

Mid Ulster District Council
Draft Equality Action Plan (Pre Consultation)
(2021-2026)

This information can be made available in alternative formats, such as audio, braille, easy read or large print and may be provided in alternative languages, upon request. Please contact Mid Ulster District Council's Corporate Policy & Equality Officer on 03000 132 132 Ex 24612 or via ann.mcaleer@midulstercouncil.org

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1. Introduction

Mid Ulster District Council is required to comply with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act). The act relates specifically to two statutory duties set out below:

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

2. The Community Plan- A 10 Year Action Plan for Mid Ulster

The Community Plan has identified the following themes and associated outcomes:

- **Economic Growth**
 - We prosper in a stronger and competitive economy
 - We have more people working in a diverse economy
 - Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive
- **Infrastructure**
 - We are better connected through appropriate infrastructure
 - We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children
 - We enjoy increased access to affordable quality housing
- **Education and Skills**
 - Our people are better qualified and more skilled
 - We give our children and young people the best chance in life
 - We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative
- **Health & Wellbeing**
 - We are better enabled to live longer healthier and more active lives
 - We have availability to the right service, in the right place at the right time
 - We care more for those most vulnerable and in need
- **Vibrant & Safe Communities**
 - We are a safer community
 - We have a greater value and respect for diversity
 - We have fewer people living in poverty and fewer areas of disadvantage

The **vision** set out in the Community Plan is:

‘Mid Ulster...a welcoming place where our people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where our economy is thriving; our environment and heritage are sustained; and where our public service excel’.

3. Corporate Vision and Values

Mid Ulster District Council have also agreed a Corporate Plan 2020-2024. The plan sets out Council’s priorities for the four year period it covers. When Mid Ulster District Council was formed in April 2015, the Council agreed that its vision was to aspire to be ‘at the heart of our community’. This vision continues to strongly represent the ethos and ambition of Mid Ulster District Council.

This vision is underpinned by the following **values**:

- Citizen and customer-focussed *Designing and delivering our services in response to and around the needs of our customers and within our resources.*
- Innovative *New and better ways of doing what we do.*
- Excellence *Striving to excel in every aspect of our work, being accountable for and delivering the best, value for money services.*
- Trustworthy *Working for our communities in a spirit of friendliness and openness by delivering fair, transparent, equitable and ethical services to all customers.*
- Respect ***Treating** each other, our customers and our stakeholders in the same considerate way that we wish to be treated ourselves.*
- Inclusive *Creating a culture which values, supports and celebrates diversity to the benefit of the organisation and the people we serve.*

The Corporate Plan has identified five themes:

Our 5 Corporate Plan themes:

Theme 1: Leadership

Theme 2: Service Delivery

Theme 3: Economy

Theme 4: Environment

Theme 5: Communities

These guiding principles are the cornerstones of our action plans, policies and strategies.

The Corporate Plan also commits to:

- addressing rurality
- promoting equality of opportunity and good relations
- continuously improving our services
- designing and delivering our services sustainably
- working collaboratively across the public, private, community and voluntary sector to achieve shared objectives.

4. Purpose

This Equality Action Plan (2021-2026) contributes to Mid Ulster District Council's compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Equality Action plan ('The Plan') outlines how Council will address the key inequalities identified within our District. The Plan has been informed by an Audit of Inequalities carried out in 2020. Themes identified for inclusion in The Plan from the Audit of Inequalities included the following:

- Accessibility of Council Services, Facilities and Events
- Corporate practices
- Participation levels
- Partnership working

These themes remain consistent with the themes identified in the previous Equality Action Plan which was updated in 2017. Council is working to implement its Equality Scheme and to ensure that there are equitable opportunities provided as a direct result of its implementation. This draft Equality Action Plan is designed to support Council to meet its equality requirements and the full implementation of Council's Equality Scheme.

5. Action Plan

The table below sets out how the four themes identified by the Audit of Inequalities and how Council will deliver to address each area. Each theme can be addressed in an item by item basis by what the desired of each action will be, how performance will be monitored and who has responsibility for its implementation. A timeframe for its implementation is also included:

Action No.	Theme 1: Accessibility of Council Services, Facilities and Events	Key Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of alternative formats • Accessibility of Buildings for People with Dependents • Accessibility of Events for People with Dependents 		
		Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe
1a	Improved accessibility of Council information in alternative formats	Ease of accessibility of information	Increase in the number of alternative formats requested and provided	Chief Executive and Directors	2021-2022
1b	Increased accessibility at Council facilities for parents and carers	Accessible and user friendly spaces created for parents and carers within Council facilities	Provision of quiet areas within buildings, baby changing to be installed where it is currently unavailable, family friendly parking spaces	Chief Executive and Directors	2022
1c	Staff Training	Improved awareness. Reduced number of complaints	No. of staff provided with awareness training	Chief Executive and Directors	2021 and thereafter
1d	Elected Members training	Improved awareness and informed decision making	No. of sessions held and No. of participants	Chief Executive and Directors	2021 and thereafter

Action No.	Theme 2: Corporate Practices	Key Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are opportunities within corporate practices to mainstream improvement of inequalities and track improvement of inequalities 		
		Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe
2a	Any gaps in monitoring information identified	More robust monitoring arrangements	Monitoring reports examined/reviewed on an annual basis	Chief Executive and Directors	2021-2022
2b	Inclusive delivery of the Corporate Plan	Adherence to the commitment to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.	Policy developed and approved by Council for implementation	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer/ Head of Marketing and Communication	2021-2025
2c	Develop procedural arrangements for translation and interpretation	Clear guidance in relation to translation & interpretive requirements	Procedures developed and approved by Council for implementation	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	2021
2d	Mainstreaming equality of opportunity and Good Relations through service planning and documentation	Improved systems and procedures	No. of Screening Documents completed and examples of mainstreaming developed	Heads of Service and Directors	2021 and thereafter

Action No.	Theme 3: Participation Levels	Key Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The timing and local of events can create participation barriers for carers Older people who are less comfortable and experienced with using online platforms can feel excluded from services that are provided online only 		
		Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe
3a	Explore the timing of events/courses	Create Equality of Opportunity for carers	Samples taken of the timing of various events/guidance developed	Heads of Service	2021 and thereafter
3b	Location of activities	Creates Equality of Opportunity for all locations across the District	Samples taken of the timing of various events/ guidance developed	Heads of Service	2021 and thereafter
3c	Provide a digital first but not digital only approach to service delivery	Older people feel excluded from services that are moved to online	Number of alternatives provided	Directors	2021 and thereafter
3d	Increased skills development opportunities	Opportunity to develop skills set and address any gap in skills	No of carers employed by Council	Director of Organisational Development	2022

Action No.	Theme 4: Partnership Working	Key Inequalities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership working between Council and Community & Voluntary support organisations how place a focus on Health and Wellbeing and Good Relations 		
		Desired Outcome	Performance Indicator	Responsibility	Timeframe
4a	Explore partnership working opportunities that place a focus on Health and Wellbeing of S75 group	Increased opportunities for partnership working between Council and relevant C&V organisations	No. of joint partnership projects being delivered	Heads of Service	2021-2026
4b	Explore partnership working opportunities that place a focus on Good Relations	Increased opportunities for partnership working between Council and relevant C&V organisations	No. of joint partnership projects being delivered	Heads of Service	2021-2026

6. Review and Evaluation

This action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and progress will be monitored and reported upon within Council's annual submission to the Equality Commission.

7. Conclusion

The implementation of this action plan will support the overall implementation of the Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan and the mainstreaming of equality throughout the organisation. This plan will be re-examined as priorities emerge following the commencement of the implementation of our community plan.

Disability Action Plan
for
Mid Ulster District Council
2021-2026

Final Draft (PRE Consultation)

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Approved by SMT for Public Consultation:

MUDF consulted: 15/9/2020

Approved by P&R:

Approved by Council:

Submitted to Equality Commission:

Foreword

To be completed upon approval.

Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Chair

Anthony Tohill
Chief Executive

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the) Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 requires the Council, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need:

- to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and
- to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

These are collectively referred to as ‘the disability duties’.

- 1.2 Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, Mid Ulster District Council is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan showing how it proposes to fulfil these duties in relation to its functions.
- 1.3 The Council is committed to the fulfilment of its disability duties in all parts of its organisation and has set out how it intends to do so in this Plan.

2. The Purpose of the Disability Action Plan

- 2.1 The purpose of this Plan is to set out how Mid Ulster District Council in relation to the delivery of its functions.

3. The Council – its role and functions

- 3.1 The roles and functions of Local Government in Northern Ireland are provided by the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 and other Miscellaneous Acts and Regulations.
- 3.2 As a result of Local Government Reform, the Council has been given a wide range of transferring functions including functions relating to planning, roads, regeneration and community development, economic development and local tourism. Council now also has a leading role the Community Planning implementation process. The Council will facilitate and coordinate a joined up approach to the delivery of key projects and services which will address and improve local issues and challenges identified via the Community Planning development process.

3.3 The Council performs four principal roles within its local area and district:

- Direct service provision in response to community needs and legislative requirements – setting priorities for the area and for the Council and being accountable for the choices made.
- A development role as enabler/facilitator on economic and community development initiatives enabling and empowering local people; setting out the vision for local strategies in partnership with other agencies.
- A representative role on boards such as health and education – championing the district.
- A consultative role on issues such as water, roads and housing, by providing a challenge to the performance of all of the delivery agencies in the district.

3.4 In the performance of the above roles the Council will carry out functions in the following areas:

- Refuse Collection and Disposal
- Recycling and Waste Management
- Civic Amenity Provision
- Grounds Maintenance
- Street Cleansing
- Cemeteries
- Public Conveniences
- Food Safety
- Health & Safety
- Environmental Protection
- Environmental Improvement
- Estates Management Building Design and Maintenance
- Building Control
- Inspection/Regulation of New Construction
- Dog Control
- Enforcement Byelaws Litter etc.
- Licensing
- Sports and Leisure Services
- Sports and Recreational facilities
- Parks, Open Spaces, Playgrounds
- Community facilities

- Arts, Heritage and Cultural Facilities
- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Spatial Planning & Regeneration
- Community Planning
- Off Street Car Parking

The Council also has a role in:

- Economic Development
- Community Development
- Community Safety
- Sports Development
- Tourism

3.5 To enable the Council to provide the above services and perform its other functions, the Council must levy an annual rate and has the power to:

- acquire and dispose of land
- borrow money
- employ staff
- procure goods and services

3.6 To support and implement the above statutory functions and provision of services and facilities, the Council will adopt a wide range of policies.

4. Public life positions over which the Council has responsibility

4.1 A key aspect of the disability duties is to encourage participation by disabled people in public life.

4.2 The Review Report on the Effectiveness of the Disability Duties (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, December 2009) identified a misunderstanding among public authorities regarding the definition of the public life with some authorities defining public life positions as public appointments. The Commission's guide makes it clear that the definition of public life is wider than this and includes:

- participation in focus groups or working groups
- participation in community group or fora

- local partnerships
- 4.3 Mid Ulster District Council does not have a responsibility for the membership of many such groups. However, Council is committed to ensuring that disabled people have the choice to be fully participative in groups/organisations that it has a responsibility for.
- 4.4 Council will also encourage other bodies such as community associations and user groups to take more positive steps towards including people with a disability and take accounts of their views.

5. The Council's commitment to the effective implementation of the disability action plan

- 5.1 Mid Ulster District Council is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and this Disability Action Plan. In order to do so Council will put appropriate internal arrangements in place in order to ensure that the disability duties are complied with and this Disability Action Plan is effectively implemented.
- 5.2 We will ensure the effective communication of the Plan to employees and provide all necessary training and guidance for employees and elected members on the disability duties and the implementation of the Plan.
- 5.3 Overall responsibility for determining policy on how this will be achieved lies with the Elected Members, and day to day responsibility for carrying out the policy with the Chief Executive. As part of its corporate planning process, the Council will set objectives and targets relating to the disability duties. These will be reflected at all levels of planning within the Council including individual staff objectives.
- 5.4 A formal report of progress on meeting the objectives relating to the disability duties will be included in the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

6. Internal Arrangements

- 6.1 The Council consists of 40 Elected Representatives, elected for four years periods meeting monthly at full Council. The Council has selected a traditional committee structure as its form of decision making.
- 6.2 The Council organises its business through 5 statutory committees that meet on a monthly basis and each of the Committees consists of 16 members. This is with the exception of the Audit Committee which has 8 members.
- 6.3 The Council also has the power to establish working groups.
- 6.4 The list below sets out current committees:
- Planning
 - Development
 - Environment
 - Policy and Resources
 - Audit
- 6.5 The Full Council meeting meets in full session on the last Thursday of every month when it receives and decides on reports and recommendations from the various committees.
- 6.6 The work of the Council operates under the leadership of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is responsible for giving the strategic direction and advice to the Council and oversees the preparatory work to ensure it is ready to deliver its services.
- 6.7 The Chief Executive will have the overall responsibility for the implementation of the Disability Duties and the Action Plan.
- 6.8 The point of contact for those seeking further information on the Action Plan is the Corporate Policy and Equality Officer (see page 1 for contact details) who will take specific responsibility for co-ordinating the day to day requirements for the delivery of the Action plan.

7. Effective Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 Mid Ulster District Council is committed to engaging effectively with disabled people in the drafting, implementation, monitoring and review of this Plan.
- 7.2 The Council is committed to carrying out consultation in a meaningful manner in the development of its disability duties. In doing so the Council is keen to bring about change with and for people with disabilities and will therefore be focussing on the issue of involvement and participation in preparing and reviewing its Plan.
- 7.3 The Council's consultation process will be designed to ensure that people with disabilities are consulted at as early a stage as possible so that they can assist and inform the development of the Plan.
- 7.4 The Council will make every effort to remove any potential barriers to proper consultation by ensuring accessibility of documents in appropriate formats and in a timely fashion. Information will be made available on request in alternative formats. It will also be important to establish with people with a disability, the basis for dialogue and engagement during the life of the Plan. A variety of methods of discussion will be used such as meetings, one to one discussions, telephone and text phone discussions. Consideration will also be given to how best to communicate information to young people with a disability, as well as considering additional dimensions such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious belief.
- 7.5 The Council believes it is important that people with disabilities are involved in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Plan. The Council will seek views and comments on the specific actions when they are developed and will consider amending them or including additional ones following the comments received.

8. Annual Report and Review

- 8.1 The Council will prepare report annually on the implementation of its Plan. The report will be included as part of the Council's annual report to the Equality Commission on the implementation of our equality scheme.
- 8.2 A copy of the full annual report and further reviews will be made available on the Council's website.

9. Action Measures

- 9.1 The Council continues to complete a number of actions which help promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. These action measures include committing to:

Action Measure 1: Equality proof' our Community Plan

Action Measure 2: Integrate our Disability duties into policies, programmes, plans and strategies

Action Measure 3: Include 'Changing Places' facilities in capital build projects venues (where a need is established)

Action Measure 4: Maintain Council's partnership working with Mid Ulster Disability Forum and other with disability support services/ groups within the District in order to gauge their views and opinions

Action measure 5: Any new/substantially renovated play areas meet the highest possible standards of accessibility

Action measure 6: Appoint a Disability Champion at officer and elected member level to progress the disability duties

Action measure 7: Provide flexible work placements/taster placements for individuals with disabilities with a view to preparing them for paid employment

Action measure 8: Training on Accessibility Auditing provided to relevant Mid Ulster District Council Staff

Action measure 9: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Council Officers including members of the Senior Management Team

Action measure 10: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Elected Member

Action measure 11: Develop and implement effective means of communication for people who have hearing loss

Action measure 12: Ensure accessibility details for buildings and events are available on Council's website

- 9.2 The table below sets out the measures that Council intends to undertake to take in order to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation:

Action measure 1: 'Equality proof' our Community Plan		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Senior Management Team/Head of Community Development	Better promotion of equality and services for people with a disability	Equality Screening will be carried out intermittently over the duration of the Community Plan
Action measure 2: Integrate our Disability duties into policies, programmes, plans and strategies		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
All Policy Authors	All new and revised policies screened for impact on disability duties ensuring that issues which may affect people with a disability will be sorted out at the earliest possible juncture	Dip sample carried out every six months
Action measure 3: 'Changing Places' facilities included in capital build projects (where a need is established)		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Senior Management Team Head of Technical Services	The number of changing places established in Council owned facilities	6 Changing Places to registered by Mid Ulster DC by 2026
Action measure 4: Maintain Council's partnership working with Mid Ulster Disability Forum and other with disability support services/ groups within the District in order to gauge their views and opinions		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Focussed consultation and engagement with people with disabilities will be carried out in order to understand their needs and	Monthly meets attended by Mid Ulster District Council staff.

	requirements. Consultation is also inclusive of the statutory agencies representing people who have a disability	
Action measure 5: Any new/substantially renovated play areas meet the highest possible standards of accessibility		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Head of Leisure Head of Parks Head of Technical Services	Inclusive and accessible services for people with a disability	Inclusivity rate to be increased by 20% (from 17.5%) by 2026
Action measure 6: Appoint a Disability Champion at officer and elected member level to progress the disability duties		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Head of Democratic Services Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Disability champions appointed to promote disability issues both internal and external to Council	Annually
Action measure 7: Provide flexible work placements/taster placements for individuals with disabilities with a view to preparing them for paid employment		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Director of Organisational Development Corporate Learning & Development Manager	Flexible Opportunities provided for people with a disability	Annually
Action measure 8: Training on Accessibility Auditing provided to relevant Mid Ulster District Council Staff		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Director of Organisational Development Corporate Learning & Development Manager	Corporate Policy & Equality Officer will be skilled to advise	9 members of staff to be trained. Staff to be sought from various departments.
Action measure 9: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Council Officers including members of the Senior Management Team		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Corporate Policy & Equality Officer/Heads of Service	Increased awareness of disability legislation and understanding of the issues relating to the service users	2 Sessions Annually from 2021
Action measure 10: Develop, deliver and implement a programme of awareness training for Elected Members		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Head of Democratic Services Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Increased awareness of disability legislation and understanding of the issues relating to the service users	2 Sessions Annually from 2021
Action measure 11: Develop and implement effective means of communication for people who have hearing loss		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe

Corporate Policy & Equality Officer	Appropriate and effective means of communication are in place	2021
Action measure 12: Ensure accessibility details for buildings and events are available on Council's website		
Responsibility	Performance	Timeframe
Heads of Service	Required information provided on Council's website	2021

10. How the disability action plan will be published

10.1 Following submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, this Plan will be available by contacting:

Ann McAleer
Corporate Policy & Equality Officer
Mid Ulster District Council
Dungannon Office
Circular Road
Dungannon BT71 6DT

Tel: 03000 132 132

E: ann.mcaleer@midulstercouncil.org

10.2 The availability of the Disability Action Plan will be advertised in the press and can be accessed on Council's website:

www.midulstercouncil.org/equality

10.3 The Council will, through our on-going work with people with disabilities and people with learning disabilities, find appropriate ways of communicating the Plan. The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language, and will be available in alternative formats on request.

10.4 The contents of the Disability Action Plan will be highlighted through press releases, advertisements, Council literature and by meeting directly with disability organisations, representative groups and individuals.

10.5 In addition, a summary Plan as well as a full version of the Plan will be available on the intranet or in alternative formats upon request.