

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Mid and East Antrim Community Planning Partnership

Third Statement of Progress

November 2023

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Our Vision for 2030 is:

"Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all."

Our Statement of Progress

Mid and East Antrim's Putting People First Community Plan was published on 30 March 2017. The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires Community Planning Partnerships to make arrangements to monitor progress against meeting the objectives of community plans and the effectiveness of the actions taken in aiming to achieve those objectives. This is to be communicated to the public via a published statement, highlighting progress on outcomes achieved and actions taken.

A first statement of progress was to be produced within two years of the community plan being published and every two years thereafter. The first Statement of Progress was published in November 2019 with the second statement following in November 2021.

The statement is an opportunity for partnerships to update local people on actions to deliver the community plan, the nature and details within these statements will evolve as community planning develops.

The third statement considers how well the Mid and East Antrim Community Planning Partnership has worked collaboratively; what progress, if any, has been made towards the 15-year outcomes; the actions delivered or underway; and what impact they have made to local people.



The Approach

The first Putting People First Community Plan contained five themes (these have been reduced to 4 themes following review (see pag 13), Sustainable Jobs and Tourism; Good Health and Wellbeing; Progress in Education; Community Safety and Cohesion and Our Environment.

Initially in order to progress to the implementation and delivery of actions, some short-term and medium-term priorities were identified via a scoring matrix. The actions prioritised were the ones that demonstrated clear collaborative gain to build momentum and public confidence in the Community Planning process. They also required minimal funding or legislative change and had lead partners readily identified. Going forward, following review we will focus on priority actions for the next four years.

It is also important to note that the Community Planning Partnership has tried to avoid including any business-as-usual work and instead focused on areas of work requiring a collaborative approach to improve the quality of life for all.

As lead partner, Council is fully committed to implementing the statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. A requirement to carrying out its functions, it has 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. The screening of all community planning actions has allowed Council to promote equality of opportunity, take further consideration of any potential equality impacts, and apply measures to mitigate and further promote equality of opportunity.

Following the publishing of the first Statement of Progress in November 2019, attention turned to the process for the review of the community plan. A paper outlining our approach to the review along with a draft timeline was developed for presentation and approval to the Strategic Alliance in March 2020.

The scheduled meeting of the Strategic Alliance in March 2020 was cancelled due to the onset of Covid-19 and the introduction of lockdown.

At that point the community planning partnership leaned heavily on the strong working relationships developed through the community planning journey and utilised them to make a swift and robust response to the pandemic.

As a result of Covid-19 timescales shifted and thus our review process took place in 2022 and a reviewed plan was produced which took cognisance of the change in landscape post-pandemic.

Our Community Planning Partnership

The Local Government Act 2014 requires Councils to facilitate the development of a Community Plan in partnership with Community Planning partners.

The Community Planning Structure for Mid and East Antrim was designed with the involvement and engagement of the community planning partners, including the community and voluntary sector organisations.

The membership of the Community Planning Partnership includes the designated statutory partners set out in the legislation, community representatives included elected members and a range of other groups and organisations.

This has established a broader partnership which has been integral to the initial development and ongoing delivery of the community plan.

Our Partners:



Patient and Client Council
Your voice in health and social care



The Delivery Structure

Within the Community Planning Partnership, there are a number of key groups directly involved in influencing the delivery of Putting People First:

Strategic Alliance

This is the key overarching strategic partnership body for Community Planning. It includes the 12 designated statutory partners, government departments, elected representatives, representatives from the Community Panel and additional voluntary support organisations identified by partners as having potential to make a valuable contribution to the process.

Community Panel

This group represents the community voice for Mid and East Antrim Borough and provides 12 community representatives, elected members and sectoral representatives the opportunity to input into all parts of the Community Planning Partnership structure. They supplement the work of the local community activity in relation to community planning objectives.

Thematic Groups

There are currently 5 thematic groups (will reduce to 4 following review), one for each of the 5 overarching themes in the Community Plan. These are the key operational groups for the Community Planning Partnership, informing and supporting strategic decisions made by the Strategic Alliance. The groups prioritise the work stream actions and prepare delivery action plans. These groups do not operate in isolation, as there are many interrelationships between the themes and their combined contribution help to achieve better results.

Delivery Groups

These are special purpose working groups tasked with taking forward the day-to-day activities involved in delivering the short-term actions. Membership of these remain flexible and responsive and will change depending on those required for delivery at each stage.



How well is the partnership working?

What have we done?



3rd

Published 3rd Statement of Progress in November 2023



6 Further Strategic Alliance meetings

5 Further Community Panel Meetings

How well have we done it?

Representation at Community Panel Meetings

Average attendance rate at Community Panel meetings ranged from 29% to 41%, with average attendance of 34% of those invited. Members (non MEABC staff) had an average attendance rate of 21%

Representation at Strategic Alliance Meetings

Strategic Alliance meetings had an average attendance rate of 36% of those invited. Statutory and voluntary partners (non MEABC staff) accounted for 26% of those in attendance.

Is anyone better off as a result?

Despite the ongoing review of the community plan during this period, coupled with still dealing with Covid-19 and subsequent restrictions, work did continue.

Many of the actions were still relevant and necessary and took on a stronger focus such as addressing needs, supporting mental health, and tackling vulnerability and poverty. New actions involving multiple partners commenced in respect

to the pandemic and subsequent cost of living rise and many continue.

A robust response to Covid-19 was made possible through community planning partners and a community planning approach. This has strengthened further collaboration emerging from the pandemic as well as dealing with the cost-of-living rise and its impact on the most vulnerable.



Challenges

From the outset there was a range of challenges that impacted on the implementation and delivery of community planning activities.

Many of these remain to varying degrees across the sectors, such as:

- Varying levels of understanding across partner organisations
 - Inconsistency of commitment across partner organisations
 - Managing the high expectations of communities
 - Delivering on new ambitious commitments from within existing and depleted resources
 - Promoting the plan as a Mid and East Antrim plan and not a Council plan.
- As Lead Partner Council had secured the services of a statistician to work as part of the community planning team and liaise with partners throughout the development of the plan and in the initial delivery phase. This resource has departed over the past number of years and currently there is no access to such expertise in house. This has an impact on the quantitative data collection and in the longer term will be an issue to be addressed by the wider partnership alongside the other challenges still being experienced.
 - Resourcing community planning continues to be a real challenge, particularly as it did not come with a defined budget. This is particularly challenging for council as a lead partner who services the partnership and coordinates all activity.

This is not unique to Council as particularly post Covid-19 and the current cost of living rise, delivery of public services are under increasing pressure with many services not able to fully meet demand. Community Planning is a way of working in partnership to reduce duplication and find new and more efficient ways of delivering public services.

In practice, there should be a focus on the sharing of resources to improve the outcomes for our citizens but the practicalities of this has been and continues to be much harder than perhaps initially anticipated.

The review of Putting People First reflects the post pandemic landscape as well as the impact of the cost-of-living rise and has set priorities for the next four years (until next review) taking this context into account.



Covid-19 Recovery

The Local Government Act 2014 requires Councils to facilitate the development of a Community Plan in partnership with Community Planning partners.

The Community Planning Structure for Mid and East Antrim was designed with the involvement and engagement of the community planning partners, including the community and voluntary sector organisations.

The membership of the Community Planning Partnership includes the designated statutory partners set out in the legislation, community representatives included elected members and a range of other groups and organisations.

This has established a broader partnership which has been integral to the initial development and ongoing delivery of the community plan.

Review of Putting People First Community Plan

The review of Mid and East Antrim's community plan was the main focus of the partnership for the 2-year period covering this Statement of Progress (November 2021-November 2023). Putting People First is an ambitious document which accurately reflects the context of Community Planning in 2014-2017 when plans were being developed. Partnerships were new, the task in hand was unclear, corporate, and operational plans were already in place within partner organisations and yet community planning partnerships were tasked with developing plans and actions to transform the quality of life in communities.

Whilst across all of Northern Ireland's local authorities every effort was made to develop collaborative plans and to try to avoid the inclusion of business as usual it was impossible to disregard existing strategies, plans and programmes which were already in place and seeking to address many of the very same issues which were highlighted as priorities for community plans.

Unsurprisingly the first iteration of community plans, Putting People First included, have an abundance of outcomes, indicators and actions. At the time, with partnerships in their infancy, this was the only way

to ensure that all partners had a stake in the success of community planning. The review of Putting People First in 2021/2022 was timely. Not only have the partnership structures developed and solidified, but the global pandemic along with the cost of living rise has changed the landscape in which community planning is delivered.

In focus groups conducted as part of the audit and review process, it was commented that the response to the Covid 19 crisis was community planning as it should be. It was a range of agencies working together to address a common and pressing concern.

It involved the reallocation of human resources, the redirection of financial resources and the concentration of effort on a single issue. In addition to taking on board the feedback from the audit, this review was also cognisant of the learning from what happened during the pandemic and the opportunities that exist to build on the success of the response made.

Having reviewed Putting People First, the Statement of Progress and the implementation plan, it was clear that the plan offers a comprehensive approach

to addressing some of the starkest needs and potentially fruitful opportunities facing the borough. Whilst it may appear nuanced, the review led to the consolidation of some of the themes and outcomes, to move what have previously been identified as outcomes into actions and indicators and re-prioritised the proposed actions. The aim of this reshuffling of the plan content is twofold – to streamline a complex process to enable delivery of actions which make an impact; and for that impact to be tangible in local communities and for the residents of Mid and East Antrim.

The review was approached from a people-centred perspective, intending to highlight where community planning can really make a difference to people living in the borough. Measuring and evidencing the answers to "what did we do?" and "how well did we do it?" is significantly more straightforward than answering "is anybody better off?" however we know that people are, and that more people could be.

Our Themes

Currently Putting People First has five themes, each with its own vision, a number of outcomes and an action plan to achieve the outcomes:

- *Good Health and Wellbeing*
- *Community Safety & Cohesion*
- *Progress in Education*
- *Sustainable Jobs and Tourism*
- *Our Environment*

Operationally, five themes made for a complex delivery system. The nature of a community plan is that, to quote one consultee "there is nothing that's not connected."

Issues in communities do not lend themselves to alignment with particular departmental strategies. Communities are complex places, where needs vary, infrastructure is changeable, and it takes a variety of interventions to turn the curve.

Feedback as part of the audit showed that the public agreed that all of the five themes remain either a priority or very

important, and there was no suggestion that anything was missing.

That said, examination of the current themes and their related action plans lead to the consolidation of the existing themes in a way which will work better operationally.

Good Health and Wellbeing

More than 90% of survey respondents identified Good health and Wellbeing as "should be a priority" or "very important", and two thirds of respondents ranked good health and wellbeing as either their first or second priority for community planning effort in the next four years. As we emerge from the pandemic and move into a period of recovery, there will be new challenges in terms of physical and mental health and wellbeing.



90%

of respondents said health & Wellbeing "should be a priority" or "very important"

Progress in Education and Employment

43.5% survey respondents identified progress in education as their first or second priority. Review of the implementation plans for Progress in Education and Sustainable Jobs and Tourism identified significant synergies between the proposed areas of focus. The themes of removing barriers and achieving potential were common to both, as were a number of the key partners. Rewording this theme provided an opportunity for greater synergies and greater benefits through community planning actions.



43.5%

of survey respondents identified progress in education

Community Safety and Cohesion

Safe and inclusive communities continue to be valued by those who responded to the survey with almost 40% identifying this as their first or second priority. Whilst it was not recommended that the title of the theme is changed, it was recommended that the scope of the theme was broadened.



40%

identified Safe & inclusive communities as their first or second priority

Tourism and the Economy

26.9% of respondents had the previous theme of Sustainable Jobs and Tourism as first or second in terms of their prioritisation of effort, however tourism clearly plays an important part in the economic prosperity of the borough. Currently there is limited appreciation for the benefits tourism brings to the borough with those who did comment identifying that visitors go to attractions but do not spend much time or money in the local villages or towns. If tourism and economy were brought together under one theme, there was greater scope for the wider ripple effects of tourism development to be seen.



26.9%

identified this as their first or second priority





Strengthening our Themes

The review and audit identified a number of recurring themes which were not so much issues to address as they are ways of working. The reviewed plan includes five cross cutting themes which represent key considerations which will underpin all activity undertaken through community planning.

Tackling poverty

The Covid 19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the livelihoods of individuals and families across Northern Ireland and the borough. When this is coupled with rising costs of living, rapidly escalating fuel costs and inflation, the numbers of households finding themselves financially insecure is increasing also. Mid and East Antrim had one neighbourhood renewal area and two areas at risk prior to the pandemic but anecdotal evidence to date indicates that poverty is impacting families across the whole of the borough. Poverty and deprivation can be a significant barrier to achieving the ambitions of Putting People First, but conversely, Putting People First has the opportunity to tackle some of the root causes of poverty through its actions.

Prioritising the most vulnerable

The issue of inclusion was raised frequently throughout the audit, and it was in regard to a spectrum of people, but in particular people with disabilities and people with learning difficulties whom it was felt had been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the resulting exclusion. In addition, people at risk were identified including people from different ethnic backgrounds, young people and older people. Any planned community activity should be viewed through the lens of how it will benefit those who are the most vulnerable in the borough. This will enable a focus on those who can be the most "better off" as a result.

Valuing the views and contribution of our residents

The intent of the partners in the Strategic Alliance was clear when it entitled the community plan Putting People First. The plan acknowledged that the greatest asset in the borough of Mid and East Antrim is its people. It also acknowledged that it is a plan to benefit the people of the borough. Currently there is a disconnect between those involved in the community planning structures and other groups and residents. There is a sense in the feedback received through the consultation process that the community feel they are not engaged in the decisions that affect them, or that the community organisations are not taken seriously.

The pandemic response has clearly demonstrated the importance of the community and voluntary sector in the area. Without local groups and local intelligence, those who were most in need would not have been identified or supported. Post pandemic there are connections and relationships which the community planning partnership should nurture going forward.

Valuing our environment

Paradoxically Our Environment as a theme was the least prioritised, however measures to address climate change, environmental awareness and the importance of respect for the local and natural environment were points which were made throughout the consultation responses. Therefore, valuing our environment has become a cross cutting theme which will enable the community planning partners to make climate change commitments at an organisational level and to support the improvement of local environments at a community level. The environment is a key success factor in all four of the revised themes.

Addressing the inequalities in our Borough

The plan currently includes "our borough has health equality for all" as an outcome under Good Health and Wellbeing. Given that there are so many social determinants of health and wellbeing such as deprivation, living environment, access to employment and so on, addressing inequality is a cross cutting theme. This commitment will also respond to feedback which asked for fairness in how resources and support are allocated between rural and urban areas and between different towns in the borough.

The results of our Themes

Outcomes:

In addition to consolidating the themes, the 19 original outcomes were streamlined also. This enables the Strategic Alliance to focus on priority areas but also provides the opportunity to redistribute existing efforts into contributing towards clearer and more easily measurable outcomes.



Community Safety and Cohesion

Our borough has vibrant, inclusive and cohesive communities

- Because there are activities and events which welcome everyone
- Because we proactively support and include the most vulnerable and the most excluded
- Because we value and respect the environment we live in

Our people feel safe in their community

- Because there are programmes in place to address their greatest concerns
- Because we proactively support the most vulnerable or at risk

Our older people are live healthy, active lives in their community

- Because there are networks and services in place to support them to age actively and healthily
- Because we proactively remove barriers to their participation in community life

Progress in Education and Employment

We have a skilled workforce able to adapt to the changing economy

- Because we have skills development programmes targeting areas of high growth or need
- Because we provide a range of education pathways to employment

Our borough provides opportunities for all and supports people to achieve their full potential

- Because we reduce or remove the barriers to our people achieving their potential
- Because we value lifelong learning
- Because we encourage entrepreneurship and vocational training

Tourism and the Economy

Our borough is a leading and competitive place to start and grow business

- Because we support entrepreneurs to start up and existing businesses to grow
- Because we support local businesses and those which can demonstrate social value

Our borough is a destination of choice

- Because we have first class facilities and attractions
- Because our towns and village are attractive and vibrant

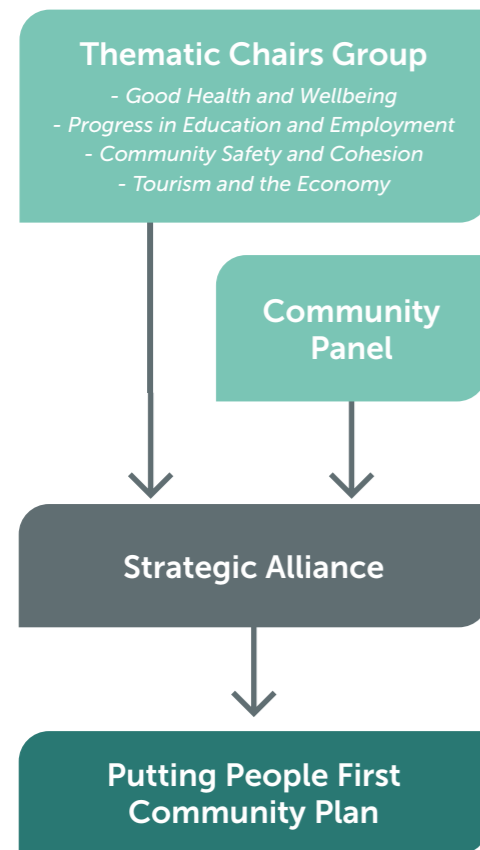
Good Health and Wellbeing

Our People enjoy good mental and physical health and wellbeing

- Because they are physically active more often
- Because they enjoy easy access to our borough's natural environment and heritage
- Because they have access to information, activities and advice to support their physical and mental wellbeing

Supporting our Themes

The review demonstrated that there are aspects of the current structures which are more effective than others.



Strategic Alliance

The recent statement of progress identified that the Strategic Alliance meetings had an average attendance rate of 37% of those invited. This figure is cause for concern, implying as it does that there is consistent commitment by only around one third of partners. The strategic connectivity which the Strategic Alliance can foster is vital to the effective delivery of the community plan, if the plan includes areas of focus for which key strategic partners are not present, then progress in effecting positive change will always be difficult.

Community planning is a collaborative endeavour. It is therefore important that the outcomes and related actions provide the opportunity for significant collaboration. Ideally this collaboration serves both the operational needs of the partners and provides significant added value to the beneficiaries. However, collaboration and partnership can also slow progress. The greater the number of organisations involved, the more levels of approval that are required.

It is anticipated that the ongoing review of the community planning guide including reducing the number of meetings of the Strategic Alliance and the retention of a hybrid approach which will allow partners to avoid unnecessary travel will address this.

Community Panel

There is room for improvement in the role played by the Community Panel and how this connects to the wider community planning structure.

There is real potential for this group to bridge the perceived gap between communities and the community plan but currently this does not appear to be the case. The community panel represents the community voice for Mid and East Antrim Borough, yet feedback implies that the community feels it does not have a voice or that its voice is not heard.

At this stage, the structures, membership and operation of the Community Plan are being reviewed, to ensure that it is able to provide the voice for the community. Clarity around the expectations of members of the panel is required also. The panel is an ideal conduit of information into and out of the community planning structures, but for this to be effective the information shared should be pertinent and should be directed towards where it can be actioned.

As part of this review the Strategic Alliance will consider reorganising how it engages with the community to reflect the new District Electoral Area structures within Council and the Community Clusters. It is an opportune time to review the representativeness of the community panel across the borough.

Thematic Groups

Thematic working groups can be very effective in the initial planning and action planning stages, particularly when the members are decision makers within their own organisations. Once the initial action plans are developed however, thematic working groups can slide into a pattern of meetings focused on updates, declining attendance and increasing frustration as progress slows. The feedback from some of the thematic groups was that they struggled to find the added value of the community planning activity. There was concern expressed by some that the scope of themes was so wide that by the time updates were presented there was no time left for development. Concern was also expressed around changing personnel and membership leading to a loss of corporate knowledge about the community plan, its intentions and its actions.

It is anticipated that the review of the Community Plan and the consolidation of themes referenced earlier in this document will provide thematic working groups with renewed focus as they have the opportunity to examine and re-prioritise actions.

Thematic Chairs Group

This strategic connectivity between the themes is an important aspect of the successful implementation of Putting People First. By definition, any structure which involves 25 public and private sector organisations will be unwieldy and challenging to navigate. Information flows will be patchy, and it will be difficult. The thematic chairs group has proved an excellent way to mitigate this. As decision makers in their own organisations and experts in their themes, they will be instrumental in overcoming some of the challenges to delivery.

Operational Board and Performance Management Group

Neither the Operational Board nor the Performance Management Group have been implemented as envisaged when the plan was developed. The roll out of community planning has not been detrimentally impacted by the absence of either group, in fact it is likely that had these groups been in place it would have diluted the attendance of partners even further.

Putting People First in the Wider Strategic Context

Since Putting People First was published in 2017, the strategic and policy context has seen some significant changes, some key aspects of which are noted below.

- *The covid pandemic and subsequent recovery plans*
- *Welfare reform*
- *New Mental Health Strategy 2021 to 2031*
- *Belfast Region City Deal*
- *Draft Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland*
- *Development of an anti-poverty strategy*
- *Draft programme for government*
- *Towards a Programme of Support for Community Planning (the Gallagher Report)*
- *Embedding a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland, Carnegie Trust UK*

It is testament to the foundations of Putting People First that it remains aligned with the wider policy context and priorities. These new and emerging strategies may add impetus to areas of work the Strategic Alliance was already considering.

Communication and Awareness

It is difficult to challenge the perception that Putting People First is the Council's plan - as opposed to the plan for the Council area - when so many of the actions are Council-led. Whilst we understand the origins of this, it is to the detriment of a wider understanding of community planning.

The action planning process in 2017 prioritised actions which could be delivered quickly, and which involved at least three partners, however it in the effort to deliver quickly, the community planning identity was lost.

It was clear through the focus groups that there is a lack of awareness and appreciation of what has been delivered as a result of community planning. This is due in part to people struggling to differentiate between what they perceived as business as usual and the perhaps more collaborative way in which this business is now conducted. Part of the solution to this lies in a Communications Strategy and Action Plan.

The communication networks and channels available to the community planning partnership is nothing short of significant. Across the partners there are ways to communicate with all schools, all sports clubs, all registered community groups, all registered youth groups, all housing associations and tenants' groups. The potential of this communication platform is vastly underutilised by the Strategic Alliance. A small number of agreed core messages, a reciprocal agreement around social media post tagging and sharing, and a twice-yearly e-zine shared with all contacts and awareness of Putting People First and what it is achieving will increase exponentially.





Actions and goals refreshed

As part of the review implementation plans for each theme were considered. The documents provided identified how actions were prioritised into short, medium and long term. It was agreed that the actions lists were reviewed with a fresh lens which takes account of the new environment in which community planning is being delivered.

Actions agreed which were appropriate and pertinent to escalate up the list or to increase the focus on. These include the following:

Good Health and Wellbeing

- Creating a network of navigators within communities
- Support and encourage the shared use of facilities within the public sector estate

Progress in Education and Employment

- Skills Forum
- Education and support for employing vulnerable people (previously a Health and Wellbeing action)

Community Safety and Cohesion

- Build Civic pride and celebrating community success
- Build on existing support to assist newcomer pupils

(previously a progress in education action)

- Environment champions to encourage environmental responsible behaviour

Tourism and the Economy

- Energy efficiency
- Buy Social
- Urban and Rural Regeneration and town centre revitalisation
There are also actions which are either the responsibility of a single organisation or which include many factors which the partners cannot influence and as such they were removed or consolidated with others to design a more strategic multi-partner initiative.

Regional Strategies Initiatives with a Community Planning dimension

Several of the regional policy developments referenced in the previous section include opportunities for action which

readily lend themselves to being community planning actions. Such opportunities are collaborative in nature and community in focus, the following actions were considered for the next 4-year period:

- Initiatives to tackle poverty such as development of sustainable social supermarkets
- Embedding the work of the Labour Market Partnership within the action planning on the theme of Progress in Education and Employment
- Enabling and Empowering local communities to respond to local issues through the community resilience model, protecting those most at risk of exploitation by addressing addiction
- Developing a model of community development and engagement which empowers communities to participate in the community planning process
- Exploring neighbourhood agreements as a mechanism to engage statutory partners and local communities in resolving issues in District Electoral Areas
- Implementing actions identified through the Review of Community Plan under the four themes in the Gallagher Report, namely: the Scope of Community Plans; Communications and Community Involvement; Use of Data and Evidence; and Leadership, Performance and Resources.

Community Involvement

The Community Panel plays an important role in the community planning structure, however moving forward, representation of the community should be progressed to active engagement/involvement of the community. Where possible the Strategic Alliance will adopt a co-design approach to development of actions. Not only will this address issues of community buy in, it will also increase the chances of success and increase awareness of the community planning activity.

The new District Electoral Area model lends itself particularly well to co-design as it has a local focus and can draw on local networks and relationships. It also has a council officer with community development skills as lynchpin to the process. This approach would make community planning more real and tangible at a local level and enable appropriate focusing of resources in response to local need.

Partnership Commitment

It is understood that all public sector agencies are under considerable budgetary pressure. It has also become apparent over the past five years that the theory of bending the spend ie, the reallocation of existing resources is less readily achievable than the designers of community planning might have anticipated.

However, there are ways in which community planning partners can actively participate in community planning with little or no investment required: Social Value Clauses are identified as an action under Tourism and the Economy. Whilst this currently applies to above threshold contracts, partners could commit to inclusion of social value as a consideration in all community planning related commissioning.

Climate change policies are required of all public bodies, so the partnership could make a collective statement on its commitment to net zero, renewable energy etc Meetings within the community planning structures could be better utilised for the sharing of information and expertise between partners. Each of the partners has access to an immense network of groups and individuals who can both inform and benefit from community planning actions, however the opportunities this presents have not been maximised as yet.

It is anticipated that as a result of the Regional Review of Community Planning, and the revisions to the Programme for Government, there will be increased support for the implementation of Community Planning at a local level.

Partners' Engagement

Historic Environment Division

The Department has had important engagement with the Council on the historic environment during the review period. There has been significant work carried out in the development of the Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme and City Deal for Carrickfergus and in the nomination of Gracehill as a potential World Heritage Site to UNESCO. The Council has also made significant progress with its Local Development Plan and the development of policies to protect the historic environment within this.

We note that under the Tourism and Economy heading there remains a commitment to 'urban and social regeneration and town centre revitalisation' and suggest that the potential of heritage/historic environment to contribute to that aim and to the wider tourism strategy could be included to allow clear reference to the initiatives referred to above.

Active Communities Division Sports Branch

The Department notes and welcomes the work the Council is doing to secure 'Autism Friendly' organisation status in particular the update that several leisure centres and parks in the area have received the 'Autism Impact Award'. This aligns with a number of key themes and goals in Active Living, the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Northern Ireland that aims to increase participation in sport and physical activity among traditionally under represented groups, including people with a disability, by removing barriers to participation and ensuring everyone has access to inclusive, shared, safe and welcoming indoor and outdoor sport and physical activity infrastructure.

The Department also welcomes the update on greenways and outdoor spaces and the programmes on health and wellbeing that the Council have facilitated in these spaces. We support encouraging people to use green and blue spaces and providing greater choice of sport and physical activities for all abilities.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Northern Ireland Housing Executive welcomes the inclusion of Urban and Rural Regeneration and town centre revitalisation as per re prioritisation of actions on page 16. Housing led regeneration can play an important role in the sustainable growth of towns and villages and we want to ensure housing is a priority which gives us an opportunity to raise awareness of local housing issues across the partnership that could also help to unlock opportunities for increasing housing supply and housing led regeneration.

Our local office has also commented that the Mid and East Antrim Support Hub continues to be an invaluable resource to residents and tenants (Cohorts) and statutory agencies to achieve housing solutions for those who consent to having their cases discussed confidentially by the Statutory Agencies concerned with any issue the cohorts may have. The Statutory Agencies work together to endeavour to achieve a satisfactory solution for the tenant.

Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership MEAAP) also continues to be a vital source of referral for NIHE Patch Managers to assist tenants/residents with a variety of financial and practical support services for vulnerable older tenants provided by MEAAP. The Housing Executive continues to have a professional working rapport with MEAAP.

Northern Ireland Water

There has been strong collaboration between NI Water and Council partners within the thematic topic 'Our Environment' of the Community Plan 'Putting People First.' While the environment was initially the least prioritised theme, the consultation responses emphasised the significance of measures addressing climate change, environmental awareness, and respect for the local environment. Consequently, valuing the environment became a cross-cutting theme for the Community Planning Partnership to make organisational commitments towards climate change and support community-level environmental improvement.





Where we are now

The review of Mid and East Antrim’s Community Plan, Putting People First is now complete along with the review of the implementation plans. Successful consultation has also taken place on the delivery plans. The next steps will be to re-invigorate the thematic groups and agree action leads for the new actions that align with the reviewed plan and outcomes.

This work has been taking place over the last two years – 2021 – 2023 and has been the main focus of the partnership. Whilst there have been actions that have been deemed appropriate to continue to be delivered, others were paused or ceased for a number of reasons. Some were due to the pandemic, where priorities and resources shifted. Others were due to the review taking place and awaiting the outcome. This has been a transition period for Mid and East Antrim’s community planning process, and it is the intention that the new indicators and subsequent measurements will be reflected in the 2025 Statement of Progress.

Putting People First remains a document which is reflective of the needs and priorities of the residents of Mid and East Antrim. The current review, coupled with the emergence from the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, provides the Strategic Alliance with an opportunity to streamline the plan, to focus on those who are most in need and most vulnerable, and to deliver collaborative actions that benefit residents. The changes are not onerous; however, they will enable the Partnership to make an even greater, and more visible and tangible, difference in the borough.

Appendices

Sustainable Jobs and Tourism

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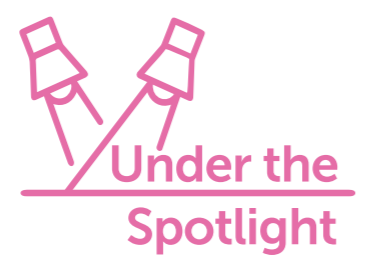
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Sustainable Jobs and Tourism

A proud, vibrant and ambitious place, which collaborates, encourages and supports economic and tourism growth and prosperity



Labour Market Partnership

Mid and East Antrim's Labour Market Partnership (LMP) was established in March 2022 to help improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by working through a collaborative, multi-agency partnership. This partnership has implemented action plans to improve employability, provide the skills to obtain better employment and inspire the future work force working in tandem with local employers and support agencies.

The LMP is funded by the Department for Communities as part of Employability NI. MEA LMP has five key themes:

Economic Inactivity

To encourage participants back to work, MEA LMP offers a range of employability provisions to raise the confidence and skills to reconnect with the labour market. Initiatives include Community-led skills initiatives, Do It Herself, Women Returners Support, FLEX Engagement Programme.

Unemployed

To support unemployed people to become self-employed and provide a range of entry level employment academies to provide access to employment. Academies include Enterprise Pathways, Classroom Assistant, Classroom Upskilling, Forklift, Plant Operations, Tourism and Child-minding.



Disability

To support people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to improve their personal confidence to access the labour market. Initiatives include Work Connections and Graduate Disability Academy.

Skilled Labour Supply

To support economic recovery and prosperity in the region by investing in skills to deliver better quality jobs. Academies include Transport, Health Administration, Health Support, Engineering and Manufacturing.

Provision of outreach events and activities

To promote employability and careers including Job Fairs, Rural Clinics, Hospitality Takeover and a range of activities as part of Science Summer School.

From March 2022 to September 2023 MEA's LMP has delivered:

249

Academy Participants



165

Qualifications



538

Participants at employability events and clinics



99

Participants into employment to date



700

Young people attended careers and employer events



"I would say I'm a prime example of why this programme is successful. I struggled for years to find a job that I wanted to do and have spent the last few years on benefits. A friend mentioned the course to me, and I thought I would give it a go. I received help to get the licences and qualifications that I needed. It really has been life changing as my new employer was on the phone within a matter of days and gave me a job straight away. I would recommend 100% to anybody and I can't thank these guys enough for what they have done for me".



Progress and Impact of Actions

As stated above only actions deemed relevant and appropriate continued to be delivered. This took account of the emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living rise and the review of the community plan Putting People First, which took place during this reporting period.

Business Escalator

Deliver a Business Escalator Programme, providing support for businesses in Mid and East Antrim to accelerate business growth and increase the number of growth companies in the borough.

Place Promotion

Implement an initiative to develop promotional material, which can be used to sell the area as a place to live, work, study, visit and invest in.

Place Promotion

Progress Overview

Significant progress has been made since 2021 on development of promotional material which can be used to sell the area as a place to live, work, study, visit and invest in.

Key Unique Selling Points to promote the borough identified the following:-

- A pro-business Council – Number 1 for speed of small planning decisions, Number 3 in large commercial planning decision times.
- Unique Financial Support – available only in Ballymena via Michelin Fund, not available anywhere else in Northern Ireland, in addition to Invest NI grant.
- Proud manufacturing and engineering heritage – transitioning to advanced manufacturing base. Strong farming and agri-food sector.
- Large supply of industrial sites, pre-zoned including excellent large warehousing and manufacturing spaces formerly occupied by Michelin and Caterpillar.
- Wraparound support from Council with dedicated economic development resource to support new investors; including skills, recruitment, training and signposting – Council acts as an enabler to support business growth.

- Support for skills and reskilling initiatives – new course development in existing and new sectors – Manufacturing Academies, CNC, Female Manufacturing Academy, Transport Academy, Electricians Aid Academy, Hydrogen Training Academy etc.

- Access to strong established industry and stakeholder networks including the Manufacturing Task Force (MTF), focused on issues such as skills, digitization, innovation and opportunities in Cleantech.

Key methods for promoting the place Mid and East Antrim:-

- 8 promotional videos during the period – 3 for the Hydrogen Training Academy 5 for the Town Centre scheme
- 5 sectoral PowerPoint presentations covering key sectors and aimed at external markets to showcase and promote the region which outline all the available property in the region, which can be used to attract potential FDI companies, to encourage re-investment from existing companies and to attract companies from outside the area.
- Launch of 'Invest in Mid and East Antrim' website to provide a one-stop-shop portal of information to assist potential

investors with 10% user increase year on year.

- Speaking or promotional type events where promotion of the area in external markets took place.

The following promotional materials have been developed from September 2021 to September 2023:-

- Belfast Region City Deal Brochure
- Hydrogen Training Academy Brochure
- Hydrogen Training Academy Key Facts
- Manufacturing Task Force Brochure x 2
- Apprenticeship Opportunities Brochure x 2
- Science Summer School Brochure
- Key Facts Brochure
- ECOS Hub Promotional Fact Sheet
- Workspace Accommodation Fact Sheet
- Buy Supply NI Brochure
- Company Fact Sheets – Caterpillar, IPC Mouldings, Plotbox and Ryobi

Our Impact

12 investor visits into the borough comprising of – 9 Foreign Direct Investment Companies seeking to locate here, 3 NI companies from outside the borough seeking to relocate here.

8 investment and promotional visits/events/speaking opportunities outside NI.

13 investments/re-investments in the borough.

There have been a mix of investments in this period, including business expansions, relocations and new investments with these originating from indigenous businesses in Mid and East Antrim, other NI based companies from outside of the borough and from Foreign Direct Investors (i.e., outside NI).

Additional impacts:-

Property Request Process – a dedicated service offered to companies wishing to set up in the borough – 43 over the period leading to 9 companies setting up in the borough.

Position Mid and East Antrim as the CleanTech Hub in Northern Ireland –

- Secure full business case approval for I4C project
- Establishment of a Hydrogen Training Academy in conjunction with key partners. Key outcomes from Hydrogen Training Academy are:
- 200+ trainees – Level 5 and Level 3
- Hydrogen research activities supports – four PHD projects
- 450+ people engaged, 90+ organisations
- 30+ demos of H2 Gas Safe Lab
- £800k funding support
- 5 awards

Funding secured for Cleantech Initiatives

- £500k from UK Government for Hydrogen Training Academy, plus a further £200k from NI Government and £50k from the private sector;
- £40,000 award from Invest NI for a scoping exercise to explore CleanTech opportunities for SME's and industry (7 SMEs and 8 large companies).

- £300k from Innovate UK for Net Zero Fast Followers Programme, reflecting our activity to date in this area, 1 of only 3 councils in NI to be supported.
- i4C Innovation & CleanTech Centre - £20m from UK Government (Belfast Region City Deal).
- HyTech NI - £7.5m from Local Government through the NI Complementary Fund.

Continue to Grow and Develop the Manufacturing Task Force as a Key Driver for Economic Growth Across the borough

Number of new companies engaged with MTF - 10

Value of in-kind contribution from MTF members - £100,000

Number of meetings held annually - 12

Number of new companies registered on BuySupplyNI portal – 30

Business Escalator

Progress Overview

245 referrals to stakeholders for business support plus 80 referrals to Invest NI.

A stakeholder panel groups was established in April 2018 to coincide with the Business Escalator Programme.

Stakeholders include Invest NI, intertradelreland, Northern Regional College, Michelin Development Ltd, University of Ulster and Labour Relations Agency. This mechanism proved highly beneficial for businesses in the borough and generated key outcomes in the update, which follows.

The Business Escalator Programme delivery period ended September 2020; however, the stakeholder relationship remains and continues to compliment the work of Council's Business Client Managers alongside Council's business growth programmes, in order to leverage as much support to Mid and East Antrim based businesses as possible to enhance innovation and growth potential.

Our Impact

240 Fulltime equivalent jobs created.

As a result of the initiative:

20 Quality referrals to Invest NI leveraging support worth £272,053 with 11 of these businesses matched with knowledge transfer partners to secure Invest NI Innovation Vouchers.

Leveraged a total of £155,500 worth of additional support for 27 businesses via Intertradelreland.

2 businesses secured loans through the Michelin Development Fund - total value £40,000.

16 businesses availed of skills and training support for new product, service or process development with Further Education colleges.

1 business recruited 3 apprentices and a further 9 businesses availed of training courses for staff from Northern Regional College.

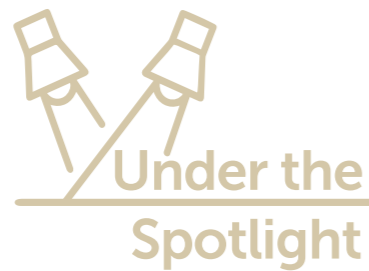
24 business received supported through the Ulster University KTP & intern graduate programme.

8 businesses accessed free HR advice and services through Labour Relations Agency.



Good Health and Wellbeing

'Improving health, including the wider factors and causes of ill health'



Autism Friendly Programme

Through its Community Plan. "Putting People First", Mid and East Antrim have developed and implemented a programme of awareness to develop the borough as an autism friendly place in partnership with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

The range of activities included in the programme are: -

- Autism Roadshows
- Autism Awareness Sessions
- JAM Card Training
- Development of sensory areas in parks and open spaces
- Autism Impact Awards
- Autism Champions
- Makaton Training

The outcomes to date of this successful programme are: -

- 24 awareness-raising sessions delivered - 92% increase from previous Statement of Progress
- 6 venues have received the 'Autism Impact Award' in recognition for going 'above and beyond to create accessible and autism-friendly' environments, including Carrickfergus Amphitheatre, Larne Leisure Centre, Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Carnfunnock Country Park, The Gobbins and The People's Park. The achievement involved staff training and a number of adjustments to improve accessibility and overall customer experience, including pre-visit guides and 'quiet spaces' at a number of venues. The Braid Arts & Museum, Larne Arts & Museum, Carrickfergus Museum, and the Andrew Jackson Cottage & Rangers Museum have all received

Impact Award training. Action Plans for these venues have been developed and Autism Champions identified. It is anticipated that these venues will receive their Autism NI Impact Award by March 2024.

- 267 staff members have completed 'Just A Minute' (JAM) Awareness Training successfully so far. This initiative is another positive step in the right direction in our journey to become an Autism Friendly Borough. Training continues to be rolled out.
- 2 additional sensory areas have been launched – one in People's Park and the other in Carnfunnock Country Park. These were funded by the Department for Communities via the Access and Inclusion

Programme which aims to promote a more inclusive society by enabling people with disabilities to fully participate in arts, cultural and active recreation activities. The People's Park Sensory Area was launched by the Mayor on 27 June 2023; Carnfunnock Country Park Sensory Area was launched by the Mayor on 23 October 2023.

- 6 venues were successful in gaining Autism NI's Impact Award accreditation in 2021. (Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Carrickfergus Amphitheatre, Larne Leisure Centre, The People's Park, Carnfunnock Country Park and The Gobbins)

Other Facilities Pending award:

- The Braid Arts Centre
- Larne Museum & Arts Centre
- Carrickfergus Museum
- Andrew Jackson Cottage & Rangers Museum
- 3 Autism Roadshows delivered in the reporting period. 3 Roadshows planned to be delivered within the next 9 months.
- 6 Makaton sessions delivered. 90 MEA residents invited to attend.



Progress and Impact of Actions

As stated above only actions that were deemed relevant and appropriate continued to be delivered. This took account of the emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living rise and the review of the community plan "Putting People First", which took place during this reporting period.



Autism Friendly –

Develop and implement a programme of awareness to develop the borough as an autism friendly place via:

- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council to secure Autism Friendly status.
- Promote recognition and use of the JAM (Just a Minute) Card for businesses and services in the borough

Greenways and Outdoor Spaces –

Creating greenways/pathways between areas and reclaiming existing outdoor spaces including the development of an Urban/Community

Growing Strategy to include the development of allotments and development of local trails as part of Every Body Active 2020: Outdoor Spaces.

Dementia Friendly –

Extending the dementia friendly programme into the other areas of the borough and expanding it into broader Age Friendly programmes.

Ageing Well Model –

Developing an Ageing Well Model for Mid and East Antrim taking forward a partnership vision for communities in which older people age and live well, and delivery of programmes for reducing isolation and healthy living for older people.

Tackling Poverty –

Working with others to establish a Poverty Action Group for Mid and East Antrim who will work to understand what causes poverty, the impact it has on lives and work together to make life better for our citizens.

Autism Friendly

Progress Overview

This is an awareness-raising programme to develop the borough as an autism friendly place.

Council aims to secure 'Autism Friendly' organisation status as a potential model for other Community Planning Partners.

Commitment to JAM training, as this will allow people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier to tell others they need 'Just A Minute' discreetly and easily.

Development and launch of sensory areas in People's Park and Carnfunnock.

Council venues were be accredited with the Autism NI Impact Award. Autism Information Roadshows Additional Activities: Makaton Training

Total: 24 awareness-raising sessions delivered - 92% increase from previous Statement of Progress

Six venues have received the 'Autism Impact Award' in recognition for going 'above and beyond to create accessible and autism-friendly' environments, including Carrickfergus Amphitheatre, Larne Leisure Centre, Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Carnfunnock Country Park, The Gobbins and The People's Park.

Our Impact

The achievement involved staff training and a number of adjustments to improve accessibility and overall customer experience, including pre-visit guides and 'quiet spaces' at a number of venues.

The Braid Arts & Museum, Larne Arts & Museum, Carrickfergus Museum, and the Andrew Jackson Cottage & Rangers Museum have all received Impact Award training. Action Plans for these venues have been developed and Autism Champions identified. It is anticipated that these venues will receive their Autism NI Impact Award by March 2024.

267 staff members have completed 'Just A Minute' (JAM) Awareness Training successfully so far. This initiative is another positive step in the right direction in our journey to become an Autism Friendly Borough. Training continues to be rolled out.

Two additional sensory areas have been launched – one in People's Park and the other in Carnfunnock Country Park. These were funded by the Department for Communities via the Access and Inclusion Programme which aims to promote a more inclusive society by enabling people with disabilities to fully participate in arts, cultural and active recreation activities. The

People's Park Sensory Area was launched by the Mayor on 27 June 2023; Carnfunnock Country Park Sensory Area was launched by the Mayor on 23 October 2023.

All 6 venues were successful in gaining Autism NI's Impact Award accreditation in June 2021.

- Seven Towers Leisure Centre
- Carrickfergus Amphitheatre
- Larne Leisure Centre
- The People's Park
- Carnfunnock Country Park
- The Gobbins

Pending award:

- The Braid Arts Centre
- Larne Museum & Arts Centre
- Carrickfergus Museum
- Andrew Jackson Cottage & Rangers Museum

3 Roadshows delivered in the reporting period. 3 Roadshows planned to be delivered within the next 9 months. 6 sessions delivered. 90 MEA residents invited to attend.

Greenways and Outdoor Spaces

Progress Overview

- During the period September 2021-September 2023 2 programmes to promote health and wellbeing have been facilitated, involving 182 participants.
- In addition, 45 single events involving 1350 participants have taken place. Examples of events include orienteering, safety on our water, den building, yoga, art and guided walks learning about our natural heritage.
- Summer events – 43 events over the summer period attracting approx. 1500 participants.
- Healthy Oceans Initiative – 132 participants.
- Delivered the Healthy Oceans Healthy Minds Campaign in partnership with Live Here Love Here; a late summer tour of our blue spaces to help residents form a lasting connection to our waterways. 6 sessions were hosted across the 3-week campaign and included - Beach Babbies, Rockpool Safari, Stand Up Paddle boarding, Pollution Art and Seaweed Tasting.
- Emergency tree fund - 9 confirmed tree planting sites for winter planting 2023/24 - 32,732 trees confirmed for 23/24 tree planting season.

- The EmBRACE programme funded by The Executive Office through Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Good Relations Programmes "Embrace" and "TBUC Trees" which operated from 1 October until 21 March. It encouraged residents to attend outdoor events whilst celebrating the diversity and culture of the borough.
- From November 2023:
- 375 Memory Trees were distributed to residents across the borough
 - 150 other trees were planted during embRACE events workshops
 - Total 525.
- 1010 participants attended 33 events/workshops/sessions ranging from family sessions in the forests, foraging opportunities and guided walks, workshops with Friends of Groups, Forest Bathing sessions and an event in the park celebrating Lunar New Year. 400 grow-your-own-at home kits were distributed to residents.
- Hard working volunteers, community gardeners and council staff from across Northern Ireland were recognised and celebrated for their hard work and dedication

- as the results were announced for the 2023 Translink Ulster in Bloom awards.
- In an event hosted at Lisburn Civic Centre, the popular annual horticultural competition celebrated the year-round work of green-fingered gardening enthusiasts across the country and officially recognised the most beautiful plant and floral displays and environmental impact achieved in local cities, towns and villages.
 - MEA 2023 Award winners by category were: Large Village - Cullybackey (Mid & East Antrim Borough Council); small town – Ahoghill 2nd place; large town – Ballymena 2nd place.
 - Special Award winners included: Ballystrudder for Sustainability in Practice.
 - 3 Green flag sites - 13ha of land planted with native trees at Carnfunnock country park – Carbon Woodland.
 - £97k secured to carry out park enhancement work throughout the borough – UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
 - Keeran Moss finalist in All-Ireland Sustainability Awards – biodiversity initiative of the year.



Our Impact

- Impact of Community Fridges in the borough at Eden – Carrickfergus, Greenisland, Islandmagee and Larne 2022/23
- 712 Ton of CO2 emissions saved.
 - 223 Ton of Food collected from retailers.
 - 98,000 Meals distributed.No of active allotment holders - 218
 - Sensory Areas being delivered at 2 Principal Parks – with Access and Inclusion funding from DfC (£30k). Officers have worked with local Councillors/ Charity Organisations to ensure the areas are accessible for all. New pathways have been laid leading off the main

- thoroughfare to the Sensory Areas, users will be greeted by a calming space to stimulate senses and encourage both individual and group engagement. The addition of dedicated areas for all ages to enjoy a calm sensory experience will be an important addition to the site. Local Schools and Charity groups will be invited to attend the Sensory Opening days.
- Council have carried out an autism audit at People's Park and introduced quiet hour at the play park to support all users to the site.
 - Introduction of skate schools at Carnfunnock Country Park following a successful trial over

- Easter, introducing residents and visitors to a new sport and engaging all ages especially providing a hobby for 12-16 age group.
- Continued development of skate school at People's Park generating responsible and increased use of skate park
 - LUF investment for Carnfunnock Country Park – Ongoing planning for upgrades this park including Activity Centre, Shop, toilets and Café. Amenity block and play areas - £6million secured for the re-development of Carnfunnock Country Park
 - 3x blue flag/seaside awards

Dementia Friendly

Progress Overview

Council worked in partnership with Alzheimer's Society to deliver 13 Dementia Awareness training sessions across the borough which saw 279 people trained. 34 businesses and community groups were also represented at Dementia Awareness training sessions and 109 staff members from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council were trained.

2 staff members and 1 Elected Member were trained as 'Dementia Champions' by Alzheimer's Society, enabling them to deliver the Dementia Friendly Communities presentation across the borough. The Mid and East Antrim Dementia Friendly Steering Group was restarted in 2022 and members were added to include people with lived experience of Dementia or as a family carer, as well as having representation from local businesses, Dementia support groups, NHSCT Dementia Navigators, Alzheimer's Society Dementia Advisors and the Inter-Ethnic Forum. The steering group meets quarterly, and this wider input has ensured any Dementia-Friendly actions are fit for purpose and delivered through a collaborative approach.

In May 2022 and 2023, a week-long programme of activities were delivered for Dementia Action Week. These activities included reminiscence sessions

through storytelling, chair-based exercise, Dementia Friendly 'This is Me' choir, chair-based dance and Museum reminiscence demonstrations. A dementia support group was also supported to access external funding to run an Inter-generational event during Dementia Action Week 2022.

In September 2022, feedback received from residents indicated that there was a need to know more about the support available for people living with Dementia, their family members and carers. Council responded to this by developing 'Signposting Information Support Packs' which included details on any support services available to people with Dementia or their carers throughout the borough. These signposting packs were piloted at Dementia Awareness training sessions for residents in October 2022 and due to their success, they are now given out at every Dementia Awareness training session. Post-training evaluation forms have shown that 100% of attendees receiving these support packs feel they are a useful resource. 3 organisations have also used Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's signposting pack as a model to develop their own resource for their local area.

3 community groups who work with people with Dementia in Mid and East Antrim were

supported to promote their activities or to access external funding for sustainability.

In September 2023, Council released a Dementia Awareness Campaign called "We See You. We Care." which featured residents from across the borough who were living with Dementia or caring for a loved one with Dementia. The campaign highlighted the experiences of people impacted by Dementia and the support available within Mid and East Antrim and was displayed across billboards, and ad shells, with the campaign video being shown as an advert before films within cinemas in Larne, Carrickfergus and Ballymena. A campaign advert also featured on Q Radio and the video was shared widely across social media. As part of this campaign, the Council's Dementia Friendly Borough work was rebranded to provide recognisable branding and signage to assist in identifying 'Dementia Friendly' organisations. Council's website was also updated with information on upcoming training and events, as well as a new signposting support section. Since launching the campaign, many residents have been able to access information and support, with one individual commenting, "Since Council launched that campaign, I feel we now have the opportunity to get our loved one the support they really need and we know where to go for it".

Our Impact

- Number of awareness sessions delivered: 13
- Number of businesses and community organisations participating in Dementia Training 34
- Number of Dementia friends: 279
- Number of Dementia Champions receiving necessary training to support delivery of awareness sessions: 3
- 91% of attendees reporting that their knowledge of Dementia has improved as a result of the workshop.

Details of any additional performance measures identified:

100% of attendees at Dementia Awareness training sessions felt the signposting information pack provided was a useful resource.

88,974 people were reached through the Dementia Campaign Video across Council's Social Media platforms within 3 weeks.

There were 140 visits to the Dementia section of Council's website within the first month of it being updated with support information.

Dementia Campaign advert went out on Q Radio for 2 weeks. Q radio report having approximately 362,000 listeners per week.

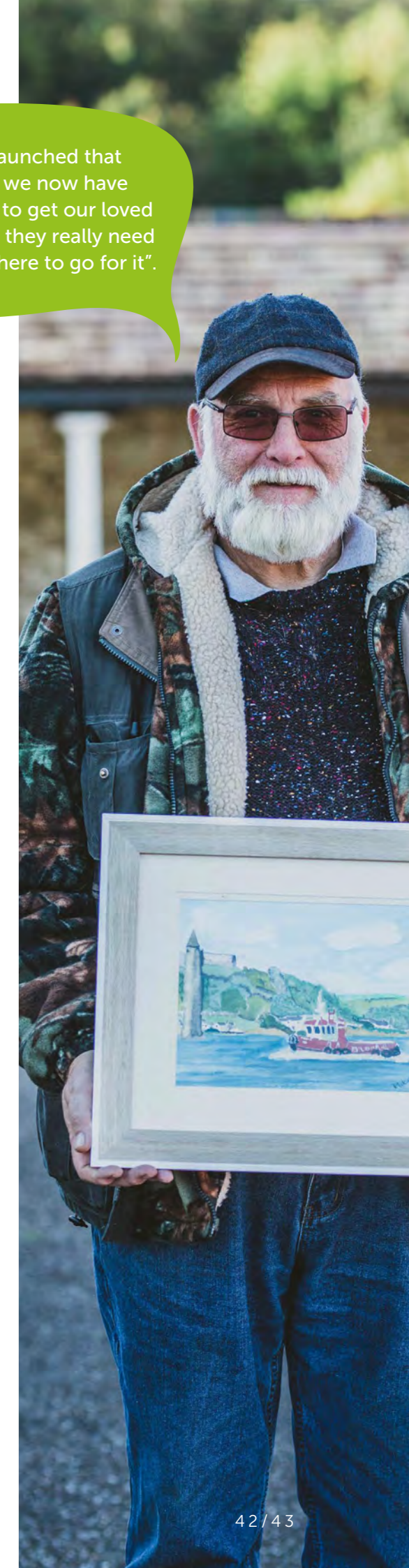
The Dementia Campaign video was played in cinemas within Larne, Carrickfergus and Ballymena over a 2-week period, with 5,565 visitors having seen the advert.

Comment on the campaign:

Comment on the training: "This was a very informative training session, providing much needed awareness in the community. I feel confident to engage with people with Dementia and their carers."

Another attendee stated, "This course was very informative, and it has enabled me to be more compassionate towards people living with Dementia."

"Since Council launched that campaign, I feel we now have the opportunity to get our loved one the support they really need and we know where to go for it".



Ageing Well Model

Progress Overview

The Provision of Ageing Well Services contract was developed as a joint procurement process between NHSCT, PHA, NIHE, SPPG, PCSP and Council to provide services that would support older people throughout Mid and East Antrim to age and live well. Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP) were appointed as the delivery agent for this contract. Partners meet quarterly with staff from MEAAP to review progress on the contract.

- Number of partners committed to developing Aging Well Model: 6
- Number of consultation sessions (contract management meetings): 8 meetings
- Number of funders secured: 6

Our Impact

From August 2021 to March 22, Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership (MEAAP) reported there were over 500 members across the Mid and East Antrim area, there were 47,~536 successful Good Morning phone calls made, 304 work maintenance work orders were requested including 121 home security orders, and 235 individuals were signposted to ICT training/support.

From April 22 to March 23, MEAAP reported there were 654 members by year end. 495 work orders were requested over the year including 170 home security orders, 69,548 successful Good Morning phone calls were made and 20 people were signposted to ICT Training/support. MEAAP also reported a total of 23,329 volunteering hours during 22/23 throughout MEAAP services. 50 older people also benefitted from 'Helping Hands' cost of living packs which included fuel vouchers/bags of coal, cupboard essentials and signposting leaflets.

From April 23 to September 23, MEAAP reported there were over 600 members across the Mid and East Antrim area, with 31,008 successful Good Morning phone calls made, 304 work

maintenance orders requested including 83 home security equipment orders, as well as 15 people being signposted to ICT Training/support and 23,053 volunteering hours being recorded through MEAAP services.

Details of any additional performance measures identified:

The service user commented that the service is a lifeline to staying connected with people. This service user reports peace of mind, less stress and reduced loneliness due to Good Mornings Support.

This service user reports that they feel more confident, knowing that there is always someone they can turn to for help.

"You have brought joy to my mornings"

"I absolutely love the volunteers and I am so grateful for the lifts to the hospital"

The fitting of these lights have increased their safety and security around the house. The service user commented that they have no one else who could do these jobs and they now feel much safer in their home.



Loneliness Network

Progress Overview

1 in 3 people in Northern Ireland feel they are more often lonely than not – Based on latest population estimates, this roughly equates to more than 500,000 people. Chronic loneliness affects 1 in 20 people in Northern Ireland. Following a loneliness conference in 2019 a need was identified by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and Mid and East Antrim Borough Community Planning to provide a co-ordinated and consistent approach to preventing and addressing loneliness with the Mid and East Antrim area. As a result of the Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network was launched in December 2019.

To date the Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network has :-

- The network has met regularly to share and update of the ongoing work within the partner agencies.
- Launched a webpage and social media campaign.

- Distributed 60 tablets to local vulnerable people to encourage digital inclusion.
- During the Covid pandemic the network distributed a range of packs for all ages including art packs, afternoon tea boxes and emotional wellbeing boxes for young people.
- Issued funding to members carrying out projects to tackle loneliness.
- Created a brand logo to identify to Loneliness Network.
- Organised a webinar with the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The period 2021-2023 has seen massive growth for Mid and East Antrim Loneliness Network. Aiming to support people to live well within cohesive and well-connected communities the Network has rolled out innovative achievements including: Chatty Benches, Chatty Cafes, "Connected" Chatty Walks, public awareness raising campaigns, photography projects, Loneliness Champions, Kindness postboxes and the development of a Facebook page.

Our Impact

- 16 Chatty Benches established and launched
- 13 Chatty cafes established and launched
- 5 Kindness Postboxes established
- Annual series of Chatty Walks running for 3 years involving up to 15 people each time
- 12 Loneliness Champions nominated to acknowledge those who have gone the extra mile
- Development of MEA Loneliness Network Webpage with GIS map and Facebook page to promote work locally
- 1 Photography project rolled out involving over 25 local young people with a variety of abilities
- Finalist in the MJ Awards in 2022 under the category "to mark significant innovations in transforming local public services"
- MEA Loneliness Facebook page has 54 Like and 87 Followers.
- Over 40 organisations now a member of the MEA Loneliness Network.
- Regular presentations given to NHSCT Loneliness Forum made up of Loneliness Networks in the Northern Trust.
- BBC coverage on BBC Newsline of our first Chatty bench and our first Kindness Postbox.
- General population of Mid and East Antrim are now much more aware of the issue of loneliness through our campaigns and PR around these projects and the fact that loneliness can affect anyone.
- Loneliness Network members are now advocates of the work of the Loneliness Network and promote this throughout their own organisations and daily work.
- Local people have been helped in a variety of ways through our extensive range of projects tackling loneliness and isolation.
- A Loneliness Framework has been developed and this Network is involved in lobbying for a Loneliness Strategy for Northern Ireland.



Poverty Action Group

Progress Overview

The Poverty Action Group continues to meet and the following schemes have been developed: The lunchbox scheme and the Uniform scheme. Referrals to all members where sent and referral process explained. Over the summer months 55 clients were provided with Affordable Food Club membership. 43 clients were provided with their first week's shopping. Some members are referred as they have no money or food therefore financial support is required for membership and shopping. Only the first week's shopping is provided free. 102 x £50 (£5,100) step down grants for clients when ending membership. All Women's Aid clients receive free membership and their first week's shopping as many arrive at refuge with no money until benefits are applied for. 45 electric over blankets will be distributed in Autumn.

Affordable Food Hub

The Affordable Food Club (AFC) is now well established and has increased membership capacity in Ballymena to 300 members plus 100 in Larne and 100 in Carrickfergus. Each membership cycle is for 12 weeks, with a waiting list to join. There are plans to start providing affordable ready meals for those clients who live alone or who

are unable to prepare a meal. We have interest from Good Morning Ballymena and Mid & East Antrim Age Well Partnership to purchase these. This income will increase sustainability. We also aim to provide these to our members at a reduced cost.

A Blast Chiller will be purchased to meet health and safety regulations. In agreement with our landlord, we aim to place additional office space in our car park which will allow other agencies such as Victim Support and Patient Client Council to move to the Hub and therefore create further onsite wrap around support for clients. The rental income will also help with sustainability.

The purchase of the mobile units will be provided from the sale of a large van which is no longer needed as we have the outreach shops which can be used as a base to complete rural deliveries. In partnership with Moy Park, Cranswick and Ballymena Chamber of commerce we will be providing each of our members with the contents of a Christmas dinner i.e., Turkey, Ham, Vegetables and all the trimmings to the value of £50. In addition to this each child of school age will receive a book token and selection box, all donated by our sponsors. The majority of our funding continues to be used for rent, utilities, petrol and staff.

Extension to Welfare Mitigations Objectives;

- To provide high quality advice services to help people across NI particularly the most vulnerable to help them negotiate the welfare benefit system.
- To provide timely accurate management information reports on service activity and client profiles.
- To provide high quality advice in line with the NIASQS and the 7 principles of advice delivery.
- Provision of face to face service
- Receive GDPR referrals from the free phone helpline.
- Service provision complies with NI Advice Quality Standard.
- Action all recommendations and improvements.
- F/L managers improve service delivery
- Empower clients to increase self-sufficiency.
- Provide a referral service to specialist support
- F/L managers to provide MI by 10th working day.
- Target Groups: Section 75, low income households, individuals affected by welfare changes etc.

Our Impact

Lunchbox Scheme

This was a hugely successful scheme. In the period: -

- 1,924 from Ballymena
- 4,026 from Larne
- 3,303 from Carrickfergus

Giving a total of 19,281 residents affording of the scheme.

Uniform Scheme

The uniform scheme has been hugely successful. In the period 464 residents of Larne afforded of the scheme, 285 from Carrickfergus and 927 from Ballymena, giving a total of 1,676.

Affordable Food Hub

300 members signed up across the borough. Each cycle is for 12 weeks, and a waiting list has been established due to high demand.

An additional van was purchased to help with the mobile aspect of AFC to ensure that we can reach those in a rural setting. We have partnered with MEA Community Advice to use one of their interview rooms in both Larne and Carrickfergus to open a small shop two days per week in each location. This has proved very successful and increased membership in each town as a result. Additional freezers and fridges have been purchased for both locations to provide a greater range and replicate Ballymena stock. Cranswick have confirmed that they will

become a sponsor to provide funding and surplus food. As we have a local bakery and egg supplier. We were recently awarded 'Social Enterprise of the year' at the Ballymena Business Awards which has helped raise awareness of AFC. The board of Directors has now been increased to 9 members and we have received our Charity Number from Charity Commission. All retail staff have completed General Advisor Training to help with wrap around advice and support. We have recruited a further volunteer driver and 4 retail volunteers for Larne and Carrick shops.

Extension to Welfare Mitigations

- Total number of clients/enquiries/issues. Clients – 713 Enquiries – 0(all were cases), Issues - 1382
- Total number of referrals inbound/outbound. Inbound – 123 Outbound - 95
- Total number of cases opened/closed – Opened 613
- Total number of Income assessments 713
- Total Number of Benefit checks 713
- Total number of crisis interventions referrals - 30
- Total Amount of Income Generated by project on behalf of service users. £1,064,867.62

- Number of people to access service - 713
- Number of people to access service via helpline
- Number of people with increased financial capability.

Appeals

- Total number of new appeals this period – 13 from standardised report our own report shows 30
- Total number of appeals hearing this period - 89
- Total number of appeal clients - 113
- Total number of appeal cases - 113
- Money back at appeal this period - £144,671.24

Number of staff training sessions -5 new volunteers undergoing

- 98% of people satisfied with service.
- 80% of people that would recommend service to others.
- 95% of people who felt their circumstance were improved by accessing service.
- 90% of Section 75 groups assisted.
- 97% of people satisfied with appeals service.

Additional Impacts

Affordable Warmth Scheme

925 enquiries received for the Affordable Warmth scheme during the reporting period. 608 home visits made.

During the reporting period 552 referrals made to the Affordable Warmth Scheme and a waiting list of 62 applicants was forwarded to the new Scheme to be followed up.

Cook Slow Eat Well

Following the pandemic and Cost of Living crisis the demand for these demonstrations has increased with 14 being delivered during the reporting period.

Heater lending scheme

This scheme was developed for households with no heating who are waiting on a replacement boiler via a grant scheme. This scheme has been operational since January 21 and provides eligible households with the loan of a number of energy efficient electric heaters as a temporary measure until their heating system is upgraded.

Sew Energy Efficient

This resource is provided free to local community based groups on a loan basis and groups are provided with up to 10 sewing machines and accompanying

equipment along with material to make draught excluders. Four community groups benefitted from the sew energy efficient lending service during the reporting period.

Energy Detectives

This school-based programme provides practical learning around energy use in the home with the help of an energy monitor. Pupils become members of an Energy Detectives team, taking part in a week of fun activities that help them and their families identify potential 'energy gobblers' in their homes and discover just where energy is being wasted and are set 3 tasks by Energy Detectives HQ.

Phase 2 of Warm Spaces Grant Scheme (Community Recovery)

This very successful community grant scheme is being rolled out for a second year in response to the continuation of the cost-of-living crisis. The scheme opened on 23 October and will run until 18 February 2024. Constituted groups are permitted to apply for 100% funding up to a maximum of £500 to encourage them to host a Warm Space for the local community. The definition of a warm space is that it must be a free to use, warm, safe place where residents can expect a friendly and inclusive welcome. £12,500 is again being made available for up to a maximum

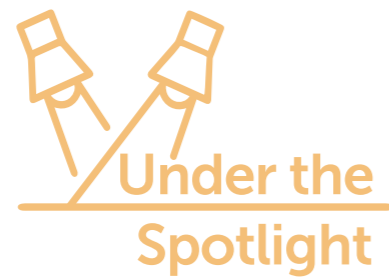
of 25 community groups. A total of 13 applications have been approved in phase 2.

'Fab Food for Less'

Building on the success of our slow cooking cookbook and Cook Slow Eat Well sessions an air fryer cookbook was developed. During the reporting period 46 air fryer kits comprising an air fryer, cookbook, silicone utensils and ingredients for one of the recipes were provided to households struggling to make hot meals. This initiative was also extended to include air fryer demonstrations with one completed during the reporting period and considerable demand for further sessions going forward.

Progress in Education

Developing educational achievement and aspirations



Our Future Together Programme

The Our Future Together is under the Our Children and Young People Theme and is made up of three elements:-

- Respecting Difference – Formative Years Programme
- Sports Programme
- Schools Engagement Programme

This is a cross-community programme is aimed at nursery and primary aged children. The Formative years project worked with 4 nurseries across the borough of Mid and East Antrim.

The Sports Programme worked with year 7 pupils in 6 primary schools across the borough and the Schools Engagement Programme worked with year 7 pupils in 7 Primary schools – 1 from each District Electoral Area. As well as bringing school and nursery aged children together from different community backgrounds, participants received training on the following:-

- Resilience and Emotional wellbeing
- Lifestyle and nutrition
- Physical activity and screen time

Progress and Impact of Actions

As stated above only actions that were deemed relevant and appropriate continued to be delivered. This took account of the emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living rise and the review of the community plan "Putting People First", which took place during this reporting period.

Parental Engagement – Research and report on best practice in raising aspirations of children and parents in relation to nursery, primary, post primary and further education. Explore and learn from family/parenting programmes, for example 'Incredible Years'.

This programme was extremely successful and received positive publicity through the local press and Council's social media channels. It enabled children from different community backgrounds to come together and learn important skills around resilience, mutual understanding and respect and learn about diversity in Mid and East Antrim.

- Mutual Respect & Understanding
- Diversity – Japanese, Chinese, African, Polish and Pakistani cultures

This was a successful and progressive programme with a range of age-appropriate interventions that supported children and young people from the age of 3-11. It supported the development of stronger relationships between pupils and schools, reinforcing the good relations message as they develop into young adults.

The following outcomes were achieved:



90.29%

felt their knowledge of cultural traditions/ backgrounds had increased.



75.73%

felt they had a better attitude towards people of a different religious background.



86.41%

felt that had a better attitude towards people from a different ethnic background.



88.35%

would recommend this programme.

Volunteering

Progress Overview

To map the sector, create opportunities to increase participation in volunteering and support organisations to welcome new volunteers through creative positive opportunities, training and recognition.

Covid has had an impact on the state of the sector and NISRA research is indicating:

Pre Covid the NI statistics were sitting at 28% of the NI population volunteered and this figure had been pretty static for over 10 years. Just after covid the statistics were showing that only 17% volunteered and this drop was consistent with research across the UK. The latest statistics from NISRA have shown that the figure has increased to 21% so at least we are on the right lines but still have some way to go.

Organisations and the research are indicating:

- Many find it difficult to recruit and retain new volunteers for roles that are long term, involve training or a lot of responsibility
- Volunteers are asking for short term, episodic and flexible opportunities that meet their changing priorities and work/home life
- Volunteers want roles that make an instantaneous

difference, or they want to know the difference that they make more readily than before.

- The recruitment process needs to be simple and non-bureaucratic which isn't easy for roles which require Access NI etc.
- Some want an online/digital journey and others still like the pen and paper, but the majority want human contact
- Each volunteer wants their individual needs to be met which is a shift away from the focus being on the needs of the organisation.
- Organisations have less resources for volunteers as budgets get tighter and therefore there is a decrease in volunteer managers/co-ordinators and more staff members where volunteering is part of their wider remit. This means that the inclusion of volunteers is more difficult to manage or help.
- Volunteers also need reimbursement of expenses, and many ask for this to be on the day of their volunteering rather than waiting to the end of the month. The cost-of-living crisis amongst other factors have meant that individuals can't be out of pocket for as long as before. Many organisations moved their reimbursement online during

covid and now are moving back to petty cash etc in order to support/retain their volunteers.

Volunteer Now has been focussing on supporting organisations to respond to the new environment that we find ourselves in and this has included:

Locally with MEA Council area:

Volunteer Now have brought Volunteer Friendly to Northern Ireland in a licence agreement from Volunteer Scotland. Volunteer Friendly is part of a quality pipeline and gives accreditation to small volunteer involving organisations for their good practice in volunteer management. This was introduced in April 2023 with a launch event in MEA Council area (over 30 attended) and two organisations from the Mid and East Antrim Council area are going through the process: Greenisland Community Association and Homestart MEA. Carrick Rangers FC also expressed an interest.

Uniformed Project:

We supported the School Uniformed Project in the MEA area targeting disadvantaged families with uniforms, food and lunch box initiative. We recruited the volunteers for this programme and supported the roll out.

Loneliness Network:

We are proactive members of the Network. During this time the Network joined the Be Collective platform. We launched the Kindness Post Box scheme in Q1 in 2022/23 which involved local primary schools and local care homes and was covered by BBC NI. Invited to facilitate a chatty café session with MEA Council staff members on loneliness and how to reduce it. Volunteer Now recruited the schools and care homes and the volunteers within it to make it successful. Volunteer Now brought together the cluster groups, council, loneliness network, ROC NI and the Larne Action Group in order to share information and good practice in volunteer involvement. Our Volunteering Support Officer was recognised as a Loneliness Champion recognising her work in this area and the positive impact made. The chatty cafes, benches are still in existence: 3 kindness boxes; 11 benches and 12 cafes. Volunteer Now staff also attended training on Loneliness. Attendance at all quarterly meetings.

Age Friendly

Volunteer Now attends all Age Friendly Partnership meetings and recruits and supports the volunteers who facilitated the Christmas lunches that were distributed for the last 2 years.

Volunteers Week

Volunteer Now is part of the national campaigns to recognise volunteering and VN worked alongside MEA Council to host a volunteer recognition event in Carrickfergus. The Mayor of MEA Council and CEO of Volunteer Now attended with over 100 volunteers being recognised for their commitment. Volunteer stories also shared throughout NI to celebrate the impact of volunteering.

Positive Ageing Month runs every October and VN is at the forefront of the campaign to raise awareness of the valuable impact volunteering plays in ensuring the positive mental health and emotional wellbeing of those who volunteer in this area. The Kindness Post Boxes and health and wellbeing workshops were provided. These were delivered to the Council and Loneliness network members.

Neighbourhood Renewal

Member of the subgroup and proactively supports the engagement of residents in volunteering.

Mobile volunteering

These are instrumental in enabling older people and those less mobile to volunteer and to make a difference. The groups utilise stock donated from Oxfam to relabel so that they can sell in their stores. E.g., Open Door

Centre Information stands/talks: VN has attended the NRC freshers' fairs and has provided a lot of support with ASRs particularly in Loughshore Hotel and has recruited volunteers from this hotel to support the MEA Larne Half Marathon. Approximately 40 attended this year. Talks given to Mindwise, AMH, Open Door and Homestart. Supported the YMCA to recruit young volunteers.

Ukraine Assistance Centre:

Volunteer Now recruited and managed the volunteers for the Ukraine Assistance Hub that was hosted at The Braid in Ballymena. 24 sessions were supported: 296 volunteering hours with 11 volunteers. (That figure does not count Red Cross volunteers).

Group support:

All new organisations in the MEA area received a health check and support in relation to any gaps that may exist. All organisations supported to register their group and opportunities on Be Collective. Opportunity sheets detailing new opportunities also collated and shared quarterly. These were distributed widely throughout the Council area (140 organisations who then share it with their local offices and staff members, e.g., jobs and benefits office, training organisations etc) and on our website. Staff also attend a range of

groups and partnerships including Larne and Carrick Community Clusters; health wellbeing subgroup (Larne and Ballymena); carrickfergus shared housing advisory group; community planning meetings; ROC Action Group; Larne mentoring programme; LGNI; MEA advice services; affordable food club board; scullery o'tulla advisory group; NHSCT advisory panel. We also have a partnership with Libraries NI and work closely with the jobs and benefits offices delivering talks to staff and undertaking clinics to encourage volunteering as a way to build confidence and self-esteem of the long term unemployed.

Youth Volunteering:

Over the last 6 months Volunteer Now recruited a youth worker (Volunteering Participation Officer) to focus on the promotion and development of volunteering amongst young people. We have been proactively promoting the benefits of Be Collective to schools and have provided talks and workshops to Cambridge House Grammar School and Cullybackey College. The Impact Awards provides recognition to young volunteers and recently we recognised young volunteers within Ballymena Lawn Tennis Club with one young volunteer receiving her 700 Hour Award. We are UK partners of the #iwill movement which encourages youth voice and youth social action. Two of our Ambassadors

are from MEA Council area and volunteer with Girl Guides and St John Ambulance. One attended the recent 10 year anniversary event in the House of Parliament, Westminster. We recruited the volunteers for One Young World and the Schools Summit which was promoted throughout the MEA area and would have reached young people from this catchment.

Throughout NI and open to MEA c/v organisations

The development and delivery of a range of training, e.g. The New Environment (recruit, retain and recognise); Managing Change; Risk Management and Governance training. We have also delivered our Safeguarding training both online and in person to organisations throughout NI. We deliver 10 networking meetings every year (VOLT) on a range of topics relevant to the sector with the latest focussing on the Information Commissioners Office and data collection.

We have maintained the focus on the health and wellbeing of volunteers as it has become increasingly important that organisations are able to support the mental health and wellbeing of those they involve. We have developed a new workshop that will also support organisations to focus on dealing with difficult situations and volunteers.

In light of the growing number of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASRs) Volunteer Now has developed information materials in a range of languages to encourage ASRs to volunteer. We have also run an information session for organisations detailing how they can involve and support ASRs as volunteers.

- We have worked with NICVA to produce an ILM in Volunteer Management and have also created an Institute of Volunteer Leadership with Volunteer Ireland.

Volunteer Now is working with Volunteer Ireland to undertake research which will result in a toolkit. This project focusses on supporting inclusivity in volunteering and will enable organisations to create solutions to ensuring that their volunteers represent their local communities and are as inclusive and diverse as possible. This project is funded by the Shared Island Fund and will be complete by the end of March 2024.

- 148 people living in MEA Council and who attended an event that we ran as a volunteer: 2021 and 2023 registered with us an event volunteer – includes Covid Vaccination Centre, Ukraine Assistance Centre and One Young World as well as the Half Marathon.



Our Impact



46

new organisations from Mid and East Antrim area joined Be Collective to promote volunteering opportunities.



296

new individuals registered on Be Collective to search and register for volunteering opportunities.



148

event volunteers are from the MEA Council area.



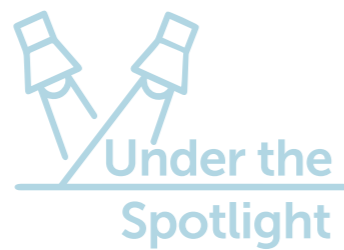
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new opportunities, promoted through Be Collective for potential new volunteers as well. All of these opportunities are seeking more than one volunteer so therefore 276 roles available.



Community Safety and Cohesion

Reducing crime and creating good relations between people and communities'



Ageing Well Service

The Ageing Well Service funded by Mid & East Antrim Community Planning Partners, provides vital support for Older People across Mid and East Antrim in relation to Good Health and Wellbeing and Community Safety & Cohesion. The service includes a Handyperson Service facilitated by Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership and Bryson Energy which provides a small home repair service for Older People enabling them to live independently and safely in their own homes. In addition to this, the Handyperson Service also provides and fits home security equipment to all ages, to ensure that residents feel safe and secure in their homes.

Examples of home security equipment provided includes key safes, security lighting and door bar and chains etc.

The Ageing Well Service also contributes towards the Good Morning Telephone Befriending Service, run in partnership with Good Morning Ballymena, Good Morning Carrickfergus and Good Morning Larne. This service provides befriending telephone calls for Older People who are identified as isolated and in need of connection.



The Volunteers within the Good Morning Teams agree a pre-arranged time to ring the Older Person and to have a friendly chat. Over time, trust and meaningful relationships are built, which provides emotional support and builds resilience for the Older Person to remain safe and independent in their own home.

"After my sight loss, GMC began to call me when my wife went out. It has given both of us peace of mind. The volunteers are all lovely people."

"They listen to me when my family won't. They have taken me to hospital appointments as well."

"More than pleased with the work and service provided by The Handyperson Service. He arrived on time which is rare nowadays! He made suggestions on how to fix the fence and we took his advice along with all the materials. Great tidy job!"

Good Morning Testimonials:

"I just sit and wait for Good Morning's phone call as it brings joy to my heart."

"I am very very grateful for my telephone calls with Good Morning."

"Good Morning has helped me immensely. They have provided me with practical and emotional support."

Progress and Impact of Actions

As stated above only actions that were deemed relevant and appropriate continued to be delivered. This took account of the emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living rise and the review of the community plan "Putting People First", which took place during this reporting period.

Support Hub

A dedicated multi-agency group to focus on emerging issues of vulnerability and identification of those individuals most at risk. A cross-partner sharing of information and knowledge with a view to developing appropriate support.

Safer Places Planning

Scoping and identification of most vulnerable places within the borough. Develop a multi-agency 'rapid reaction' problem solving team, to deal with emerging issues with regard to environmental issues and anti-social activity that is having the highest impact on people's quality of life.

Paramilitary Activity

To explore projects or interventions, in conjunction with regional departments and agencies, to help to address concerns regarding paramilitary activity within the borough.

Intergenerational

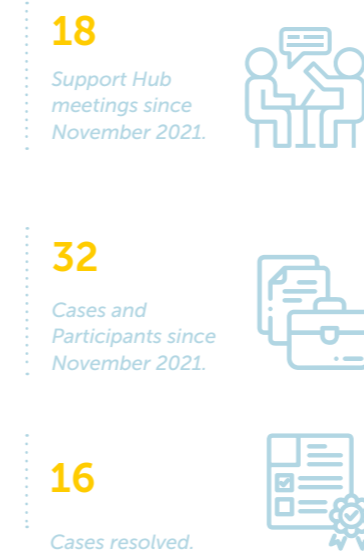
Design community planning activities that promote greater understanding and respect between generations.

Support Hub

Progress Overview

The Support Hub continues to work successfully. It has now been functioning for over 6 years. The cross-agency group focuses on vulnerable individuals across Mid and East Antrim, with regular sharing of information between the partners, in order to develop appropriate support. A confidentiality agreement is signed at the beginning of each meeting and actions are agreed and addressed.

Inter-Agency Hub meetings are held monthly:



The PSNI in Mid and East Antrim currently has three Constables dedicated to the work of the Multi Agency Support Hub: two working with adult cohort members and one working with youth cohort members. The team meets with their colleagues in the multi-agency group on a monthly basis to discuss progress, emerging issues and problem-solving, and in the interim work closely with cohort members and outside partners to provide support and encourage cohort members towards sustainable solutions to their issues. At any given time, these three officers will be working with around thirty of the District's most vulnerable people. Since the scheme's inception, over 110 such people have been deemed fit to be discharged following the team's involvement. These officers are supported in their work by a Sergeant and an Inspector, who also supervise the complementary areas of business managed by the Youth Diversion Officers (two Constables) and the Repeat Offender Unit (two Constables).

Our Impact

18 clients in total have been managed by the Hub during reporting period. 114 clients have been managed by the Hub since its inception to September 2023.

The call out volume from the cohorts showed a reduction of 30% at year-end.

The Support Hub Vulnerability Navigator has connected callers to Police and referred and signposted to relevant support services (such as mental health support services, drugs and alcohol support services, Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership, food banks and other services bespoke to the individual requirements) and educated the Local Policing Team officers on services available.

Safer Places Planning / Place Based Approach

Progress Overview

Regular formal and informal meetings take place in relation to antisocial behaviour within Mid and East Antrim District.

Partner organisations on the forum include: -

- Police Service for Northern Ireland
- Department of Justice
- Youth Justice Agency
- Education Authority
- Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trust
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

The forum has reviewed the most vulnerable places within the borough to target anti-social behaviour.

A number of projects are also currently in place, for example, Community Safety Wardens and the Detached Youth Project, providing support on the ground within local communities to engage with local youth and those involved in anti-social behaviour, working closely and effectively in partnership with PSNI.

The District Support Team remains deployed across the district to provide to Local Support Teams and to react to problems. There are also a number of Neighbourhood Policing Teams distributed across the District, for whom antisocial behaviour is an area of particular focus. Where officers identify an area at particular risk of antisocial behaviour, it can be designated for targeted patrolling using the PSNI's Geographical Information Portal; other officers will review this information upon commencing duty, ensuring knowledge of the issue is passed between teams to allow consistent attention to be given to the issue. The Geographical Information Portal can also be used to review calls by category – for example antisocial behaviour – with the resulting "hot-spot" maps also used as a briefing tool. This information is fed back to the anti-social behaviour forum to inform vulnerable places.

Our Impact

14 meeting of the Anti-Social Behaviour Forum have taken place in the period September 2021 to September 2023.

Over 1,000 young people at risk of becoming involved in crime were engaged with. Young people were signposted into youth provision, and some referred for 1-1 mentoring. Links have also been made with schools to ensure a joined



Paramilitary Activity (Including Youth Stream Support Hub)

Progress Overview

Youth Stream Support Hub:

The Mid and East Antrim youth Support Hub was established in December 2020 following a request from the Department of Justice to establish a youth support wing of the main Hub.

Since November 2021, 14 new cohorts have presented with a variety of issues. The key objective of this scheme is to identify young people in our communities susceptible to paramilitary influence with the outcome of implementing support networks and interventions to divert away from paramilitary clutches.

Issues that were presented include drug dealing, domestic abuse both perpetrated by the cohort and against them, drug and substance abuse, self-harm, truancy, loneliness, anger management issues, stealing, engagement in anti-social behaviour, Asperger's diagnosis, stealing from their families, broken homes, families split up to the young person, potential for beatings from paramilitaries due to the young people's actions in their communities, parents at a loss to know how to help cope etc.

The age ranges are from 11 to 21 years, with 3 from the Carrickfergus area, 7 from the Larne area and 4 from the Ballymena area.

Neighbourhood Policing Team Carrickfergus and Larne continue to work closely with Paramilitary Crime Task Force and National Crime Agency colleagues to target and reduce the grip of paramilitarism in the Greenisland area and to remove drugs from within the community. This work alongside collaborative community focused events, strengthens and builds confidence in policing in the area and helps maintain this legitimate role in policing in the community.

Our Impact

100% of partners effectively engaged.

Currently 31 cohorts identified and involved in Youth Hub projects with interventions explored.

12 currently on list with research being conducted in relation to other possible young people at risk, with a view to coming on if they meet criteria.

Council is currently working with Department of Justice to establish indicators regarding the programme.

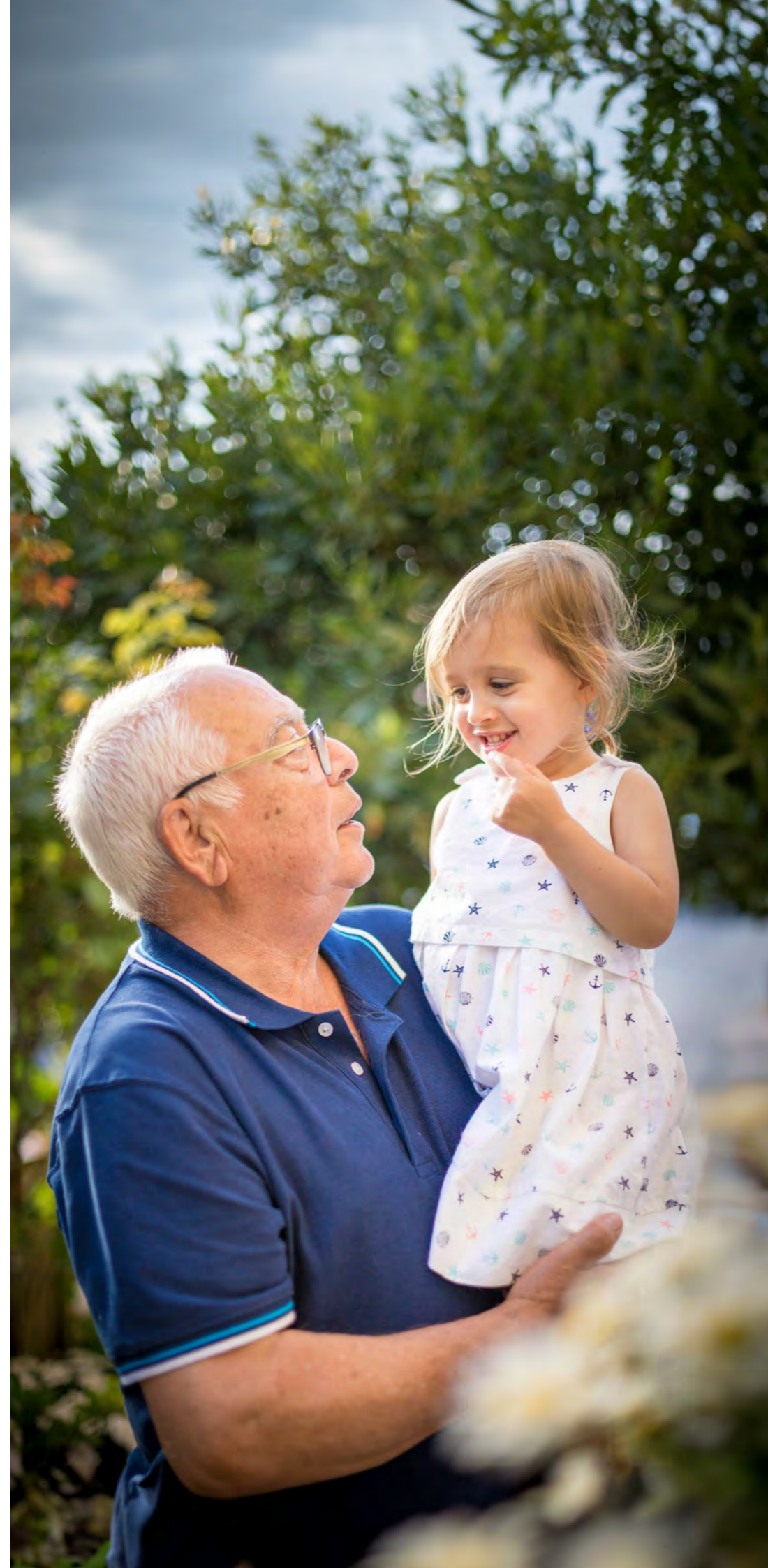
Intergenerational

Progress Overview

Where age is identified as a factor in the vulnerability of an individual who is working with the PSNI's broader Support Hub team in Mid and East Antrim District, officers routinely refer them, with their consent and as appropriate, to a number of external partners including the Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership, the Alzheimer's Society, Dementia NI, Veteran's Support NI, etc. Local Policing Team officers are regularly updated on the extra support available locally to older people and will highlight an individual for referral if there appears to be a need identified during their routine interactions with the public. Where the victim of a burglary is over 60, the investigation receives special scrutiny in recognition of the possible vulnerabilities that may entail. Referral to the District's dedicated Crime Prevention Officer will also be considered if it might be beneficial.

The Good Morning Services and Handyman services provided by Mid and East Antrim Agewell Partnership, also highlighted under the Good Health & Wellbeing Scheme, are aimed at reducing fear of crime within the older population as well as linking them with the younger generation through the befriending services.

The Kindness Post Boxes that are delivered through the Loneliness Network are also aimed at linking generations. The post boxes are placed in schools and the pupils write to older people in nursing homes.



Our Impact

From August 2021 to March 22, MEAAP reported there were over 500 members across the Mid and East Antrim area, there were 47,536 successful Good Morning phone calls made, 304 work maintenance work orders were requested including 121 home security orders, and 235 individuals were signposted to ICT training/support.

From April 22 to March 23, MEAAP reported there were 654 members by year end. 495 work orders were requested over the year including 170 home security orders, 69,548 successful Good Morning phone calls were made and 20 people were signposted to ICT Training/support. MEAAP also reported a total of 23,329 volunteering hours during 22/23 throughout MEAAP services. 50 older people also benefitted from 'Helping Hands' cost of living packs which included fuel vouchers/bags of coal, cupboard essentials and signposting leaflets.

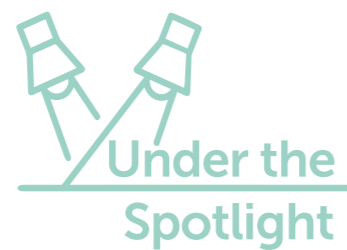
From April 23 to September 23, MEAAP reported there were over 600 members across the Mid and East Antrim area, with 31,008 successful Good Morning phone calls made, 304 work maintenance orders requested including 83 home security equipment orders, as well as 15 people being signposted to ICT Training/support and 23,053 volunteering hours being recorded through MEAAP services.

5 Kindness Postboxes established in the period September 2021 to September 2023



Our Environment

Increasing awareness, positive attitudes and action for a clean, safe, protected, vibrant environment'



Embrace Forest Schools

The Embrace Forest Schools project was developed in 2022-2023 as a good relations project working in collaboration with Council's Parks Department. The project was developed in partnership with internal and external partners (District Electoral Area Team, Parks Team, Play team and community groups). The programme aimed to promote good relations and cultural diversity whilst encouraging people to make use of the borough's rich outdoor spaces, particularly during the winter months when getting outdoors has huge health benefits.

A range of activities were available across the borough and were open to all to register. The programme was a great success and received positive coverage through local press and Council's social media channels.

Activities included: -

- **Forest Families** – tying in the Scandinavian model of Forest Schools and introducing different cultures.
- **Forest Bathing** – educating on the Japanese relaxation practice of shinrin yoku.
- **Celebrate the Seasons with foraging and tree planting** – Introducing the global culture of foraging and educating on global environments/native trees.
- **Grow Your Own Chinese/Italian/Indian cultural kit** – encouraging Mid and East Antrim to try different recipes from different cultures. 90 packs available across Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus.



- **Lunar New Year's Celebration**
A Chinese new year event to raise awareness on Chinese traditions. This outdoor event took place on Saturday 28th January 2023, 2pm-4pm at People's Park, Ballymena and included food samples, craft activities, family games and dance performances.
- **'Friends of' groups in local woodland/landscape areas**
A safe and welcoming multi-cultural space for residents of Borough to meet and improve the local environment while building good relations.

- **Grow Your Own Memory Tree**
The opportunity for residents across MEA to apply for a memory tree to plant in memory of a loved one or special event.

Such was the success of the programme a total number of 707 participants took part, plus 375 people applied for memory trees.

A total number of 2,855 trees/plants were planted plus 375 memory trees given out for people to grow themselves.

The outcomes for this project are as follows: -



81.03%

had increased knowledge of cultural traditions/backgrounds



57.71%

had a better attitude towards people from a different religious background



53.75%

had a better attitude towards people from a different ethnic background



96.05%

would recommend this programme

Progress and Impact of Actions

As stated above only actions that were deemed relevant and appropriate continued to be delivered. This took account of the emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living rise and the review of the community plan "Putting People First", which took place during this reporting period.

Environmental Champions

Develop and launch an Environmental Champions Programme to encourage more environmentally responsible behaviour.

Cycle Infrastructure

Explore potential for development of additional cycle infrastructure.

Tourism Strategy

Ensure the implementation of Council's Tourism Strategy is done in an environmentally sustainable way.

Resource Efficiency Programme

Deliver a resource efficiency programme in partnership with local businesses.

The Cycle Infrastructure

Progress Overview

Currently a review in cycle routes is being undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure Travel Team and Council will be working with them on this.

Funding has been provided for the Cullybackey to Galgorm Greenway under the Small Settlements scheme. This is phase one of a larger project which is anticipated to connect Broughshane to Cullybackey via new and existing routes.

Our Impact

One route has been funded and agreed by the public to date with others having been put through to the Department for Infrastructure for future budget setting.

There was public consultation as part of the Small Settlements Scheme, open to all, but not targeted as specific Council areas.

Tourism Strategy

Progress Overview

The first Tourism Strategy was expected in March 2023 but has been delayed twice since then. Consultation commenced in October 2023 and a number of core themes have been identified to date including regenerative and sustainable tourism.

Sustainability toolkits are shared with industry through the Mid and East Antrim Tourism ezine with promotion of industry talks and events to ensure maximum awareness.

Funding is being sought for Council Officers to be trained in 'Leave no Trace' accreditation which enable Officers to deliver the training to other Council departments, other organisations and community group with a view to making Mid and East Antrim a 'Leave No Trace' Borough.

Our Impact

Sustainability survey will be issued to Mid and East Antrim's Hospitality businesses in October 2023.

Tourism NI are reviewing Green Accreditation to see if there is a standard that can be rolled out across Northern Ireland. Tourism NI are considering using Mid and East Antrim area as a pilot.

Next Steps

The Community Planning Partnership has recently reviewed the community plan, "Putting People First". This review was timely in light of the recent pandemic and the impact of the cost of living rise. The Partnership has ensured the reviewed plan reflects the priorities for Mid and East Antrim for the next four years.

The Partnership has also agreed implementation plans which align with the reviewed plan's priorities. Currently, a process is being worked through to develop delivery plans to ensure the priorities identified are delivered.

Whilst these processes are being worked through existing actions are still being delivered on (where appropriate) and progress and impact are still being monitored.

The Partnership will continue to monitor progress and impact and a further Statement of Progress will be published again in November 2025.



Our Vision

Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.



Led by

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