



Belfast
City Council

Equality Action Plan 2021-24

We are committed to making sure that our services and information are available to all parts of the community. If you need this information in an alternative format or language, please contact us at:

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What is the Equality Action Plan?

This Equality Action Plan runs from 2021 until 2024, it is a corporate level document which outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

What other documents is the Equality Action Plan linked to?

1. The Equality Action Plan is developed from some of the information in the **Audit of Inequalities**, which is a systematic approach to identify inequalities, across the nine Section 75 categories (religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, people with dependants or without), which are relevant to a public authority's functions.
2. The Equality Action Plan contains some of the key priorities from our Corporate Plan, which will have the biggest impact on inequalities. Our Corporate Plan is a reflection of what people in Belfast have told us they want and the type of leadership they feel the city needs. It takes the priorities of the Belfast Agenda, the Community Plan, and sets out the ways in which the council will deliver these to grow a sustainable, inclusive economy and equitable society. To fulfil our responsibilities, our Corporate Plan not only ensures we deliver the day to day services which the people of Belfast rely upon; we stretch ourselves through a series of strategic priorities to ensure we positively affect the lives of everyone in Belfast

How are the actions in the Equality Action Plan categorised?

Actions are categorised according to the Corporate Plan priority they contribute to. Each action includes a timescale for delivery, a performance indicator and the name of the department responsible for delivery. We will report on these actions annually.

1. Growing an inclusive economy

We will work to create an inclusive, resilient economy through creating good, sustainable jobs.

A thriving urban economy is a key foundation to achieving many of the outcomes in the Belfast Agenda. Not only can a successful economy generate the wealth required to grow local businesses, generate jobs and offer routes out of poverty for struggling families, it is also the main source of revenue for the city's public services, programmes and interventions.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
1.1	Access to Employment work package - Deliver employment academies in sectors focused on workforce demand (Logistics, Social Care, Child Care, Public Sector), removing barriers to people furthest removed from the labour market to enter into or return to employment and/or advance in employment. (Annual programme)	2021-24	Percentage participating in Employment Academies. / Percentage into employment (NB reviewed at key checkpoints within the year as the state of play within the labour market becomes clearer)	Place & Economy
1.2	Support five training and skills development projects via the European Social Fund (in partnership with TEO), targeting those who are long-term unemployed, younger people not in education, employment or training and people with disabilities.	2021-24	No. of participants achieving positive outcomes	Place & Economy
1.3	Develop a GIS monitoring approach to systematically assist programme development to continue to tackle inequalities in access to the labour market.	2021-24	Effective monitoring mechanism established to better understand inequalities, and the needs of S75 groupings. / Improve quality and quantity of monitoring information to support policy making on Employability and Skills (retrospective measure)	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
1.4	Working with partners and stakeholders across the city to put in place an (enterprise framework) action plan which supports long term ambitions to increase the number of business start-ups, including targeting workless residents, females and young people - and any under-represented groups	2021-24	Increase in % participants from under-represented groups on enterprise awareness initiatives. / No. of business starts.	Place & Economy
1.5	Understand the barrier to employment to support employability skills and capacity building programme for disabled people and those from ethnic minority groups.	2021-22	Use insights to inform programme design	Place & Economy
1.6	Deliver the Access and Inclusion Programme of capital enhancement projects to encourage engagement with culture, arts and heritage experiences (subject to funding)	2021-24	Number of small capital enhancement projects delivered	Place & Economy
1.7	Develop schemes to support higher participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people such as gig buddies	2021-24	No. of events supported by Gig Buddies	Place & Economy
1.8	Deliver A City Imagining projects targeting LGBTQ+ groups, ethnic minority and new comer communities, disabled people, older people, schools and multi-lingual communities	2021-24	No. of participants	Place & Economy
1.9	Development, publication and full public consultation of draft Social Value Policy	2021-22	Publication of finalised policy and guidance	Cross - departmental

2. Working and learning

BCC will work to ensure people are appropriately skilled for the jobs created in the city.

Education is the foundation for a better life, not only in facilitating future employment and providing access to a fulfilling adult life, but also as a major contributor to a person's wellbeing and to shaping lifelong health. Working with our partners, we will bring forward a work programme which supports the inclusive growth ambitions of the Council with a focus on addressing barriers to progression

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
2.1	Focus on young people by delivering the Youth Support Programme targeting young people between 14- 24 years at risk or disengaged from formal education or training/employment.	2021-24	Percentage participating in positive outcomes in education, training and employment	Place & Economy

3. Living here

Our city and neighbourhoods are vibrant, resilient and safe places where people choose to live, work and spend time being more healthy and active.

In our recent residents survey, 86% of respondents were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live. We want everyone to be satisfied. We want to deliver a high quality of life for everyone. In doing so, we must deliver and plan effective public spaces and conserve our natural environment so it can be accessed and enjoyed.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.1	Deliver the Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2018-2021 assess achievements, identify challenges and develop a new Age-friendly Belfast plan 2022-2025	2021	Measure outcomes framework, consult with older people and stakeholder, review baseline information; 2022 develop new plan and begin to deliver	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.2	Finalise and implement the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy	2021	To be determined as part of the action plan development.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.3	Develop a Sport and Physical Activity Strategy	2021	To be determined as part of the action plan development.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.4	Implement the programme of development of playgrounds across the city to further improve accessibility (following consultation with disability groups in early 2021).	2021	To be determined following consultation with disability groups.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.5	Achieve Onus Safe City status and retain platinum-level status	2021	Re-accreditation of Onus Workplace Charter-Platinum level / Safe City Status Achieved	Cross - departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.6	Review and implement the council's Toilet Provision Strategy to improve the accessibility of toilets and maintain and promote the Changing Places toilet facility	2021-24	Report on the review of existing process and the number of stakeholder organisations engaged for 19/20. Increase in choice of available Changing Places facilities across the city over the next 24 months.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.7	Development of the new crematorium and our intention to acquire additional burial land, particularly for the north and west of the city.	These are medium to long term projects and time scales will be determined as the projects are developed	To be determined as the projects develop.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.8	Develop a co-design approach to engage communities in Social & Community Recovery planning.	To be determined as the approach is developed	To be determined as the approach is developed.	City & Neighbourhood Services
3.9	Cultural mapping and understanding barriers (research and engagement) to support the delivery of capacity building programme (with tailored strands inc S75)	2021-24	Publish research document	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
3.10	Create an Audience Panel that contains a range of voices including those underrepresented in cultural engagement (proactively recruit those whose voices are not heard as often)	2021-24	4 focus group meetings held with Audience Panel per annum	Place & Economy
3.11	To develop and deliver the next phases of the City Centre Connectivity Study (CCCS) ie to create a green, walkable, cyclable network of connected streets and places will improve the health and wellbeing for all, revitalise the city's economy and restore a sense of collective pride in the centre of Belfast among the communities within and around it.	2021-24	To be determined as part of the development of the next phases of the Study, which will include public consultation and Equality Screening exercise.	Place & Economy

4. Cross-cutting

Our cross-cutting priorities will have a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits for the city.

These priorities include once in a lifetime opportunities to fundamentally change the city, culturally, physically and economically and help achieve the big ambitions of the Belfast Agenda.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.1	Design, implement and pilot an Inclusive Growth Decisions Making Framework	2021-24	The BCC inclusive growth decision-making framework is agreed and rolled out.	City & Organisational Strategy
4.2	Co-design an Inclusive Growth City Charter in collaboration with our city partners which encourages/ offers recognition for those organisations who adopt business practices as employers, procurers or in the delivery of services which have been proven to create more inclusive economic growth	2021-24	A draft charter is finalised and publicly consulted on by April 2021. / A final charter programme is launched and a range of businesses sign up by April 2022. / The charter actions/initiatives acknowledge the additional barriers many groups of citizens face in employment and are designed to mitigate against these barriers. / A number of city partners/employers adopt more inclusive growth business practices. / There is an increase of awareness around the benefits of inclusive growth business practices amongst employers across Belfast, with sharing of best practice. / Economic growth opportunities across the city are more accessible to all residents.	City & Organisational Strategy
4.3	Design and deliver the Shared Spaces programme	2022-23	Delivery of physical programme under the PIV Shared Spaces and Services Theme	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.4	Build relationships across communities to increase confidence using and developing shared spaces and services	2021-24	% increase in the no of participants who feel safe attending event, activities, and facilities in areas associated with a different background.	City & Neighbourhood Services

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.5	Help address issues of demarcation and division including flags, murals and other symbols	2021-24	Delivery of actions within BCC Good Relations Plan working towards a Shared City vision.	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.6	Design and deliver the Interfaces programme	2021-24	% increase in the no of participants who feel safe attending event, activities, and facilities in areas associated with a different background. / Contributions towards physical works and programming that encourage attitudinal change and an even greater sense of belonging and social value.	Cross - departmental
4.7	Encourage a re-imagining of the cultural significance of upcoming commemorations under the Decade of Centenaries	2022-23	Development of a Decade of Centenaries Programme based on the DOC principles on Shared perspectives. / % increase in the number of participants who feel comfortable socialising in a shared space they would not normally visit	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.8	Encourage cultural expression to be celebrated and undertaken within a culture of lawfulness	2021-24	% increase in the number of participants who think the culture and traditions of Catholics, Protestants and minority ethnic people add to the richness of and diversity of Northern Ireland society.	City & Neighbourhood Services
4.9	Development, publication and full public consultation of draft Local Policies Plan (LPP) [to include an Equality Impact Assessment, as well as a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Appraisal and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment]	2021-23	Publication of finalised policies following independent examination	Place & Economy
4.10	Development, publication and full public consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) topic areas	2021-23	Publication of finalised range of SPG policies	Place & Economy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.11	Build the capacity of disengaged and marginalised citizens and community leaders and changemakers to engage	2021-23	No. of engagement projects undertaken in collaboration with pre-engagement through the VCSE panel	City & Organisational Strategy
4.12	Produce a consultation and engagement toolkit for officers and provide ongoing advice and capacity building	2021-24	% of residents who agree that council consults with and listens to the views of local residents (survey in 2021 and 2023)	City & Organisational Strategy
4.13	Work with community planning partners to improve how data is accessed and utilised to ensure the Belfast Agenda process understands and takes action to address inequalities	2021-24	Belfast Agenda Dashboard updated. / Consultation and engagement gives all people equal opportunity to participate	
4.14	Promoting Inclusive Growth (IG) through the Belfast Region City Deal Action 1 (over 10 years) Develop clear and robust arrangements to monitor how well actions to promote IG through the BRCD are delivering. This will help us to report on progress at both a geographical and on a priority group basis to improve understanding of what types of interventions and policy changes work best in which circumstances and for which groups.	2021-24	Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements in place and communicated to partners	Finance & Resources
4.15	Promoting Inclusive Growth (IG) through the Belfast Region City Deal Action 2 (over 10 years) Deliver new and better jobs to the BRCD region and support the region's economic recovery efforts. This will be done in the context of IG and will include programmes and interventions to enable all groups, particularly those furthest from the labour market, to avail of the opportunities emerging through the capital investment.	2021-24	Establish an Employability and Skills programme to support the ambitions of the BRCD	Finance & Resources
4.16	Develop, roll out and deliver new physical programme: £8m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, through an open call process. The Fund will focus upon a number of key thematic areas and reflect the priorities agreed within the City Recovery Framework: environmental/sustainable projects, neighbourhood tourism and social enterprise.	2021-24	Number of projects completed, number of consultation exercises encompassing Section 75 groups	Physical Programmes

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
4.17	Delivery of Physical Programme including £180m Capital Programme for council assets. Also management, development and delivery of externally funded programmes such as the Executive Office's flagship good relations programme Urban Villages, approx £46m.	2021-24	Number of projects completed, number of consultation exercises encompassing Section 75 groups	Physical Programmes
4.18	Deliver Pandemic Recovery Plan	2021-23	Developed understanding of impact of Covid 19 on existing inequalities	Cross - departmental

5. Our organisational priorities

As our city becomes more ambitious so must we.

To do this, we can only succeed with the wholehearted support and enthusiastic contribution of our staff. To harness this energy they need to feel valued and understand how they contribute. As an organisation, if we want to perform these capabilities to the best of our abilities we must continuously look to improve how we do things. We have therefore agreed priorities that will help us improve our capability. For example, in order to provide the best customer experience possible we have developed a customer focus programme that will enhance the experience felt by all our customers.

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.1	Ensure that the council communicates effectively with its citizens, using assistive technology and maintaining standards such as Plain English and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA standards	2021-24	Website to provide assistive technology and follow new and current Plain English and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines AA Standards.	Cross-departmental
5.2	Develop a new Customer Hub designed around customer needs	2021-24	New professional customer hub designed and implemented. Customer satisfaction with the HUB service.	Finance & Resources
5.3	Ensure that digital platforms benefit all customers and stakeholders, including through training and provision of computer facilities for public use	2021-24	Customers will have access to a point –of- service supported on-line resource within the hub and community centres. Number of customers moving to digital channels	Finance & Resources
5.4	Improve engagement with customers across all S75 categories	2021-24	% of issues understood impacting on different groups of people leading to a better-informed decision-making process and improved customer service	Cross-departmental
5.5	Provide accessible channels of communication to reflect diverse customers' needs	2021-24	Greater opportunities for two-way communication using a range of customer feedback tools and measures. An accessible online service Translated documents of interest available on request	Cross-departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.6	Deliver Disability Action Plan 2019-22 updating actions and developing a new action plan utilising key learning in relation to 'Encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life' and 'Promoting positive attitudes towards Disabled People'	2021-22	Analyse feedback and develop an action plan to improve disability initiatives, where appropriate	Legal & Civic Services
5.7	Develop and deliver Gender, Disability, LGBTQ+ and Minority and Inclusion workforce diversity action plans	2021-24	Activity in plans agreed, resourced and delivered.	City & Organisational Strategy
5.8	Improve participation in employment among those furthest from the labour market through ring-fenced entry-level posts (where possible), pre-recruitment training programmes, work experience, guaranteed interview scheme and reasonable adjustments	2021-24	Job opportunities ring fenced to the long term unemployed and targeted pre recruitment and training	City & Organisational Strategy
5.9	Encourage participation of disabled people in the workforce, Sign Language Users Forum and Disability Staff Network (DA)	2021-24	Three disability staff network meetings held each year	City & Organisational Strategy
5.10	Encourage participation of LGBT+ people in the workforce and LGBT+ staff network 'Proud'	2021-24	Improved promotion of our commitment to equality and diversity both internally and externally	Cross-departmental
5.11	Encourage participation of all staff in the workplace	2021-24	Hold event/ workshop for both male/ female staff to jointly explore/ discuss diversity and gender issues and identify any areas/ issues to be addressed.	Cross-departmental
5.12	Review and amend workforce monitoring form	2021-24	Monitoring form reviewed and revised to capture additional information including: - reasonable adjustments required by applicants as part of the recruitment and selection process; Gender identity; Sexual orientation	City & Organisational Strategy
5.13	Carry out a voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff	2021-24	Voluntary monitoring exercise conducted and up to date information available	City & Organisational Strategy

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.14	Work to achieve Diversity Charter Mark Silver Award	2021-24	Silver Diversity Charter Mark Achieved	City & Organisational Strategy
5.15	Develop opportunities for Equality and Diversity Champions both at SMT and Elected Member level	2021-24	Equality and Diversity Champions appointed	Cross-departmental
5.16	Continue to deliver a suite of equality and diversity awareness training to all staff including diversity, general disability awareness , targeted disability awareness , bi and trans awareness training (classroom based and on -line)	2021-24	No/ of sessions delivered; Training evaluation indicators: Quality of training; Increased understanding; Increase in skills levels	City & Organisational Strategy
5.17	Strategic Leaders and Elected members attend leadership equality training	2021-24	No/ of sessions delivered; Training evaluation indicators: Quality of training; Increased understanding; Increase in skills levels	Cross-departmental
5.18	Review participation in council's new engagement framework to identify participation gaps or areas for improvement	2021	Participation rates by gender, age, disability, race and community background. (Registrations on new platform). / Assess seldom heard or other s.75 participation rates as applicable. / Consultation and engagement gives all people equal opportunity to participate	City & Organisational Strategy
5.19	Research best practice and assess council's engagement and participation of young people and develop best practice guidance for council officers	2021	Production of guidance and case studies. / Evidence of improved or innovative approaches to engaging young people. / % of young people who agree that council consults with and listens to the views of local residents (survey in 2021 and 2023)	City & Organisational Strategy
5.20	Support platforms, networks and forums, such as the Older People's Forum, Disability Advisory Panel and Migrant Workers' Forum, that widen engagement, targeting in particular those most at risk of being "seldom heard"	2021-24	% attendance at each meeting from cross section of organisations/individuals; % of staff/members who understand purpose of these networks and forums and find it useful; Effective feedback mechanism established, and used by members	Cross-departmental

Ref No	Actions	Timescale	Performance Indicator	Departmental Responsibility
5.21	Use our engagement platform to encourage and build capacity within communities to engage with council using dialogue and qualitative mechanisms	2021-23	No. of standing panels. / No. of project specific panels and forums. / No. and type of panels involving targeted Section 75 or seldom heard groups (per year)	Cross-departmental
5.22	Deliver Equality Scheme Implementation Plan	2021-24	Annual compliance report to EDNS / No. of complaints	Legal & Civic Services
5.23	Deliver Rural Needs Action Plan	2021-24	Annual compliance report to EDNS / No. of complaints	Legal & Civic Services
5.24	Effective Leadership in S75 demonstrated through the Equality and Diversity Network	2021-24	At least 3 meetings of both Operational and Strategic levels of the Equality and Diversity Network. / Completed audit of S75 processes.	Legal & Civic Services
5.25	Explore development of baseline of equality related information for use by staff in all aspects of the council business	2022-24	Information of relevant equality data communicated to all staff available to all staff. / Access to equality data sets	Cross-departmental
5.26	Deliver Language Strategy 2019-23 and related action plans	2021-23	Analyse feedback and develop an action plans as appropriate	Legal & Civic Services