

MID AND EAST ANTRIM  
Labour Market Partnership  
Working Together



# Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership

## 2023-2024 Action Plan



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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.0 Introduction

Employability NI (ENI) was established by the Department for Communities (DfC) to design, procure and implement a fresh suite of employability provisions/initiatives to support people into meaningful employment.

The DfC is the lead department for a number of indicators, through which progress on these outcomes will be measured:

- Indicator 17: Economic inactivity rates excluding students;
- Indicator 32: Employment rate of 16-64 year olds by deprivation quintile;
- Indicator 33: % of people working part-time who would like to work more hours; and
- Indicator 19: % of population living in absolute and relative poverty.

Employability NI has set the following high-level Themes that LMP Action Plans must address:

- ***Economically Inactive*** - To reduce the number of customers who are economically inactive due to a disability and/or health condition or because they have family or caring responsibilities by assisting them to enter into employment or to move them closer to the labour market;
- ***Long Term Unemployed*** - To reduce the number of customers who are long term unemployed by assisting them to enter employment;
- ***Youth Unemployment*** - To help reduce the number of young people between 16 to 24 years of age becoming long-term unemployed;
- ***Disability*** - To provide support to workers with a disability and or a health condition to prevent them falling out of employment;
- ***Skilled Labour Supply*** - To put in place a first-class service for employers that facilitates their access to a suitable skilled labour supply; and
- ***Economic Shock*** - To provide support to customers who are in danger of falling out of employment suddenly due to significant labour market changes.

An integral element of Employability NI is the formation of Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) in each Council district which build collaborative multi-agency partnerships to:

- Understand local market needs;
- Improve employability outcomes;
- Reduce economic inactivity;
- Improve local labour market conditions; and
- Design and deliver targeted interventions.

MEA Labour Market Partnership is Joint Chaired by the Regional Manager and the Chair of Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment and Vice Chaired by the Manager of Carrickfergus Enterprise and consists of representatives from Department for Communities (JBO), Northern Regional College, Galgorm Resort and Spa, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, MEA Inter-Ethnic Forum, Mid and East Antrim Advice Services, MEA Manufacturing Task Force, Local Enterprise Agencies, Careers Service NI, Construction Industry Training Board NI, Education Authority and the Gallaher Trust.

DfC have requested that MEA LMP submit a refreshed Action Plan for the period 2023-2024. An Annual Action Plan for 2024-2025- and three-year Strategic Assessment Plan for 2024-2027 will then be further developed.

### **1.1 MEA - a Council focused on Putting People First**

The Council's Corporate Plan is centred on the delivery of an inclusive community plan with a vision that states:

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



**Figure 1: MEA Corporate Plan**

Integral to the delivery of Council's Corporate Plan is the Borough's first Community Plan - Putting People First. This plan is facilitated by Council in partnership with the Community Planning Partnership which comprises a range of statutory partners, Elected Members and community and voluntary representatives following widespread community consultation.

The Plan sets out the area's ambitions for the region under the five key strategic themes:

1. Sustainable Jobs and Tourism
2. Good Health and Wellbeing
3. Progress in Education
4. Community Safety and Cohesion and
5. Our Environment.

## 2. Policy and wider strategic considerations

### 2.0 Programme for Government

The NI Executive held a public consultation in 2021 on its Programme for Government draft Outcomes Framework. The draft Framework contains nine strategic Outcomes which, taken together, will set a clear direction for the NI Executive and provide a vision for the future of all citizens.

Figure 2 below sets out the Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework.



*Figure 2: Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework*

The relevant outcomes are:

- Outcome 3: 'We have a more equal society'
- Outcome 6: 'We have more people working in better jobs'
- Outcome 8: 'We care for others and help those in need'

### 2.1 10 X ECONOMY: ECONOMIC VISION FOR A DECADE OF INNOVATION

The Department for the Economy has outlined its economic ambitions for a '10x Economy', a concept to deliver a ten times better economy with benefits for everyone in Northern Ireland. The strategy aims to make a significant

impact on the economic, societal, and environmental wellbeing of the population with a Decade of Innovation designed to unlock the unique opportunity to drive growth and inclusion. The aim of the strategy is to see a tenfold increase in innovation while also achieving a fairer distribution of opportunities for people to participate in and benefit from our economic growth.

The MEA LMP Action Plan hopes to contribute to the positive outcomes detailed in the 10x strategy by supporting more people to enter the labour market, providing opportunities to reskill and upskill, increasing access to better jobs and supporting entrepreneurs.

## 2.2 Opportunities arising from the Belfast Region City Deal

The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) is a significant programme of investment in Northern Ireland, with up to £1bn expected to be invested over the next 10-15-year period. Job creation is one of the primary benefits expected across both the construction and operational phases of project delivery. Following a significant period of preparation, the BRCD programme moved into delivery phase in December 2022 with a number of the more advanced projects expected to progress to construction during the 2023/24 financial year.

As a key partner to the Deal, MEA is committed to its success as the potential benefits from these investments will have significant impact on the borough. We are keen to maximise the impact of the Deal by ensuring the skills are in place to meet the demand created and that the benefit reaches across the region to all communities.

The MEA Labour Market Partnership is well placed to help inform and deliver the interventions needed to prepare the market for new jobs and ensure that the local workforce is appropriately prepared. Council, college, and university partners have already committed to this through both the overall Deal and in the Memorandum of Understanding in order to better understand and respond to the employment opportunities arising through the BRCD investment and to improve access to and awareness of existing provision through enhanced co-ordination and joint working. MEA LMP will work with these partners around



key and emerging areas including construction, advanced manufacturing, tourism and digital.

A range of partnership and project opportunities have been identified as the City Deal projects progress into construction phases over the next number of years in two key areas:

- **Professional design and consultancy teams engaged on capital build projects** - 7 design team contracts are expected to go to market in the 2023-24 financial year.
- **Construction builds contracts** - an estimated 6-7 supply team contracts will go to market, of which 3 are likely to begin construction in the latter part of the 2023-24 financial year.
- MEA's key BRCD investments include **i4C Innovation Centre at St. Patrick's Barracks, Carrickfergus Regeneration and The Gobbins Phase II.**

In addition to the City Deal Capital Investments there are a large number of public sector construction projects planned in the borough including works for the Education Authority and civils contracts for the Department for Infrastructure. Council is working closely with its own suppliers and procurement department to ensure that opportunities for employment and upskilling are maximised through the delivery of social value in contracts of scale.

### 2.3 Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be managed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Northern Ireland Office, providing £126,854,145 of new funding across Northern Ireland. A Northern Ireland Investment Plan was developed during Autumn 2022 in partnership with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Partnership group. The work of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Partnership group was supplemented by wider engagement with stakeholders across sectors in Northern Ireland, including NILGA, SOLACE and Council's Economic Development team were actively involved in the development process.

The primary goal of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is to level up all parts of the UK by building pride in place and increasing life chances across the UK with a mix of both revenue and capital funding across three investment priorities:

1. **Supporting Local Businesses:** Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate, thrive and grow, further unleashing the potential of the private sector
2. **People and Skills:** Supporting individuals furthest from the labour market and by moving more people into work with the right skills
3. **Communities and Place:** Investing in the places where people live, restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging

There are a number of areas within the investment plan which provide opportunities for Labour Market Partnerships to work in collaboration and areas to work with stakeholders to avoid duplication.

## 2.4 Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS)

The ‘**Supporting Local Business**’ investment priority aims to support Northern Ireland’s efforts to develop as a globally competitive region and a location of choice to invest, work and live. A new NI Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) is being brought forward by NI Councils, funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund with Council match funding. The focus of the ESS is helping potential entrepreneurs, new starts, and existing businesses to maximise their potential and contribution to Northern Ireland’s economy. It will provide would-be and existing businesses with flexible, tailored and easily accessible advice and support at any stage of their growth journey.

One of the key areas of focus under the ESS programme is “engage” - engaging individuals in prestart activities and lighter touch support for volume starts. Engage will focus on identifying individuals with entrepreneurial aspirations, as well as encouraging them to develop enterprise skills and consider starting a business, drawing on partnerships with organisations already active in this space.

Considering the above NIESS provision, there is an effort to ensure support offered through Council’s and LMPs are aligned. There is an opportunity for LMP’s to add value to the ESS programme, supporting key target groups through their enterprise pathway journey. The provision of personalised wrap around support to remove individual barriers and move people into sustainable

employment or self-employment is one key area where LMPs can support the delivery of the ESS.

## 2.5 Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF): People and Skills

The 'People and Skills' investment priority aims to invest in activity that will support individuals to enter and progress in employment and fulfil their personal potential. It is intended that this funding stream is complementary to the range of funding provision already available including Department for Communities, Department for Economy, PEACEPLUS, National Lottery Community Fund and City and Growth Deals. There are two main areas where LMPs need to be aware of potential duplication of delivery and opportunity to provide wrap around provision.

**Economic Inactivity Support:** This competition closed on 27 January 2023 and is a Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities key intervention to address economic inactivity. There is a key focus to work with the community and voluntary sector with encouragement for collaborative bids to be supported under the £40m indicative budget that is available from April 2023 for a period of 2 years.

**Skills Support for Economically Active and Employed People:** The Investment Plan also outlines support for people who are economically active, those in work or seeking employment, to access basic skills and reskilling. They are particularly interested in proposals that link skills development opportunities and removing barriers to career progression in growth sectors and sectors experiencing skills shortages. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are currently considering whether these activities will be delivered via commissioning or competition with a £7.2m indicative budget available plus £2m for numeracy interventions with activity commencing in 2024 - 25.

MEA LMP aims to stay abreast of additional funding opportunities and any duplication that may arise via the range of UK SPF Investments.

## 2.6 Alignment with PEACEPLUS

The PEACEPLUS programme offers significant opportunities for economic and social benefits in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The new programme has an estimated value of £1.144bn across six themes and 22

investment areas. While there is still lots of development work being undertaken at the minute, the LMP will be cognisant of the opportunities for enhancing the LMP Action Plan and the need to flex support where there may be potential duplication, particularly under Theme 2 of PEACEPLUS: Delivering Socio-Economic Regeneration and Transformation.

## 2.7 Approach to developing the MEA Labour Market Partnership 2023-2024 Action Plan

The purpose of this document is to provide a review of the employability and labour market landscape in MEA and to set out a refreshed one-year LMP Action Plan and proposed budget for 2023-2024.

Subject to approval by the Council and DfC, this Action Plan will be implemented by Council officers and their appointed delivery partners under the oversight of the MEA LMP. Discussions with partners and other councils has also identified a range of key areas where there are opportunities for joint delivery to ensure better clarity in the local labour market, ensuring good value for money and increasing opportunities across the region.

The plan has been developed through two key stages:

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

- A refreshed review of local and regional strategies and policies;
- A review of the statistical evidence relating to the labour market and nature of economic activity in the MEA region; and
- A series of workshops and engagements with industry and key stakeholders including the MEA Labour Market Partnership during January and February 2023.

**Stage Two: Action Plan Development** - building on the findings from Stage One, a series of “Turning the Curve” workshops were held with a range of key stakeholder groups to:

- Understand emerging priorities, key themes, and sectoral issues;
- Make an assessment of needs and gaps in provision;
- Identify key intervention opportunities; and

- Agree a draft Action Plan and budget for approval.

The key outcomes and deliverables from this assessment process are the 2023-2024 Action Plan and the associated budget (See Section 7). An executive summary of the 2023-2024 strategic Action Plan is set out below.

## 2.8 Summary of the strategic Action Plan for 2023-2024

<b>Strategic Priority 1</b>	<b>To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area</b>
Key Activities	SP1.1: LMP Development and Delivery
	SP1.2: Strategic Planning: Development of the 2024 - 2027 MEA LMP Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plan for 2024-2025
	SP1.3: Capacity Building with LMP Members and Stakeholders
<b>Strategic Priority 2</b>	<b>To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally</b>
Key Activities	<b>Economic Inactivity</b>
	SP2.1: Women Returners Outreach, Confidence and Capacity Building
	SP2.2: Ethnic Minority Employability and Outreach Activities
	SP2.3: Women into non-traditional skills academy
	SP2.4: Flex - engagement programme for ageing population/perspective retirees to consider part-time work and new career options
	SP2.5 Community-led/localised skills development
	<b>Long Term Unemployed</b>
	SP2.6: Enterprise Pathways
	SP2.7: Construction Skills Academies
	SP2.8: Classroom Assistant Upskilling Academy
	SP2.9: Hospitality and Tourism Academy
	SP2.10: Childminding
	<b>Disability</b>
	SP2.11: Access All Areas
	SP2.12: Bespoke Graduate Disability Academy
	<b>Skilled Labour Supply</b>
	SP2.13: Transport Academy

	SP2.14: Engineering Academy SP2.15: Cleantech Academy SP2.16: Health Administration Academy SP2.17: Support Services and Homecare Academy
<b>Strategic Priority 3</b>	<b>To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally</b>
Key Activities	SP3.1: Events to support those in education, employment, or training through direct engagement with local employers, training providers and support organisations

### 3 Findings from the consultation process

#### 3.2 Consultation scope

In developing its LMP Action Plan for 2023-2024, MEA has been keen to ensure extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders able to offer useful opinion and perspective on the employability, skills and labour market priorities and needs in the MEA area. The table below summarises the stakeholder groups involved.

Stakeholder Sectors	Organisations
Stakeholder Bodies	Manufacturing Task Force MEA Hospitality Providers Department for Communities Jobs and Benefits Offices (Ballymena, Carrickfergus, and Larne) Northern Health & Social Care Trust Construction Industry Training Board Electrical Training Trust
Enterprise	Invest NI Ballymena Business Centre Carrickfergus Enterprises LEDCOM Venture Folk
Employability Organisations	USEL Triangle NIUSE Disability Action Orchardville Adapt NI NOW Group Network Personnel Specialisterne AEL
Community Sector	Gallaher Trust Inter-Ethnic Forum

	Mid and East Antrim Advice Services
Education and Careers	Northern Regional College Education Authority Local Secondary Schools Learning Community Network NI Careers Service

### 3.3 Key messages from stakeholder engagement

#### 3.3.1 Feedback from MEA employers

Engagement with MEA's manufacturing sector was achieved through consultation with the MEA Manufacturing Task Force (MTF) Skills Sub-Group, along with direct engagement with over 25 manufacturing businesses based in MEA.

Significant skills gaps and the inability to fill vacancies remains a prevalent concern in the sector with companies ranking this as their number one issue. A MTF benchmarking survey in December 2022 outlined the challenges of recruiting suitably skilled staff and encouraging interest in the wide range of opportunities available in the industry.

Manufacturers also referenced ongoing challenges in energy costs, supply chain and logistics. Engagement with employer and a vacancy scan of the four main recruitment platforms also notes the continuing demand for suitably trained staff for the haulage sector particularly qualified drivers, forklift operators and senior supply chain roles.

A similarly high level of demand for people and skills exists in MEA's Health and Social Care sector with continuing high vacancy rates, reflecting a sector under significant pressure as a result of Covid-19, budgetary pressures within the local health service and private domiciliary care providers.

Discussions with business leaders in the Tourism and Hospitality sector confirmed difficulties in recruiting staff. Confidence in the sector is very low as a consequence of job security issues arising from Covid lock-down restrictions that have impacted this sector in particular, and business leaders



are concerned the sector will be unable to increase staffing levels as business volumes begin to ramp up in the post-Covid recovery period.

There is an increasing demand for Classroom Assistants in mainstream and special educational needs in both primary and secondary schools. With there being an increase in the number of children diagnosed with sensory issues there is also an increasing need for one-to-one assistants in mainstream classroom settings. A vacancy scan of JobApplyNI in February 2023 showed that 50% of all advertised posts in the Education and Training sector were for Classroom/Learning Assistants. Special Education Classes in Mainstream Schools' will require 'Advanced Classroom Assistants' which will be a higher level of employment with higher remuneration. This will create vacancies for new general Classroom Assistants.

In general, employers expressed a recognition that in the context of low unemployment and an increasing demand for resource:

- Investment is needed in new and emerging digital manufacturing skills to improve productivity and efficiency.
- Flexibility is needed to reduce barriers to employment, particularly for potential employees who have been previously economically inactive as a consequence of personal circumstances that constrain their ability to engage in traditional work patterns (e.g., caring responsibilities, health concerns and disabilities).
- Hybrid working models are anticipated to be the 'new normal' labour environment and positions that offer job seekers flexibility are likely to be seen as more attractive. Improved digital skills will be important to support the opportunities that increased remote working might bring.
- Further engagement is needed with the education sector to ensure the pipeline of talent is aware of the opportunities available and have the core skills required to enter the labour market.
- In many sectors, greater female participation is needed to improve diversity and gender balance.

In the 2022-23 Action Plan it was noted that employers found it difficult to engage with the Jobs and Benefits Offices (JBO) and that the MEA LMP was seen as an opportunity to improve collaboration between employer and statutory agencies. The LMP has endeavoured to develop greater linkages and has demonstrated strong working relationships with JBO offices, Careers Service and other stakeholders which can provide a firm foundation for progress in 2023-2024.

Employers continue to note that they could be better informed of the current employability schemes that exist to support employers and participants in their journey towards improved employment outcomes. This too is an area that the LMP has sought to address, and it demonstrates a need for further improved communication and promotion of existing employability schemes. A series of engagement activities between employers, stakeholders, the current labour market, and labour market of the future are seen as vital to ensuring a vibrant and forward-thinking workforce of the future.

The make-up of the economically inactive cohort can be difficult for employers to fully understand, and it is hoped that by brokering relationships and better education in this area, the LMP can encourage greater integration of these groups in the labour market. The LMP will also work with the organisations who have been successful in securing UK Shared Prosperity Funding to work with the economically inactive population. LMP staff have met with all of the organisations who will be delivering these projects in MEA to ensure there is no duplication and partnership working where appropriate.

### **3.3.2 Feedback from employability and skills partners**

Several recurring themes emerged from consultation with employability providers, delivery partners, and community representatives, namely:

- The need for flexibility in intervention to tailor the length and content to suit the different priority groups.
- Interventions are often too short and restrained by limited budgets and timeframes to reach successful outcomes.

- The need for flexibility and ability to deliver interventions at community level and at times to suit participants and employer needs.
- Many participants will need mentoring and support to overcome confidence issues, and to adapt to the routine and discipline of a working environment after what, in many instances, may be many years removed from the job market.
- A general lack of awareness by employers about the nature of disabilities and health conditions or the working practices that could help integration into the labour market.
- Sources of information and support are often fragmented, and clients are unclear where to find information and what information they can trust.

The rural nature of the region and transport issues were raised as a common theme across stakeholder meetings. Addressing logistical issues is understood to be beyond the scope of the LMP terms of reference, although there may be opportunities to reduce the impact for rural areas e.g., through the development of digital skills, community access to digital facilities, digital and localised delivery of interventions where possible. The MEA LMP has endeavoured to develop relationships with organisations in rural areas and hopes to develop this further to enable greater participation.

## 4 Findings from the Strategic Assessment

### 4.2 Overview of the Mid and East Antrim labour market

Despite being a highly rural and second least populated Local Government District in Northern Ireland (139,127 residents<sup>1</sup>), MEA is the fifth most economically active council area in Northern Ireland with 74.9%<sup>2</sup> of the working population actively contributing to a successful local economy<sup>3</sup>. Economic activity rates within Mid and East Antrim are above the NI average and the council area ranks joint fourth highest alongside Fermanagh and Omagh.

Economic activity has been volatile over the past 10 years peaking at 78.3% in 2012 and dropping as far as 73.3% in 2020. In 2021, economic activity was 1.9 percentage points higher than the NI average indicating greater participation in the labour market both within the council area and commuting to neighbouring areas. This means more people are actively contributing to a successful local economy compared to other parts of the country.

It is widely known that MEA has suffered a number of significant economic shocks in recent years as a consequence of closures and redundancies in its manufacturing sector, including Michelin (2015), JTI (2015), and Wrightbus (2019) as shown in the adjoining table to the right.

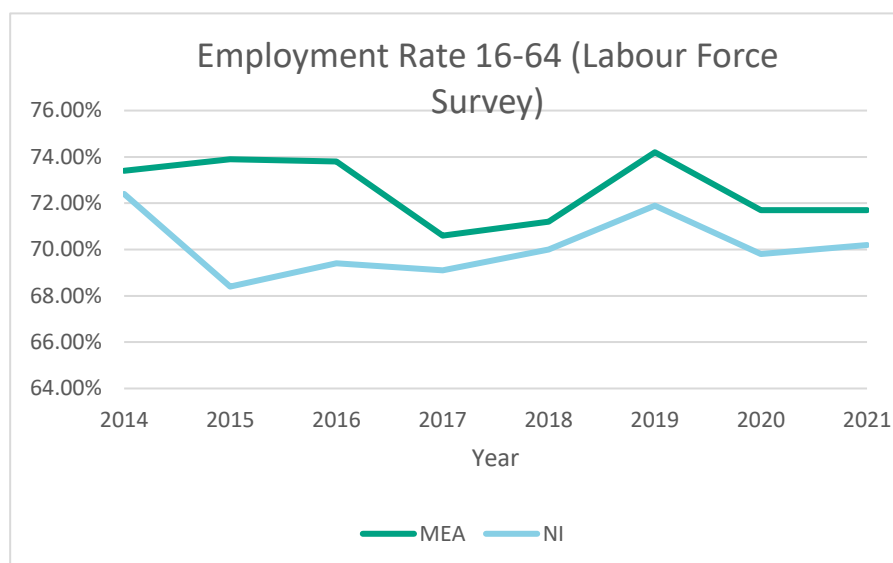
Redundancies Confirmed Source: NINIS		
Year	MEA	NI
2014	60	2140
2015	150	1950
2016	950	3650
2017	410	1790
2018	630	2500
2019	1310	3200
2020	330	5030
2021	770	2840

Despite these events and the effects of Covid-19, the region has maintained a sustained employment rate above the Northern Ireland average as per graph below.

<sup>1</sup> Population Totals, NISRA, 2021

<sup>2</sup> Economic Activity (16-64), NISRA, 2021

<sup>3</sup> Compared to a Northern Ireland average of 73%



The region is home to 5,055 businesses<sup>4</sup>, with 98.7% of these being local, indigenous Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The number of businesses within Mid and East Antrim has been continuously increasing over time to a total of 5,055 in 2022. This is equivalent to 6% of all businesses in NI, a share which has decreased very marginally from 7% since 2013. Over a 5-year period (2018-2021), annual growth in the number of businesses in the council area has been slower than that of the NI average (1.6% vs. 0.9%). In relation to other council areas Mid & East Antrim ranked 9th in 2021 in terms of total numbers and has one of the lower numbers of businesses per capita.

The employment structure in Mid and East Antrim is similar to that of the NI average where Retail, Manufacturing and Health are the key ones. These sectors account for almost half (48%) of all employment opportunities within the council area, again similar to the NI average. The sectoral structure of Mid and East Antrim has remained largely unchanged since 2018 with the biggest change occurring in Manufacturing (19% in 2018 vs. 15% in 2021). However, in 2021, Manufacturing still accounted for a larger share in Mid and East Antrim than the rest of NI (15% and 11% respectively)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses, NISRA, 2022

<sup>5</sup> Key Employment Sectors, Business Register and Employment Survey, 2021

Ulster University Economic Policy Centres (UUEPC) local model insight notes that Mid and East Antrim accounted for 6% of total real gross value added (GVA) in NI, this proportion has declined sharply from 9% in 2010 to 6% in 2018 where it has remained constant since. Whilst NI in general was experiencing positive growth (2% annual growth) during the 2012-2019 recovery period, Mid and East Antrim had an annual growth rate of -4% over the same period of time. However, Mid & East Antrim's GVA held up slightly better than the NI average entering the Covid period (2019-2020) declining by 7% compared to NI which declined by 8%.

Employed people within Mid and East Antrim represent 7% of the total in Northern Ireland in 2021. Positively, the employment rate is higher than the NI average, 71.7% and 70.2% respectively<sup>6</sup>. Mid and East Antrim ranks 5th against other council areas when comparing employment rates. Over the years, both employment and the employment rate have been volatile within the council area, continuously peaking (65,000 in 2012) and troughing (57,000 in 2010, 2014 and 2019). However, the extent of this volatility has calmed somewhat in recent years. This volatility can also be observed across several other council areas in NI.

Mid and East Antrim represents 8% of the total working age population within NI, marginally higher than the representation of the total population of 7%. However, over a 10-year period (2011-2021) the working age population has slowly declined at a rate of 0.06% annually<sup>7</sup>. This reflects a wider demographic change across NI of slowing growth of the working age population as the older population (65+) increases. Mid and East Antrim is being impacted at a faster rate than the rest of NI to the extent that the working age population is already in decline.

### 4.3 Unemployment

Mid and East Antrim has the third highest unemployment rate in NI (4.2%) ranking well above the NI average (3.8%)<sup>8</sup>. In terms of claimant count, in December 2022, 6% of all claimants in NI (2,075 individuals) were from Mid and East Antrim. However, the council area ranks much lower in terms of the number of claimants

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<sup>6</sup> Labour Force Survey, NISRA, 2021

<sup>7</sup> Working Age Population, NISRA, 2021

<sup>8</sup> NISRA, LFS, 2022

and the claimant count rate (2.3%) in comparison to other councils, 9th, and 10th respectively. Mid and East Antrim also has a much lower claimant count rate than the NI average (3.1%)

To continue to support economic recovery and business growth, the MEA LMP must further support actions that will help to turn the curve on job claimant numbers and reduce the aftermath and significant economic shock caused by Covid-19, which caused a spike in job claimant numbers to a peak of 4,235 job claimant individuals. Mid & East Antrim are positively showing the return to pre-pandemic levels given the reported 2,075 job claimants in December 2022.<sup>9</sup>

The Executive's policy decision not to enforce Universal Credit (UC) conditionality requirements is suspected as a key factor influencing this trend, and although conditionality rules were reinstated in December 2021, it may take until early 2023 to notice the increase.

#### 4.4 Economic Inactivity

Mid and East Antrim had a lower economic inactivity rate within the working age population than the NI average in 2021 with a cap of 1.9 percentage points. However, when comparing the total population (16+) Mid and East Antrim's rate is marginally higher than the Northern Ireland rate suggesting a greater number of retired residing within the council area, as highlighted in Figure 3 below. Within the working age population, Mid and East Antrim account for 7% of the overall inactive within NI, a share that is proportionate to the size of the population.

Mid and East Antrim follows the same general breakdown of the economically inactive as the NI average - with the exception that it has a larger proportion of early retired. On the other hand, the proportion of people economically inactive for health reasons is lower in Mid and East Antrim than the NI average. The rate of economically inactive due to being a student is lower in Mid and East Antrim suggesting more school leavers have entered the labour market, training, or unemployment. The trend of early retired and health reason is consistent across

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<sup>9</sup> Source, NINIS

2019-2021 however the number and economic inactivity rate of students is more volatile.

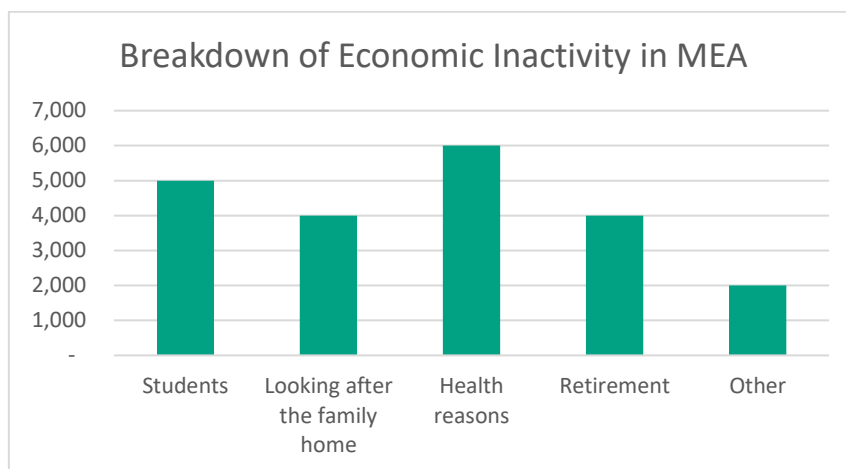


Figure 3: Economic Inactivity Profile in MEA, Source: NISRA, 2021

### 4.5 Disability

Of the employed within Mid and East Antrim, people with a disability made up 12% of the total which is on par with the NI average. However, the employment rate of people with disabilities is 1.5% higher than the NI average and ranks 4th highest within Northern Ireland. In terms of disparities between those who do and do not have a disability as per figure 4 below, there is a 41.2 percentage point gap in the employment rate. Those with disabilities have an employment rate of 38.8% vs. 80% of those without. This is lower than the average gap across NI (42.3pp) and ranks 6th in comparison to other council areas.

2021	Employment Rate		
	People with disabilities	People without disabilities	Disability Gap (p.p)
Antrim & Newtownabbey	37.8	84.3	46.5
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	31.5	81.2	49.7
Belfast	37.2	78.1	40.9
Causeway Coast & Glens	42.9	76.2	33.3
Derry & Strabane	24.7	77.3	42.6
Fermanagh & Omagh	35.3	81.3	46.0
Lisburn & Castlereagh	47.7	82.1	34.4
<b>Mid &amp; East Antrim</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>80.0</b>	<b>41.2</b>
Mid Ulster	24.0	78.9	54.9
Newry, Mourne & Down	37.1	77.0	39.9
North Down & Ards	44.3	81.3	37.0
Northern Ireland	37.3	79.6	42.3

Figure 4: MEA’s disability employment gap, Labour Force Survey, NISRA 2021



## 4.6 Qualifications

There is a general correlation in NI between economic activity and no qualifications; however, Mid and East Antrim is a slight outlier for this ranking 7th in no qualifications but fourth in economic activity in NI. The proportion of people with no qualifications (12.8%) and below degree level qualifications (49.4%) in Mid & East Antrim sits just marginally higher than the NI average - 11.9% and 45.9% respectively. However, there is a more significant gap when looking at the proportion of residents with degree level qualifications. Here 37.8% of residents fall into this category compared to 42.1% across NI. When compared to other Councils. (*NISRA, Labour Force Survey*)

## 4.7 Better quality jobs

With regards to median full time pay rates, MEA has the 3rd largest gap between workplace and resident earnings, with residents earning 9% more than those who work within the council areas. Workplace pay ranks the lowest (11th) in NI with resident pay ranking higher in 8th position. On average, pay in Northern Ireland has increased by 1.8% annually since 2018, in MEA however, as per figure 5 below, resident pay has increased at 1.3% whilst workplace pay has decreased by 0.2% annually.

Support should be further provided for higher paid jobs by investing in a range of employer-led higher skills academies to support participants to further develop industry skills to increase employee retention, reduce employee turnover. Also continuing to invest in new and emerging technologies to support MEA's reputation as a leading region for cleantech and as a hydrogen hub economy and interventions to encourage a skilled labour supply in key sectors including; higher skills academies and Health, Admin and Support Services Academies with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

<i>ANNUAL PAY</i>	<b>Residents</b>	<b>Workplace</b>
Antrim and Newtownabbey	£29,709	£28,805
Ards and North Down	£28,675	£27,733
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	£29,749	£29,236
Belfast	£29,954	£33,008
Causeway Coast and Glens	£28,733	£26,940
Derry City and Strabane	£25,989	£26,560
Fermanagh and Omagh	£27,896	£27,923
Lisburn and Castlereagh	£33,116	£29,142
<b>Mid and East Antrim</b>	<b>£28,487</b>	<b>£26,089</b>
Mid Ulster	£28,797	£28,273
Newry, Mourne and Down	£27,984	£27,276
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

*Figure 5: Median pay rates by Council (Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2022)*

## 5 Summary of findings from the Strategic Assessment

### 5.2 Defining strategic priorities

Through extensive engagement with a broad stakeholder base, and supported with a robust Strategic Assessment, MEA has identified a range of key priorities for the region that will support its 2023-2024 LMP Action Plan, and that can be used as foundation research for LMP Action Plans in subsequent planning years.

MEA recognise that in developing its 2023-2024 LMP Action Plan, the plan must:

- Avoid duplication or overlap with existing MEA or regional initiatives including projects recently funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Make best utility of a relatively small, finite budget to pilot new ideas and
- Be realistic and achievable within a year.

In developing its Action Plan, MEA has opted to focus on priorities that will best support post-Covid economic recovery in the region. “Turning the Curve” exercises have been performed on a wide range of measures, and four key metrics have been chosen to drive the 2023-2024 LMP Action Plan, namely:

1. **Economic Inactivity**
2. **Long Term Unemployed**
3. **Disability**
4. **Skilled Labour Supply**

### 5.3 Turning the Curve: LMP Delivery and Development

To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area, the MEA LMP must ensure members feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively.

<p><b>Understanding the baseline.</b>  <b>INDICATOR: Percentage of LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively (LMP)</b></p>	<p><b>What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced number of Members attending LMP meetings or events due to other commitments.</li> </ul>																														
<p><i>Source: Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership</i></p> <table border="1"> <caption>LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>Category</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2017</td><td>0</td><td>Backcast</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>0</td><td>Backcast</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>0</td><td>Backcast</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>0</td><td>Backcast</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>0</td><td>Backcast</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>75</td><td>Forecast</td></tr> <tr><td>2023</td><td>0</td><td>Forecast</td></tr> <tr><td>2024</td><td>80</td><td>Turn the Curve</td></tr> <tr><td>2025</td><td>100</td><td>Turn the Curve</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Percentage	Category	2017	0	Backcast	2018	0	Backcast	2019	0	Backcast	2020	0	Backcast	2021	0	Backcast	2022	75	Forecast	2023	0	Forecast	2024	80	Turn the Curve	2025	100	Turn the Curve	<p><b>What can be done?</b></p> <p>Support LMP members in their role through case study visits, guest speakers, attendance at events and awareness raising of LMP activity.</p>
Year	Percentage	Category																													
2017	0	Backcast																													
2018	0	Backcast																													
2019	0	Backcast																													
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2021	0	Backcast																													
2022	75	Forecast																													
2023	0	Forecast																													
2024	80	Turn the Curve																													
2025	100	Turn the Curve																													
	<p><b>How do we measure success?</b></p> <p>LMP member feedback via surveys</p>																														

## 5.4 Turning the Curve: Economic Inactivity

To encourage participants back to work, the MEA LMP must support actions that endorse inclusive access to employability programmes, focusing on a community/employer partnership approach.

### Understanding the baseline.

#### INDICATOR: Percentage of Working Age Economic Inactivity in MEA

Mid and East Antrim had a lower economic inactivity rate within the working age population than the NI average in 2021 with a gap of 1.9 percentage points. However, when comparing the total population (16+) Mid & East Antrim's rate is marginally higher than the Northern Ireland rate suggesting a greater number of retired residing within the council area. Within the working age population, Mid & East Antrim account for 7% of the overall inactive within NI, a share that is proportionate to the size of the population.

Source: *The Labour Force Survey, LFS*



### What factors are causing the problem?

- Those who are economically inactive face a range of complex needs which cannot be solved through short range interventions.
- Disabilities and long-term health conditions are a significant factor as well as stress, anxiety, addiction, financial and personal issues.
- People re-evaluating life priorities after COVID-19 possibly taking early retirements or withdrawal from economic activity.
- New residents and ethnic minorities are often not aware of the networks and support available to them.

### What can be done?

LMP investment in initiatives that target the economically inactive and in turn promote diversity in the labour market:

- Tailored women returners interventions
- Community-led/localised skills development
- Support for ethnic minority communities.
- Confidence building support for the ageing population to remain engaged in the labour market.
- Tailored female academy provision.
- Health and employability events
- Council have met with all of the UKSPF projects who are delivering in the MEA area to ensure there is no duplication in delivery. MEA will meet regularly with these organisations to ensure complementary delivery opportunities.

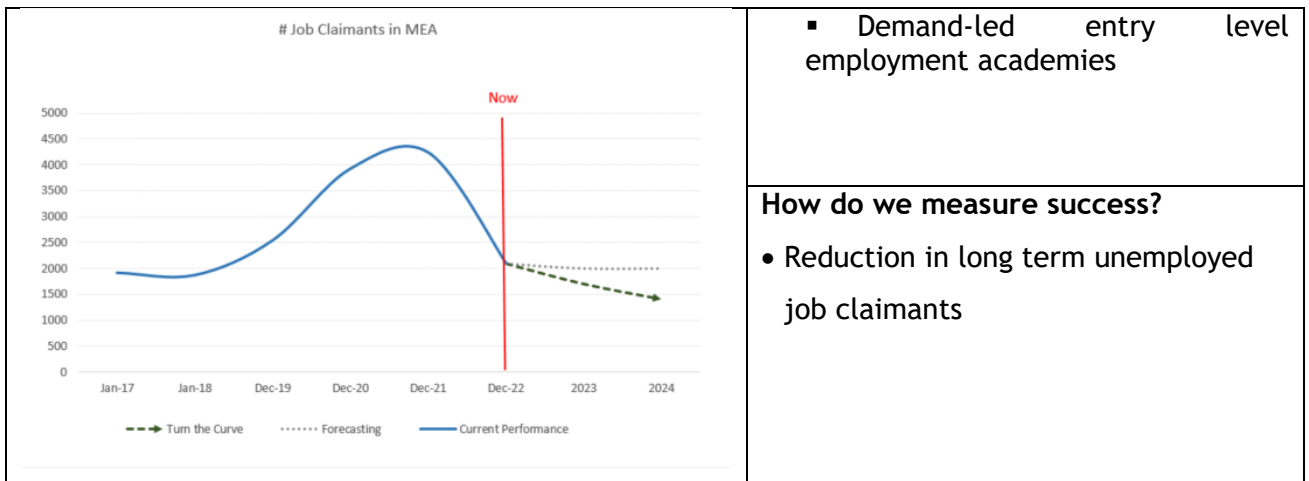
	<p><b>How do we measure success?</b></p> <p>Improvement in economic inactivity rates.</p>
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### 5.5 Turning the curve: Long Term Unemployed

Data for long-term unemployment has not been available since 2017, however patterns can similarly be modelled on the overall claimant count. There is strong demand for labour in MEA with many employer vacancies currently unfilled, and yet MEA has the third highest Claimant Count rate in NI. In saying this, MEAs claimant count has reduced significantly from 2020 with the Council area ranking much lower in terms of the number of claimants and claimant count rate at 2.3% in comparison to other Council areas.

To continue to support economic recovery and business growth, the MEA LMP must further support actions that will help to turn the curve on job claimant numbers and reduce the aftermath and significant economic shock caused by Covid-19.

<p><b>Understanding the baseline</b></p> <p><b>INDICATOR: Number of Claimant Count in MEA</b></p> <p>The baseline trend prior to Covid-19 was an average job claimant number of 2,000. Covid-19 created a significant economic shock that caused a spike in job claimant numbers to a peak of 4,235. This has been slow to reduce despite strong industry demand however, in December 2022, 6% of all claimants in NI (2,075 individuals) were from Mid &amp; East Antrim positively showing the return to pre- pandemic levels.</p> <p><i>Source: NISRA, LFS</i></p>	<p><b>What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UC conditionality had not been fully enforced due to easements introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic however, sanctions are currently being reintroduced and may increase in early 2023.</li> <li>• Existing vacancies may be perceived as unattractive by potential applicants.</li> <li>• Claimants may not have the skills to meet vacancy requisites.</li> <li>• Claimants may face a range of social and personal barriers including lack of confidence, poor mental health, access to transport and childcare.</li> </ul> <p><b>What can be done?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce Universal Credit conditionality requirements.</li> <li>• Promote collaboration between employers and labour market partners.</li> <li>• Invest in initiatives that support increased employment:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enterprise Pathways</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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### 5.6 Turning the curve: Disability

Of the employed within Mid and East Antrim, people with a disability made up 12% of the total which is on par with the NI average. However, the employment rate of people with disabilities is 1.5% higher than the NI average and ranks 4th highest within Northern Ireland.

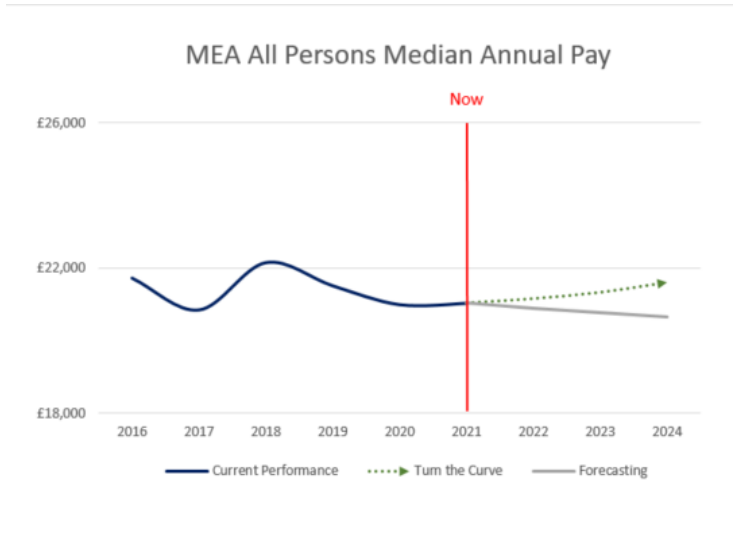
<p><b>Understanding the baseline.</b></p> <p><b>INDICATOR: Percentage of Employment rate of people with disabilities in MEA</b></p> <p>Within Mid and East Antrim residents with disabilities have an employment rate of 38.8% vs. 80% of those without. This is lower than the average gap across NI (42.3pp) and ranks 6th in comparison to other council areas.</p> <p><i>Source: NINIS</i></p>	<p><b>What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult for any job seeker to access a central information point</li> <li>• Lack of Employer Engagement and Education around Disability</li> <li>• Current Academy models generally too short for a person with disability and extra support required</li> <li>• SPF projects not targeting or providing suitable training support for people with disabilities who have higher qualification levels.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>What can be done?</b></p> <p>Support graduates with disabilities into employment through the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to employers to source job opportunities suitable for a person with disability/Newsletters/Case Studies</li> <li>• Bespoke Graduate Disability Academy to support those with disabilities and long-term health conditions access</li> </ul>

	<p>employment opportunities in key sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Connections - Access all Areas programme to support those with disabilities Work with employers to raise awareness of flexible recruitment and flexibility methods</li> </ul> <p><b>How do we measure success?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of working age adults with disabilities in employment</li> </ul>
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### 5.7 Turning the curve: Skilled Labour Supply

To support economic recovery and prosperity in the region, the MEA LMP must continue to support actions that will rapidly turn the curve on the MEA pay gap by investing in skills to deliver better quality jobs.

The MEA LMP have explored a range of employer-led higher skills academies to support participants to further develop industry skills to increase employee retention and reduce employee turnover.

<p><b>Understanding the baseline.</b></p> <p><b>INDICATORS:</b></p> <p># All Persons Median Wage in MEA</p> <p>Static MEA median pay rates whilst NI median pay rates have risen by over 10% has resulted in a growing pay gap in MEA.</p> <p>Source: NINIS</p> 	<p><b>What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic shock - loss of well-paid jobs in recent years</li> <li>• A low number of qualified workers with specialised skills</li> <li>• New technology or changes to the structure of the economy</li> <li>• Hi-tech Foreign Direct Investment favouring Belfast and surrounding regions with higher paid jobs</li> <li>• A high proportion of rural MEA jobs in lower paid sectors e.g. agriculture</li> </ul> <p><b>What can be done?</b></p> <p>Support higher paid jobs by investing in a range of employer-led higher skills academies to support participants to further develop industry skills to increase employee retention, reduce employee turnover.</p> <p>Also continuing to invest in new and emerging technologies to support MEA’s reputation as a leading region for cleantech and as a hydrogen hub economy:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interventions to encourage a skilled labour supply in key sector including higher skills academies</li> <li>• Pilot Health Administration and Support Services Academies in partnership with NHSCT</li> </ul>
	<p><b>How do we measure success?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Persons Median Wage in MEA</li> </ul>

### 5.8 Turning the curve: Referrals to relevant existing projects/ initiatives

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

<p><b>Understanding the baseline.</b></p> <p><b>INDICATORS:</b></p> <p># LMP referrals to existing regional/local employability/skills provision (LMP)</p> <p><i>Source: Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership</i></p> <table border="1"> <caption>LMP referrals to existing regional/local employability/skills provision (LMP)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Referrals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022 (Now)</td> <td>~300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>~150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024</td> <td>~170</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2025 (Forecast)</td> <td>~200</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of Referrals	2021	0	2022 (Now)	~300	2023	~150	2024	~170	2025 (Forecast)	~200	<p><b>What factors are causing the problem?</b></p> <p>Individuals unaware of the local employability and skills provision available.</p>
	Year	Number of Referrals											
	2021	0											
2022 (Now)	~300												
2023	~150												
2024	~170												
2025 (Forecast)	~200												
<p><b>What can be done?</b></p> <p>Events used to support the objective of the LMP with the overall aim to support those seeking work to move into education, employment, or training through direct engagement with local employers training providers and support organisations i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job fairs, reverse job fairs, JobStart Showcases, workshops and well-being and employability events</li> <li>• Science Summer School NI Innovation Platform and associated schools and employer engagement activities</li> <li>• Hospitality Takeover and Cleantech Takeover Days</li> <li>• NI Apprenticeship Week 2024</li> </ul>													

**How do we measure success?**

- referrals to existing regional / local employability/skills provision (LMP)

## 6 Mid and East Antrim LMP 2023-2024 Action Plan

### 6.2 Alignment to strategic priorities

The MEA LMP Action Plan has been designed to align with the Strategic Priorities (SPs) defined by DfC in the development of the LMP programme, namely:

- **Strategic Priority 1** - To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area. Actions and associated costs relating to the formation and administration of the LMP, and its ability to determine future labour market needs
- **Strategic Priority 2** - To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally. Local initiatives to “Turn The Curve” and address specific points of need as identified in this strategic review
- **Strategic Priority 3** - To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally
- A range of standardised indicators have been selected to assess delivery under each of these strategic priorities.

### 6.3 Baseline information

The MEA LMP Action Plan will impact on the following set of indicators from the baseline position stated below.

Strategic Priorities	Indicators to which Local LMP makes a contribution (Source)	2022-2023 Baseline												
<p><b>Strategic Priority 1:</b></p> <p>To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area</p>	<p><b>LMP Delivery and Development</b></p> <p>Indicator: % LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively (LMP)</p>	<p>Baseline: LMP members who feel the local LMP is making a positive contribution and delivering effectively as of December 2022:</p> <p>(Source: Mid and East Antrim Labour Market Partnership)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="927 584 1270 645"> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>75%</td> </tr> </table>	2022	75%										
2022	75%													
<p><b>Strategic Priority 2:</b></p> <p>To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally</p>	<p><b>Economic Inactivity</b></p> <p>INDICATOR: Percentage of Working Age Economic Inactivity in MEA (Source NISRA):</p>	<p>MEA economic inactivity rate (Source NISRA):</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="927 904 1398 1218"> <tr><td>2016</td><td>23.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>26.2%</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>25.5%</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>23.9%</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>25.6%</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>25.1%</td></tr> </table>	2016	23.9%	2017	26.2%	2018	25.5%	2019	23.9%	2020	25.6%	2021	25.1%
	2016	23.9%												
	2017	26.2%												
2018	25.5%													
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2020	25.6%													
2021	25.1%													
<p><b>Long Term Unemployed</b></p> <p>INDICATOR: Number of Claimant Count in MEA (Source: NISRA)</p>	<p>MEA Job benefit claimants as of December 2022: (Source: NISRA)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="927 1344 1323 1657"> <tr><td>2017</td><td>1,920</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>1,875</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>2,545</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>3,925</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>3,205</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>2,075</td></tr> </table>	2017	1,920	2018	1,875	2019	2,545	2020	3,925	2021	3,205	2022	2,075	
2017	1,920													
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<p><b>Disability</b></p> <p>INDICATOR: Percentage of Employment rate of people with disabilities in MEA (Source: NINIS)</p>	<p>Percentage of working age adults with disabilities in employment: (Source: NINIS)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="927 1830 1318 2078"> <tr><td>2017</td><td>42%</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>41%</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>41%</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>38%</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>39%</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>38.8%</td></tr> </table>	2017	42%	2018	41%	2019	41%	2020	38%	2021	39%	2022	38.8%	
2017	42%													
2018	41%													
2019	41%													
2020	38%													
2021	39%													
2022	38.8%													

Strategic Priorities	Indicators to which Local LMP makes a contribution (Source)	2022-2023 Baseline												
	<p><b>Skilled Labour Supply</b></p> <p>Indicator: # All Persons Median Wage in MEA (Source: NINIS)</p>	<p>MEA Full Time All Persons Median Annual Pay (Source: NINIS)</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="927 398 1294 712"> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016</td> <td>£21,724</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>£20,845</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>£22,150</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>£21,512</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>£20,991</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>£21,029</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2016	£21,724	2017	£20,845	2018	£22,150	2019	£21,512	2020	£20,991	2022	£21,029
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2022	£21,029													
<p><b>Strategic Priority 3:</b></p> <p>To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally</p>	<p><b>Referrals to relevant existing projects/ initiatives.</b></p> <p>Indicator: # LMP referrals to existing regional/local employability/skills provision (LMP)</p>	<p>Baseline: nil</p>												

## 7 Action Plan

Priority 1: To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area	
Theme	Activities
LMP Development and Delivery	<b>Development and delivery of MEA LMP</b>
	<b>Development of the 2024 - 2027 MEA LMP Strategic Assessment and Annual Action Plan for 2024-2025.</b>
	<b>Capacity Building</b> Support LMP members in their role through case study visits, guest speakers, attendance at events and awareness raising of LMP activity.

Priority 2: To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally		
Theme	Description	Key Activities
<b>Economic Inactivity</b> To encourage participants back to work, the MEA LMP must support actions that support inclusive access to employability programmes, focusing on a community/employer partnership approach.	<b>Women Returners Outreach, Confidence and Capacity Building Programme.</b>	An engagement programme to inspire and motivate women interested in returning to work and get them started on the returning journey. Tailored interventions will enable the target group to build their confidence to re-enter or enter the world of work or move on to other interventions including those funded under the Shared Prosperity Fund, LMP academies or education.
	<b>Ethnic Minority Employability and Outreach Activities.</b>	Working with local advocacy and support organisations to provide tailored support to connect with the local labour market.

	<b>Women into non-traditional skills academy.</b>	This Academy will provide participants with the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge in non-traditional skills areas through a range of practical hands-on activities. The academy will provide initial introduction sessions in a series of practical skills for example, using power tools, DIY, decorating as well as employability skills. Participants can then progress to Level 2 courses in the selected area of interest. It is hoped to deliver this programme in local community settings.
	<b>Flex - Engagement programme</b>	Programme for prospective retirees to consider part-time work and new career options.
	<b>Community-led/localised skills development</b>	LMP staff will work with local communities to identify skills needs and to co-design interventions and programmes that will encourage residents to get into, or back into the labour market or to help take steps on a pathway to better employment or career advancement.
<p><b>Long Term Unemployed</b></p> <p>This theme will include interventions to reduce job claimant numbers, support the unemployed people to become self-employed and provide a range of entry level employment academies to provide access to employment.</p>	<b>Enterprise Pathways</b>	Support for unemployed people who face additional challenges to progress to self-employment. Provision of enhanced enterprise development support tailored to address individual needs and barriers, enabling participants to commence test trading. Will 'wraparound' and complement mainstream 'Go for It' support and new Entrepreneurship Support Service which will commence in October 2023.
	<b>Construction Skills Academies (plant operations)</b>	This academy will offer training in a range of plant operations pathways to meet gaps in the local labour market. Participants will also be supported to develop their personal and employability skills. Recent engagement indicates the local construction sector is experiencing a 'slow down', MEA LMP will continue to monitor the situation and will progress Construction Skills Academies pending sufficient demand by local employers and job seekers.
	<b>Classroom Assistant Upskilling Academy</b>	Participants will access a range of personal development training including employability skills, communication, and teamwork. They will also be supported in the completion of their level 3 qualification and complete best practice sessions and visits.

	<b>Hospitality and Tourism Academy</b>	The academy will provide an introduction to the sector and insight into the range of job roles available. Participants will be able to explore a range of training options geared towards careers in outdoor pursuits, indoor leisure or visitor attractions.
	<b>Childminding - partnership project with NICMA and NHSCT</b>	Programme to support new self-employed childminders including Paediatric First Aid, Safeguarding Children and Health and Safety training.
<b>Disability</b> To support people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to improve their personal confidence to access the labour market.	<b>Work Connections - Access All Areas</b>	The Work Connection (Access All Areas) programme offers an innovative approach to developing the skill set of individuals, improving confidence, increasing work readiness, and providing opportunities to enter the workforce. Work Connections (AAA) aims to provide participants with intensive one-to-one scaffolded approach to support the development of the individual with increasing focus on progressing to employment as they move through each phase. Additionally, the programme will work closely with host employers' offering opportunities to participants.
	<b>Bespoke Graduate disability academy</b>	Tailored training and employment support for graduates with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, or economically inactive. Programme will include a range of personalised supports to improve confidence, explore career pathways and progress into employment or further training/education.
<b>Skilled Labour Supply</b> To support economic recovery and prosperity in the region by investing in skills to deliver better quality jobs.	<b>Transport Academy</b>	The Transport Academy aligns to sector needs and includes training and support for participants to achieve qualifications i.e. the Category C (HGV Class 2) or Category D (PCV bus / coach) license and commence employment.
	<b>Engineering Academy</b>	The Engineering Academy will include various pathways that will be shaped due to employer needs with relevant training identified offered to participants. Initial demands are around specialist spray painting, electrician's assistant and robotics/automation. This academy is subject to further funding being secured.

	<b>Cleantech Academy</b>	The Cleantech Academy is a skilling up programme to raise skills levels in the emerging cleantech and green technology sector. This academy is subject to further funding being secured.
	<b>Health Administration Academy</b>	This academy is being designed with NHSCT to include role specific training, employer visits, insight days, employability support and a guaranteed interview.
	<b>Support Services and Homecare Academy</b>	Training and employability academy in partnership with NHSCT and others for Support Service roles including porters, catering assistants, domestics, homecare staff and car parking attendants.
<b>Priority 3: To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally.</b>		
Promotion of employability and Skills Provision	<b>Job Fairs and Events</b>	To support those seeking work to move into education, employment, or training through direct engagement with local employers training providers and support. Delivery of a range of Job fairs, Employer Connection Events and Well-being and employability events.
	<b>Science Summer School NI Innovation Platform</b>	The Science Summer School aims to inspire young people to become the next generation of scientists with an inspirational programme that mixes the best of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths). Programme includes a wide range of visits, workshops, competitions, careers fairs, work experience events and takeover days for pupils across KS1-4.
	<b>Hospitality Takeover and Cleantech Takeover Days</b>	LMP will work with local hospitality and cleantech companies to deliver Industry Takeover Days. LMP Staff will engage with local Secondary Schools to provide immersive events that raise awareness of events and career pathway opportunities. Includes small workshop and insight days for young people who are 'Education other than at School'.



	<b>NI Apprenticeship Week 2024</b>	Series of activities to raise awareness of Apprenticeship opportunities with local companies and promote the wide range of apprenticeship pathways available.
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