic Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally**

**Indicators:** % Working age residents employed; % disability employment gap.  
 # Of employee jobs; # of job benefit claimants.  
 % Economic activity; % by gender; % gender gap.  
 # Of participants engaged in LMP programmes.

Theme	Aim & Description	Key Activities	Start	End	Resource or cost	Performance Measures	Reporting Quarter
<p>Address the People Crisis</p> <p>Improve diversity &amp; inclusivity</p> <p>Improve employability</p>	<p>Target a swift reduction in the number of job claimants and unemployed through sector focused employability academies to re-engage people in work.</p> <p>Address the chronic skills shortage in HGV drivers by investing in skills development.</p> <p>Improve diversity and inclusivity through targeted interventions to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The disability employment gap – invest in an employer-led employability programme that aims to improve employer understanding of special needs and the support services available. Case studies will celebrate success.</li> <li>The gender gap in economic activity, by targeted marketing of the sectoral academies, and investing in NICMA-approved childcare training to increase the provision of affordable child care.</li> </ul> <p>Improve employability outcomes by investing in technologies that help JBOs, Careers Service, Education providers and industry access Industry maintained careers and employability information.</p>	<p><b>SP2.1:</b> Appoint a Project Officer to support employer engagement and LMP programme delivery.</p> <p><b>SP2.2:</b> sector-focused Employability Academies co-designed between Industry and FE: manufacturing (4); Construction (2); Agri-food (2); H&amp;SC (2); and Hospitality (2).</p> <p><b>SP2.3:</b> HGV academy - support industry supply chains by addressing HGV driver shortages (Category C &amp; E).</p> <p><b>SP2.4:</b> Employer-led Disability Inclusion programme pilot to increase the number of disabled people in paid employment.</p> <p><b>SP2.5:</b> NICMA approved Childminding basic training academy.</p> <p><b>SP2.6:</b> Mid Ulster Careers &amp; Employability Portal as a key shared resource to resolve the disconnects in the labour market.</p>	04/22	03/23	<p><b>Staff Resource + SP2.1:</b> £40,000 council delivery resource.</p> <p><b>SP2.2:</b> £130,000 delivery partner(s) costs.</p> <p><b>SP2.3:</b> £0 - DfE funded.</p> <p><b>SP2.4:</b> £30,000 delivery partner costs.</p> <p><b>SP2.5:</b> £18,500 delivery partner costs.</p> <p><b>SP2.6:</b> £80,000 (£20k design £35k build £15k digital content for 3 sectors. £10k online launch event.)</p>	<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 delivery officer appt.</li> <li>12 x 4-week sectoral academies.</li> <li>1 HGV academy delivered.</li> <li>1 industry-led disability employment programme</li> <li>1 childminding academy</li> <li>1 online portal.</li> </ul> <p><b>How well did we do it?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% delivery of the planned interventions.</li> <li>60% academy success into job vacancies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>180 academy students - 108 into paid jobs.</li> <li>15 HGV drivers trained.</li> <li>15 disability persons into paid work.</li> <li>20 childminders trained.</li> <li>23 post primary schools, 3 FE colleges &amp; 3 JBOs better engaged with 3 industry sectors.</li> </ul>	3,4

**Strategic Priority 3: To support delivery of Employability NI**

**Indicators:** # of registers of projects & initiatives promoted locally.  
 # LMP members better informed of programmes.  
 # LMP referrals to regional programmes & # participants on regional programmes (Apprenticeships NI, WEP, Access to Work, Workable NI etc).  
 # of LMP initiatives adopted regionally.  
 # of LMP promotion events and # of participants.

Theme	Aim & Description	Key Activities	Start	End	Resource or cost	Performance Measures	Reporting Quarter
Build understanding & promote uptake of existing schemes.	<p>Mid Ulster LMPs strategic review and stakeholder engagement exercise has evidenced that industry awareness of Employability NI and available support schemes is low.</p> <p>The LMP should build &amp; maintain a register of all regional and local employability and skills delivery organisations and initiatives to provide stakeholders with a complete understanding of the existing support landscape.</p> <p>Promote the programmes and support / encourage employers and participants to access and implement the schemes – for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprenticeships NI.</li> <li>• Access to Work.</li> <li>• Workable NI.</li> <li>• Work Experience Programme.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SP3.1:</b> Map all existing employability and skills interventions available to MUDC employers.</p> <p>Define the purpose, scope, support offer, eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Nominated subgroup stakeholders to maintain the register on a quarterly basis.</p> <p><b>SP3.2:</b> Improve employer &amp; participant knowledge and access to existing employability and skills services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publishing the register on the MUDC website.</li> <li>• Host a jobs &amp; careers fair to include Employability NI promotion.</li> </ul>	04/22	03/23	<p><b>Staff Resource +</b></p> <p><b>SP3.1:</b> £10,000 Ext. consulting.</p> <p><b>SP3.2:</b> £7,500 Job &amp; careers fair.</p>	<p><b>How much did we do?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of existing initiatives mapped.</li> <li>• 1 register of current initiatives developed.</li> <li>• 1 Job &amp; Careers Fair held.</li> </ul> <p><b>How well did we do it?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register updated 3 times in 2023 (quarterly update).</li> <li>• Register made available to stakeholders via MUDC website.</li> <li>• 80% of careers fair attendees satisfied.</li> </ul> <p><b>Is anyone better off?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of attending LMP members have a better understanding of existing support initiatives.</li> <li>• 100% of MUDC employers and key stakeholders able to access signposts towards Employability NI and other interventions.</li> <li>• 300 job fair participants with improved knowledge of employers &amp; schemes. 30 jobs filled.</li> </ul>	

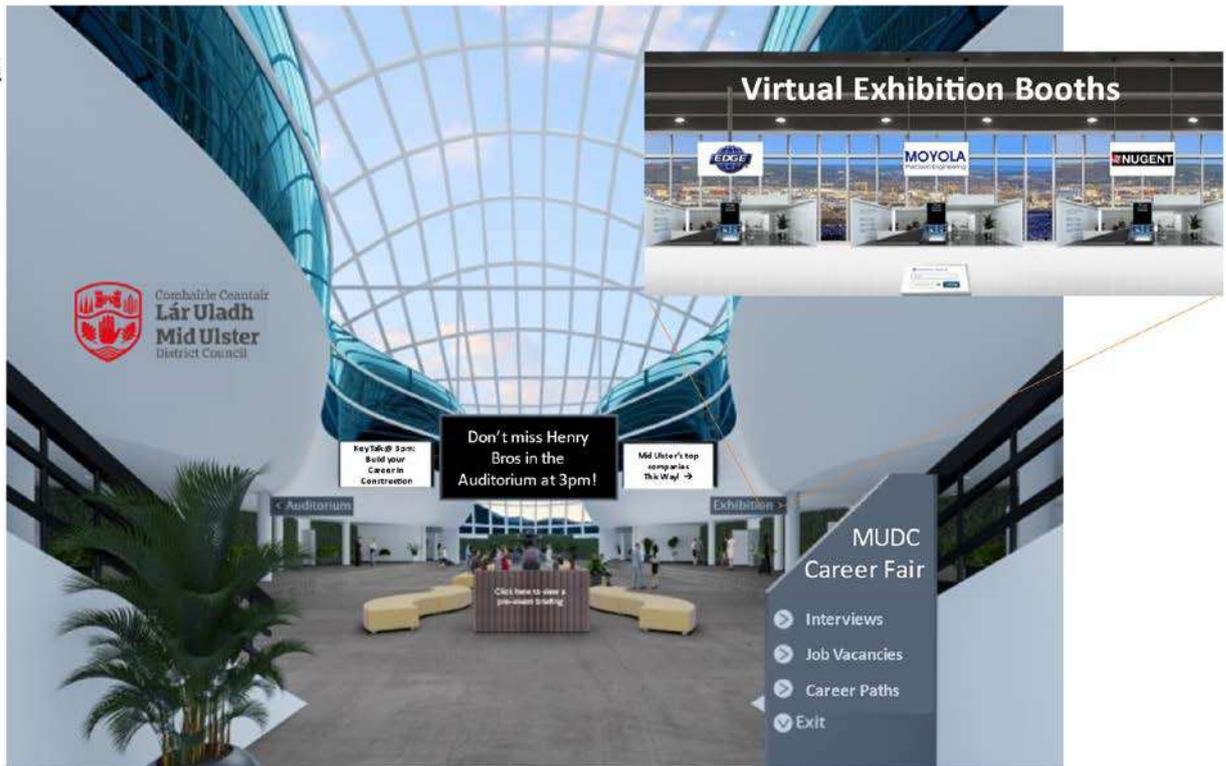
## 7. Budget

89. The proposed budget for Mid Ulster LMP's 2023 employability action plan is set out in the table below.

<b>Total Administration</b> e.g. Staff costs, running costs, mileage, printing and stationery	<b>£93,675</b>
<b>Strategic Priority 1 - Form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership</b>	
SP1.2: Venue, Catering & LMP sundry costs.	£2,000
SP1.3: Procure UUEPC statistical datasets to support the LMP.	£10,000
SP1.4: Construction Sector Skills Scoping Study.	£15,000
SP1.5: Improve awareness of LMP - publish LMP action plan.	£1,700
SP1.6: Promotion of LMP - PR, Marketing & Engagement.	£5,000
SP1.7: Annual employer labour and skills demand forecast.	£10,000
SP1.9: Review 2023 progress and create 3 year forward plan (2024 - 2026).	£15,000
<b>Strategic Priority 2 - To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally</b>	
SP2.1: LMP Project Delivery Officer.	£40,000
SP2.2: Employment academies to address post-covid industry needs.	£130,000
SP2,3: HGV academy. <i>*DfE funded project</i>	£0
SP2.4: Employer-led Disability Inclusion Programme pilot.	£30,000
SP2.5: Child minder training academy.	£18,500
SP:2.6 Mid Ulster Employment and Careers Portal (£80k).	£80,000
<b>Strategic Priority 3 - To support delivery of Employability NI</b>	
SP3.1: Map & maintain register of all current employability initiatives.	£10,000
SP3.2: Job & Careers Fair.	£7,500
<b>Total Operational</b>	<b>£374,700</b>
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>£468,375</b>

## 8. Appendix One: Employability and careers portal concept

Employability & Careers Portal Concept



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Mid Ulster District Council  
Council Offices  
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BT71 6DT

Work & Wellbeing Division  
Department for Communities  
Design Centre  
39 Corporation Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3BA  
Email: LMP@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: LMP/ENI/10/21

Date: 01 February 2022

Dear Chief Executive,

**LOCAL LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP (LMP) FUNDING 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2022 – LETTER OF OFFER**

The Department for Communities is pleased to offer funding of £50,471.40 to Mid Ulster District Council for the costs associated with the local LMP for the period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The funding offer is for the total administration and set-up costs which is detailed in the attached budget schedule. The Council will be liable for any costs incurred not approved by the Department for Communities.

Specific conditions of the offer:

1. The funding provided is to be used solely for running the LMP.
2. This offer is governed by the conditions for LMPs funding as detailed in the LMP Financial Guidelines.
3. This offer is conditional on acceptance of and adherence to the terms and conditions contained in the LMP Funding Agreement.

## **Acceptance**

Please complete the enclosed letter of acceptance with a copy of the budget attached within 4 weeks from the date on letter of Offer, and return it to:

Secretariat to Labour Market Partnerships  
Work and Wellbeing Division  
Department for Communities  
Design Centre  
39 Corporation Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3BA

Additionally an electronic copy can be sent via email to [LMP@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:LMP@communities-ni.gov.uk).

The Department for Communities requires acceptance prior to authorising the LMP first quarter grant claim.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conrad McConnell". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Conrad McConnell

**Director**

<b>LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE</b>
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Secretariat to Labour Market Partnerships  
Work and Wellbeing Division  
Department for Communities  
Design Centre  
39 Corporation Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3BA

Date .....

**LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE OF LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP (LMP) FUNDING 1  
APRIL 2021 TO 31 MARCH 2022**

**Mid Ulster District Council**

This Council agrees the funding offer from the Department for Communities of £50,471.40 for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 to set up and administer the LMP in this Council, in line with the funding criteria.

The funding will be wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the set-up and administration of the LMP as detailed in the budget schedule. The Council accept and agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions of the LMP Financial Guidelines and Funding Agreement.

**Statement of Financial arrangements and control environment**

I confirm the Council:

- has sound financial procedures and controls in place to govern the activities and expenditure of the LMP;
- will ensure all relevant documentation is retained to support all LMP expenditure claims;
- has arrangements in place to satisfy the requirement for providing assurance on the probity and proper use of funds;
- has effective Corporate Governance, Risk Management and operating policies referred to in the Financial Guidelines in place for the LMP; and
- will allow reasonable access to Council records relating to LMP transactions.

Signed.....

Date .....

Chief Executive, on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council

**BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS**

DfC Reference No: LMP/ENI/10/21

Applicant Mid Ulster District Council

Amount of Funding £50,471.40

Period of Funding 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Please complete Bank details below:

Name of Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Account: \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Bank Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed by (Chief Executive)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Block Capitals)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIPS -  
DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMY  
CONTRIBUTION FOR PILOT TO  
DEVELOP REGIONAL SKILLS  
ECOSYSTEM**

**MID ULSTER COUNCIL**

**Letter of Offer**

**January 2022**

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## **AGREEMENT**

### **1. Parties**

- (a) The DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY, and herein after called the “Department”; and
- (b) Mid Ulster Council and hereinafter known as the “Organisation”

### **2. Details of the Programme**

- 2.1 The total funding allocation for the Organisation for financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 is:

**£50,000**

- 2.2 The Department will fund the organisation to undertake the following objectives, with more information available at **Annex A**:

- 1. To conduct an assessment of skills provision in local area;**
- 2. To provide regular updates on skills gaps and issues at a local level; and**
- 3. To contribute to a Northern Ireland wide target to support 500 individuals to upskill or reskill into economically viable areas.**

- 2.3 The overarching objective of this intervention is for the development of a regional skills ecosystem, which can contribute to the implementation of the new Northern Ireland Skills Council.

- 2.4 These costs cover both administrative and operational costs incurred by the council in meeting the objectives outlined in sections 2.2.

2.5 This contribution has been made in addition to any contributions from the Department for Communities, with reporting through the Labour Market Partnership structures, primarily the Employability NI Programme Board.

### **3. Duration of Agreement**

3.1 This Agreement covers the period from date of signature to 31 March 2023, unless otherwise determined in accordance with this Agreement.

### **4. Organisation's Status**

4.1 In carrying out its obligations under this Agreement, the organisation is not acting as the agent of the Department. In other respects, the Organisation shall enter into Agreement with third parties as principal and not as agent of the Department and accordingly, shall not do or say anything that might lead any person to believe that the Organisation is acting as agent of the Department.

4.2 Nothing in this Agreement shall render the Department liable to indemnify the Organisation in respect of any liability of any kind incurred by them, but this disclaimer shall not be taken to exclude or limit any liability of the Department to the Organisation that may arise, by virtue of a breach of this Agreement by the Department, or any negligent act or omission on the part of the Department, its staff, or agents.

### **5. Organisation's Obligations**

5.1 The Organisation shall carry out the programme in accordance with the provisions of **Annex A**. The Annexes to this Agreement shall be deemed to be incorporated in and form part of this Agreement.

- 5.2 The Organisation will continue to comply with all obligations and implement the provisions of all enactments, regulations, statutory provisions and working rules related to legislation as it pertains in Northern Ireland, in line with the broader conditions relevant to the establishment of the Labour Market Partnership.
- 5.3 Funding should be solely utilised for the purpose of meeting the objectives set out in section 2.2/Annex A. If the organisation is unable to meet these objectives, then the Department should be notified immediately.
- 5.4 Any organisation appointed to provide services on its behalf of the council and Labour Market Partnership to deliver against the objectives as set out, must be verified to ensure it has the capacity to deliver and has sufficient internal procedures to ensure all due propriety.

## **6. Observance of Legal Requirements**

- 6.1 The Organisation shall not do or permit anything to be done which might cause a breach or infringement of the laws and regulations of Northern Ireland in the performance of this Agreement.
- 6.2 Without prejudice to Paragraph 6.1 in carrying out this Agreement, the Organisation shall comply with all applicable fair employment, equality of treatment and anti-discrimination legislation, including, in particular, the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and 1988, the Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, the Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 2004, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006 and the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and shall use its best endeavours to

ensure that in its employment policies and practices and in the delivery of the services required of the Organisation under this agreement, it has due regard to the need to promote equality of treatment and opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious beliefs or political opinions;
- Men and women or married and unmarried persons;
- Persons with and without dependants (including women who are pregnant or on maternity leave and men on paternity leave);
- Persons of different racial groups (within the meaning of the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997);
- Persons with and without a disability (within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995);
- Persons of different ages; and
- Persons of differing sexual orientation.

6.3 The Organisation shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the observance of the provisions of the above Paragraph 6.2 by all servants, agents, employees, consultants and sub-contractors of the Organisation.

6.4 Where any of the Organisation's obligations under this Agreement are carried out by sub-Contractors, the Organisation shall take reasonable steps to ensure that in carrying out those obligations the sub-Contractors comply with the provisions of Paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2.

6.5 This Agreement shall in all respects be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Northern Ireland and the parties hereby agree that the Courts of Northern Ireland shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine any disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement.

- 6.6 The Organisation shall not, without the prior consent in writing of the Department, assign or transfer this Agreement or any part, share or interest in it.
- 6.7 The Organisation shall, with regard to personal data collected in arranging and managing the courses, be expected to adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## **7. DfE Contact**

- 7.1 Skills Division shall act, on behalf of the Department, to oversee the programme. Therefore any queries should be addressed to the mailbox at [flexibleskills@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:flexibleskills@economy-ni.gov.uk)

## **8. Review and Contract**

- 8.1 The Organisation shall obtain the Department's written consent to any proposed changes to each of the Programmes (including but not limited to start/end dates of the Programme, individual activities and associated costs).

## **9. Confidentiality**

- 9.1 This Agreement and the terms and conditions contained therein shall be treated as confidential by the Organisation and should not be disclosed to any other person without the prior consent of the Department. The Department will not disclose any information relating to this Agreement, unless it is legally obliged to do so in order to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or any other legal obligation.

## **10. Corrupt Gifts or Payments**

- 10.1 The Organisation shall not offer or give, or agree to give, to any person any gift or consideration of any kind as any inducement or reward for doing or refraining from doing, or having done or refrained from doing, any act in relation to the obtaining or execution of this or any other Agreement for Her Majesty's Service or for showing or refraining from showing any favour or disfavour to any person in relation to this or any such Agreement.

## **11. Funding and Accountability**

- 11.1 It should be noted that the Eligible Expenditure under this agreement, as set out in **Annex A**, is for the full allocation.
- 11.2 For the purpose of securing the funding the Organisation will invoice the Department before the end of April 2022.

## **12. Funding Review**

- 12.1 In respect of funding, if, at any time, the Organisation considers that it will be unable to spend any or all of the funding allocated, or identifies a possible overspend, it should declare this to the Department at the earliest possible date.
- 12.2 If at any stage during the course it is deemed that the planned outcomes are unlikely to be achieved, the Department has the right to reconsider the level of funding in line with the revised outcomes, e.g. on an apportionment basis. In this event, the Department will consult the Organisation prior to finalising any amendments.

## **13. Breach**

- 13.1 Either party may terminate this Agreement with immediate effect in the event of a material breach of any of its terms by the other party. Such termination shall not affect any rights which the party terminating the Agreement may have against the other party in consequence of the breach.
- 13.2 In the event of a breach of any term of this Agreement the party not in any breach may, as an alternative to immediate termination, serve a notice on the party in breach requiring the breach to be remedied (if capable of remedy) within a period specified in the notice, not being later than three months. If the breach has not been remedied before the expiry of the specified period, the party not in breach may then terminate the Agreement under Paragraph 14.1.

#### **14. Default**

- 14.1 If at any time during this Agreement the Organisation is in breach of any of its obligations contained in this letter the Department shall be under no obligation to make any payment or further payment to funding and the Organisation shall, on demand, repay to the Department the full amount of the funding or such proportion thereof as the Department may at its discretion determine.

#### **15. Accounts and Inspection**

- 15.1 The Organisation shall maintain separate accounts for these courses. These accounts shall be retained for at least 7 years from the end of the financial year in which the last payment was made under this Agreement.
- 15.2 The Organisation shall permit duly authorised staff or agents of the Department or the Northern Ireland Audit Office to examine the accounts and other records at any reasonable time and shall furnish suitable oral or written explanation(s) if required. The Department reserves the right to have such

staff or agents carry out the examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the Organisation has used the Department resources in the performance of this Agreement. The Organisation shall have regard to the need for economy in all expenditure.

## **16. Force Majeure**

16.1 Notwithstanding anything that is contained in this Agreement, neither party shall be liable for delay or failure to perform any obligation under the Agreement in so far as the performance of such obligation is prevented by an industrial dispute or by any other causes which are beyond the reasonable control of the affected party.

Signed: 

Name (CAPITALS): RAYMOND KELLY

TITLE: Skills Initiative Branch

(On behalf of the Department for the Economy)

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**FORM OF ACCEPTANCE:**

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE OF LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP FUNDING FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY 01 JANUARY 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023

MID ULSTER COUNCIL

This Council agrees the funding offer from the Department for the Economy of £50,000 for the period 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2023 to deliver the skills related objectives set out in section 2.2 of the letter of offer, under the auspices of the labour market partnership established.

The funding will be wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the set-up and achievement of those objectives, and the Council accept and agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions of the Letter of Offer

I confirm the Council:

- has sound financial procedures and controls in place to govern the activities and expenditure related to the skills element of the LMP;
- has arrangements in place to satisfy the requirement for providing assurance on the probity and proper use of funds;
- has effective Corporate Governance, Risk Management and operating policies referred to in the Financial Guidelines in place for the LMP; and
- will allow reasonable access to Council records relating to LMP transactions pertaining to skills.

Signed.....

Date .....

Chief Executive, on behalf of Mid Ulster Council

Signed:

Name: (CAPITALS)

Position:

Date:

Signed:

## ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

- I am pleased to advise that the Department is prepared to offer the following contribution to the Organisation's Labour Market Partnership, supporting the development of a regional skills ecosystem:

**£50,000**

- This funding will be used to achieve the following objectives:

#	Objective	Specific actions to achieve objective	How will the customer be better off? (i.e. Outcomes)
1.	To conduct an assessment of skills provision in local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identification of council specific skills interventions</li> <li>ii. Overlaps with other governmental programmes</li> <li>iii. Identification of gaps and areas for growth</li> </ul>	<p>With multiple departments, agencies and local government offering skills solutions, a degree of duplication has occurred.</p> <p>Councils will conduct a review of all provision, and seek to maximise use of NI wide programmes, in order to better focus on local solutions to specific skills problems, saving resource by reducing duplication, and addressing real time issues with local skills interventions.</p> <p>Outcome: a more efficient skills system that offers localised solutions</p>
2.	To provide regular updates on skills gaps and issues at a local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Quarterly returns from each LMP setting out skills issues raised by employers and other stakeholders</li> <li>ii. Annual review and assessment of skills gaps</li> </ul>	<p>Granular skills data at a local level has been difficult to achieve. LMPs will work with their employers and other stakeholders to identify skills gaps and issues, for DfE to utilise as part of its Northern Ireland wide planning.</p> <p>Customers will benefit from an evidence based identification of skills gaps and an appropriate Departmental proactive and flexible response to meet these gaps</p> <p>Outcome: greater evidence base on localised skills needs.</p>
3.	To contribute to a Northern Ireland wide target to support 500 individuals to upskill or reskill into economically viable areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identify skills gaps, where no or insufficient provision exists</li> <li>ii. Work with DfE and delivery partners to develop solution</li> </ul>	<p>While DfE, DfC and other agencies provide a wide range of skills solutions, councils can, and will, be placed to respond to local bespoke needs.</p> <p>By achieving this outcome, 500 individuals will receive upskilling support to train in areas that are economically viable for their local area.</p> <p>Outcome: a more skilled workforce.</p>

**CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY**

The Organisation will deliver this programme in line with the Department's Declaration of Customer Service Policy:

1. This statement formally acknowledges that the quality we provide is of the highest priority to all Department staff. Through effective teamwork and maximum co-operation between all our staff we seek to maximise the benefits to the community from the services we offer.
2. The Department is committed to ensuring that all services are made as accessible as possible to all who seek to use them.
3. Department staff are committed to assisting customers and clients and to demonstrating that they care about their needs.
4. Department staff will provide a competent, helpful and friendly service to the highest professional standards.
5. At all times Department staff will seek to demonstrate a flexible responsive attitude to all customers and clients.
6. This policy will apply to customers inside and outside the Department.
7. The Department is committed to deliver and manage all its services and programmes in a way which is consistent with the policy of the Department for the Economy to promote equality of opportunity:
  - Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;

- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Department for the Economy is committed to delivering a quality service to its customers and to this end a customer complaints process has been put in place which is available at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/dfc-complaints-procedure>