

EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY BASELINE AND IMPACT STUDY ACTION PLAN JANUARY 2023

This Action Plan aims to address the recommendations of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Local Councils Baseline and Impact Study, commissioned by the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group.

The main findings highlighted that:

- all 11 Councils engaged positively in the research, indicating a commitment to establish a baseline, to highlight the successes and challenges and to share good practice.
- a comprehensive baseline on equality, diversity and inclusion in local government in Northern Ireland is not possible as most of the data required is currently not gathered.
- the main priority for Councils is on gathering data which is required for statutory reports.
- the limited data currently available makes it difficult for Councils to measure progress and demonstrate the impact of good practice.

This Action Plan takes into account the statutory obligations and how we can plan to go further than those obligations to ensure that local communities and stakeholders identify Councils as being equality focussed, diversity driven, and inclusion minded.

Recommendation 1: Councils go beyond statutory requirements to measure, monitor and share a complete set of equality and diversity data (addressing the data collection gaps identified in this baseline study) to drive diversity action plans and demonstrate the impact of their work on equality, diversity and inclusion.				
ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Review what equality data is collected across key service areas to ensure appropriate data is available to inform decision making	March 2024	11 Councils	➤ Services are using equality data to inform key decisions, policies and services delivery	
Establish how Councils can capture anecdotal and local knowledge more effectively to increase understanding of the needs of local communities	March 2024	Equality and Diversity Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mechanisms are in place to capture equality issues raised by Councillors. ➤ Service areas understand the needs of particular equality groups and use findings to inform the development of Council services. 	The Equality and Diversity Group to address as part of its review of the Strategy and Action Plan

Recommendation 2: Councils commit to working together to develop an annual regional data gathering and collation system on every category of equality and diversity for both employees and Elected Members.				
ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Set objectives within the revised Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and identify measures so that overall progress can be assessed annually.	June 2023	Equality and Diversity Group	➤ Delivery of regional equality and diversity objectives is monitored and reported to Council annually.	
Recommendation 3: Councils commit to working together to develop one user-friendly data collection tool, that is efficient in terms of cost and time, and that addresses all of the issues of methodology, consistency, security and privacy.				
ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Review the monitoring information and guidance used and work to develop a common approach	March 2023	Statutory Duty Network and PPMA in liaison with the Equality Commission	➤ Development of a common employment monitoring form that is used by all Councils	
Review the current level of equality monitoring with a view to: ➤ Embed the equality screening process across reports ➤ Review equality guidance and training ➤ Improve monitoring of compliance ➤ Include consideration of socio-economic disadvantage.	Sept 2023	Equality and Diversity Group in liaison with the Equality Commission	➤ Council decisions are made taking full account of the impact on relevant protected characteristic and socio-economic disadvantage	

Recommendation 4: Councils share good practice and develop strategies for reducing the number of 'unknown' responses that currently limit their ability to accurately monitor of diversity.				
ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Engage proactively with wider public sector service providers across NI to encourage a joined up approach to developing strategies to monitor impact.	March 2024	Equality and Diversity Group	➤ Encourage a joined up approach to developing strategies to monitor impact.	
Recommendation 5: Councils continue to develop leadership and culture that moves beyond simply compliance in equality and diversity, and that is visible to both existing staff and potential job applicants.				
ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Put in place a meaningful equality and diversity training provision for Councillors and officers in order to improve the learning of equality, diversity and inclusion. Develop Cultural Awareness training for key staff who work directly with the Community. Recruit Diversity Ambassadors for each Council.	June 2023	Equality and Diversity Group in liaison with the Equality Commission and NILGA	➤ Councillors and staff have a better understanding of equalities and their responsibilities in the workplace and service provision. ➤ To have at least one key person in each organization ensuring equalities is considered in all aspects of their service work.	

Recommendation 6: Council's use robust research and evaluation of practices in relation to equality and diversity action plans to measure their impact against intended objectives in relation to staff and communities.

ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	ACTIONED BY	OUTCOME	PROGRESS TO DATE
Establish a baseline of current consultation and engagement by Councils	March 2023	Equality and Diversity Group	A knowledge of current engagement by Councils with diverse communities, and an understanding of whether they are able to participate and if they feel listened to.	