

**Equality,**  
**Diversity and**  
**Inclusion in**  
**Local Councils**  
**Baseline &**  
**Impact Study**



**NOV**  
**2022**



# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Background	2
1.2	Aims and Objectives of the Study	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Research Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	Online Survey	8
3.2	Best Practice Research	8
3.3	Focus Groups	8
3.4	Report	8
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1	Baseline Survey	9
4.2	Focus Groups	14
4.3	Case Studies	18
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>25</b>
	Appendix I: Focus Group Participants	25
	Appendix II: Incomplete Data Sets	26

CONTENTS

# 1. Introduction

This is the report of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Local Councils Baseline and Impact Study, commissioned by the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group of the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC).

The purpose of the study was to establish a quantitative and qualitative baseline on equality, diversity and inclusion in local government in Northern Ireland.

The research was carried out between July-October 2022 by independent consultants Macaulay Associates.

---

## 1.1 Background

### 1.1.1 Diversity Working Group

The Local Government Equality and Diversity Group (the Group) prioritises and influences equality, good relations and diversity initiatives across local government in Northern Ireland. The Group attempts to bring together best practice across the sector and in so doing, seeks to integrate the priorities of the Group with the ongoing work of individual Councils.

The Group was first constituted in 2011 and was re-constituted in 2015, in the light of the reform of local government. A new Chair, who is the Chief Executive of one of the 11 councils, was appointed by Solace in June 2021. The membership of the Group is drawn from stakeholder bodies across the local government sector and includes Chief Executives, Diversity Champions, Equality Officers Good Relations Officers and HR Officers in councils, trade union officers and Staff Commission members, as well as representatives from external stakeholder groups. The work of the Group is supported by Commission officers, and they also provide a secretariat service at meetings. Sub groups such as the Statutory Duty Network continue to meet, together with specific task and finish groups which will be established as required.

**Key Strategic Objective:** *By working with our stakeholders and responding to their needs, we aim to support and assist Councils to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations as an Employer, a Service Provider and a Civic Leader.*

## ***The Group has responsibility for:***

- — the development of the overall strategic direction for equality and diversity initiatives in local government.
- — determining priorities and setting objectives.
- — monitoring progress and reporting to the Local Government Staff Commission and SOLACE on a regular basis.

*'Diversity is integral to the work of Councils and a progressive programme of work has been undertaken, demonstrating significant improvements in service delivery, communication methods and working practices. Council commitment goes beyond complying with the statutory duties. It is about the Council and partners actively removing barriers and supporting individuals and families to reach their fullest potential.'* (Equality & Diversity Group)

### **1.1.2 Baseline Research**

From a local government sector perspective, there is no composite baseline data in relation to the composition of the workforce in respect of all section 75 categories.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2021- 2023 includes an action on Baseline Data:

*Diversity within the local government workforce is a moral and legal imperative.*

*Currently, no baseline data exists to assess the picture or measure improvement.*

**Action:** *Establish a sub-group and work with NISRA, Equality Commission and other stakeholders to create a baseline and review the diversity of our workforce in order to identify areas for improvement and set ourselves equality goals regionally and locally.*

This research was commissioned to establish composite baseline data for the first time.

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

*The Group established four objectives of the research:*

- 1)** *Gather baseline information from all 11 Councils via an online survey.*
- 2)** *Collate and analyse reports, evaluations and case studies of best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion, to provide a baseline of the impact this has had on communities, elected members and employees.*
- 3)** *Facilitate two leadership focus groups involving HR Practitioners and those with responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion to assess the culture of workplaces to support diversity and inclusion*
- 4)** *Prepare a Baseline and Impact Study Report, with clearly presented quantitative data and case studies that demonstrate impact and good practice, for consideration and feedback by the Group.*

## 2. Executive Summary

This is the report of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Local Councils Baseline and Impact Study, commissioned by the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group of the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC). The main findings were:

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. However, 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.

However, the study was able to establish the first baseline, with a complete data set from all Councils, on full-time and part-time employees by Sex Profile and Community Background.

Ten Councils provided known figures on Age Profile for Council employees, and 9 Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Sex Profile across the workforce, making indicative baselines possible.

*The baseline on the incomplete data sets of employees by category is as follows:*

- 7 Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Community Background across the workforce including a significant number of 'unknown'.
- 6 Councils provided known figures on Racial Group Profile of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.
- 6 Councils provided known figures on Sexual Orientation and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown'.
- 6 Councils provided known figures on Marital Status of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.

- 6 Councils provided known figures on Dependants/Caring Responsibilities of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.
- 5 Councils provided known figures on Gender Identity.
- 5 Councils provided known figures on Disability of employees and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown'.
- 4 Councils provided known figures on the breakdown of the workforce on Disability with high numbers of 'prefer not to say/unknown'.

*The baseline on the incomplete data sets for Elected Members by category is as follows:*

- 4 Councils provided known figures for Elected Members on Sex Profile.
- 2 Councils provided known figures for Elected Members on Gender Identity.
- 1 Council provided known figures for Community Background of Elected Members.
- 1 Council provided known figures for Elected Members on Age Profile.
- 1 Council provided known figures on Racial Group Profile of Elected Members.
- 1 Council provided known figures on Marital Status of Elected Members.
- No Councils provided known figures for Elected Members on Disability, Dependants/Caring Responsibilities or Sexual Orientation.

A comprehensive baseline and ongoing monitoring of diversity in Local Councils is possible, but this will require a commitment of the time and resources required to start to gather all of the information requested using a consistent methodology on an ongoing basis.

The main approach reported for attracting diversity in recruitment is a combination of internal processes and community outreach. Internal processes include activity within the existing workforce such as setting targets, training on equality & diversity, disability/gender/LGBT action plans, apprenticeship schemes, and retaining people through flexible retirement and flexible/hybrid working. Community outreach includes sharing information with the wider public, partnerships with relevant organisations, work with schools, work placements, site visits, open days and mock interviews.

Current challenges in the employment market can act as a barrier but also potentially an opportunity to fill positions through targeted recruitment of different groups who may not have applied for positions in the past.

To be effective in attracting a diverse audience and talent, Councils need to go beyond Article 55 reviews and practice, which requires both leadership and a culture change to move beyond simply compliance. To demonstrate a culture that supports inclusion needs leadership and role modelling from Elected Members and Council Officers to be visible to both existing staff and potential job applicants.

Eleven Councils shared examples of their best practice in equality and diversity, to contribute to a baseline of the impact this work has had on communities and employees. It is notable that most of these examples have a strong focus on disability, which suggests that as a baseline, this is the category where most good practice has been developed to date. To measure the impact on employees of these practices, and other examples of best practice that are developed for other categories, will require gathering complete data sets for ongoing monitoring. To measure the impact on communities would require robust research and evaluation of practices against their intended objectives in relation to equality and diversity.

### *The main recommendations of the study are as follows:*

- 1) It is recommended that 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.*
- 2) To create a comprehensive baseline, it is recommended that 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.*
- 3) It is suggested that 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.*
- 4) It is recommended that Councils share good practice and develop strategies for reducing the number of 'unknown' responses that currently limit their ability to accurately monitor diversity.*
- 5) To be effective in attracting a diverse audience and talent, it is recommended that 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.*
- 6) It is recommended that Councils 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.*

## 3. Research Methodology

*The research methodology designed by the Group for the study was as follows:*

### 3.1 Online Survey

*A comprehensive online survey was designed to gather the baseline information from all 11 Local Councils. Between June and September all 11 Councils completed the survey.*

### 3.2 Best Practice Research

*All Councils were invited to share reports, evaluations and case studies of best practice in equality and diversity, to provide a baseline of the impact this work has had on communities and employees. All 11 Councils provided information on good practice. The detailed case studies are available on the LGSC website.*

### 3.3 Focus Groups

*On 16th June 2022 two leadership focus groups were facilitated to explore and assess the culture of workplaces in supporting diversity. 11 participants attended from 8 Councils (See Appendix I).*

*The researcher asked participants to discuss the following questions from the Group:*

- 1) How do you ensure that your recruitment strategy reaches a diverse audience and attracts diverse talent?*
- 2) Do you have an equality, diversity, and inclusion policy? How do you make staff aware of it?*
- 3) Is training (or meetings) structured in a way that lets everyone get involved?*
- 4) What does your organisation do to communicate/demonstrate the Council's attitude towards an equal and fair workplace?*
- 5) Are the benefits and perks you are offering accessible to all your employees?*
- 6) How does your organisation demonstrate a culture that supports inclusion?*
- 7) Do you have examples of partnership working and outreach projects within Council which relate to Equality and Diversity?*

### 3.4 Report

*A Baseline and Impact Study Report was drafted for feedback and this final version was produced, incorporating suggested changes.*

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Baseline Survey

#### 4.1.1 Methodological Challenges

##### a) Data Collection

None of the respondents were able to provide the full data set requested. Most of the information requested is not currently gathered. A comprehensive baseline and ongoing monitoring of diversity in Local Councils would require a commitment of the time and resources required to start to gather all of the information requested on an ongoing basis.

This challenge was highlighted in the focus groups. Participants explained that most of the data being requested is not available because the priority is on gathering data which is required for statutory reports. Participants suggested that this kind of comprehensive data gathering and collation needed a regional approach in terms of both commitment, resources and developing one user-friendly data collection tool.

Some participants emphasised that this would need support at senior management level and some participants highlighted concerns about how the data might be used. Participants asked if there is an example of a public sector organisation that currently gathers all of this data, to learn from.

The Equality Commission advises that in addition to legislative requirements, public authorities can carry out an Audit of Inequalities as *'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, and will inform the development of an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.'*<sup>1</sup>

According to the Equality Commission's report *'Acting on the evidence of public authority practices'* (July 2018), *'Equality Scheme commitments have not driven a data development agenda in the public sector, despite the requirements in Schedule 9 for particular monitoring arrangements and the Commission's longstanding advice.'*

## **b) Sharing Smaller Numbers**

It was expected that when figures from all 11 Councils were added together it would not be possible to identify individuals, unless the total numbers were very small for a category (e.g. Chief Executive) in which case two or more categories could be combined in the composite report.

However, some of the respondents were concerned about confidentiality/privacy and some respondents were unable to provide figures on smaller numbers, due to concerns regarding the possible identification of minorities in a particular role, in spite of the composite nature of this baseline. One respondent highlighted advice from the Equality Commission not to share exact numbers under 26.

*'The Equality Commission advice we have previously received has advised that anything under 26 should be shown as <26 and the exact information should not be provided.'*

Another respondent explained:

*'The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland advises that the Council should not disclose any information relating to perceived religious affiliation/community background if the number of employees pertaining to any one community background group shows a number less than ten, as there is a potential to identify an individual's perceived religious affiliation/community background from that information. As one of the groups in one of the categories of staff has less than ten people in it, the Council is unable to provide this information.'*

If smaller numbers are not shared it will not be possible to baseline and monitor the most under-represented minorities, which is essential for measuring the impact of actions aimed at increasing diversity. If agreed, a composite report, where it would be impossible to identify individuals, collating all regional data could address these concerns and data gaps.

## **c) Full Time/Part Time Definitions**

The Diversity and Equality Working Group decided that for the purposes of the baseline survey anything below 37 hours is part-time, which is different from the definition in the Equality Commission's Fair Employment Annual Return. This defines 'full time' to be anyone who works 16+ hours per week. This difference means that Councils had to re-categorise some figures that were collected for their Monitoring Returns using the EC definition.

## **d) Grades**

One Council's 'PO' grades range from PO1-PO12 and not PO1-PO14 as in the survey. One Council included Heads of Service within the Chief Executive and Directors category.

## **e) Date of Reporting**

There is some inconsistency between overall figures and the workforce breakdown provided in some categories due to reports being run on different dates. Ideally, a composite report collating all regional data would be completed by every Council on the same date annually.

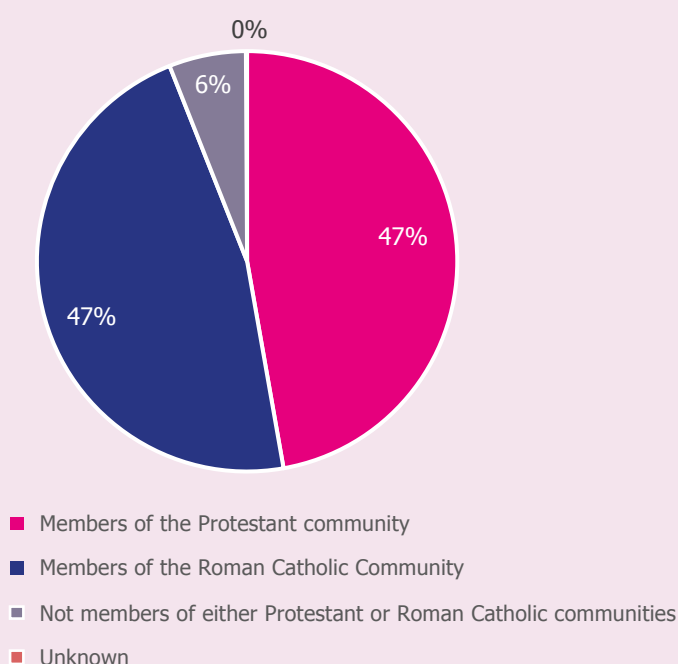
## 4.1.2 Findings

### 1. Community Background Profile

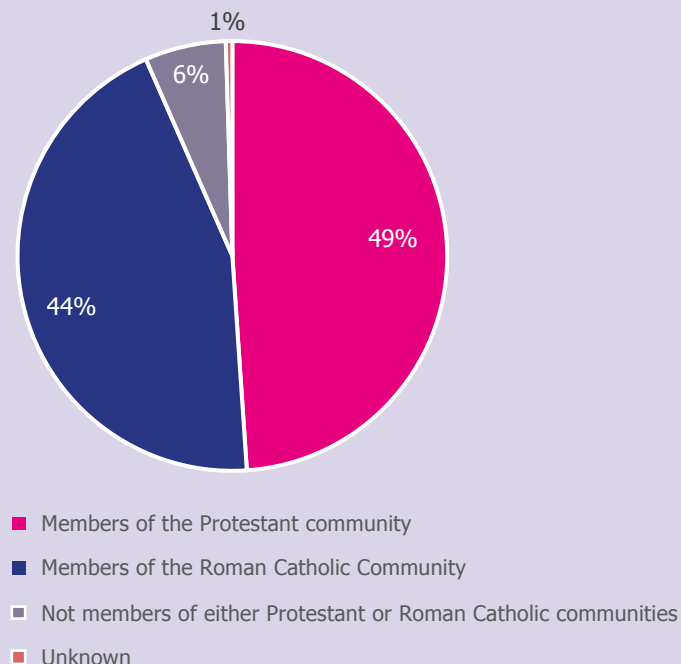
All 11 Councils answered this question for full-time and part-time employees, providing a baseline for Council employees as shown in the table below.

Community Background Profile	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
Members of the Protestant community	4133	1002
Members of the Roman Catholic Community	4093	911
Not members of either Protestant or Roman Catholic communities	518	125
Unknown	8	10

**Community Background Profile  
Full-time employees**



**Community Background Profile  
Part-time employees**



Only 7 Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Community Background across the workforce (see table in Appendix II) including a significant number of 'unknown' and therefore a baseline is not possible.

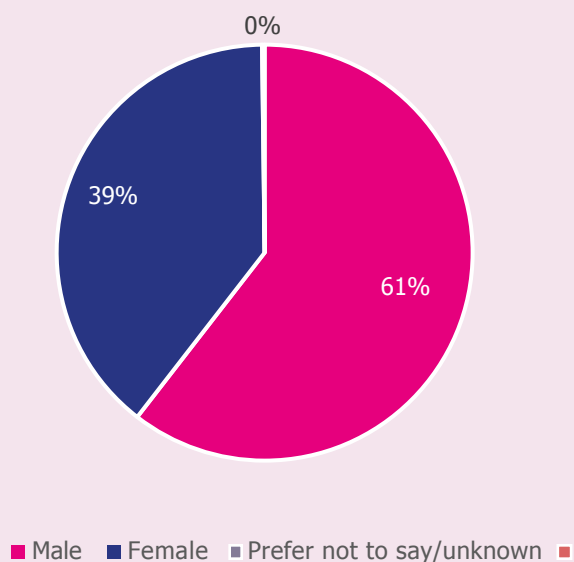
Only 1 Council provided known figures for Elected Members and therefore a baseline on Community Background of Elected Members is not possible.

## 2. Sex Profile

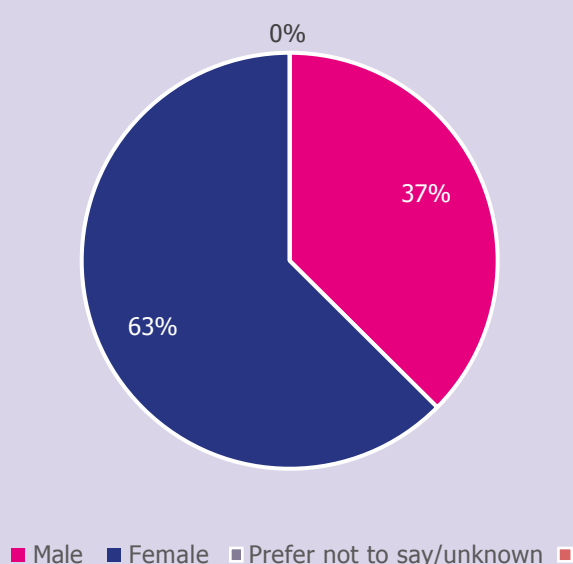
All 11 Councils answered this question for full-time and part-time employees, providing a baseline for Council employees as shown in the table below.

Sex Profile	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
Male	5161	698
Female	3353	1166
Prefer not to say/unknown	17	0

**Sex Profile**  
**Full-time employees**



**Sex Profile**  
**Part-time employees**



Nine Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Sex Profile across the workforce, providing an indicative baseline for Council employees as shown in the table below.

Sex Profile (9 Councils)	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 –Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Full-time Grade 1-5
Male	33	0	997	32	641	43	2939	612
Female	34	0	1116	149	726	173	733	798
Prefer not to say /unknown	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Only 4 Councils provided known figures for Elected Members and therefore a baseline on Sex Profile of Elected Members is not possible.

### 3. Gender Identity

Only 5 Councils provided known figures (see tables in Appendix II) and therefore a baseline on Gender Identity is not possible.

### 4. Sexual Orientation

Only 6 Councils provided known figures (see table in Appendix II) and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown', and therefore a baseline on Sexual Orientation is not possible.

### 5. Age Profile

Ten Councils answered this question, providing an indicative baseline for Council employees as shown in the table below.

Age Profile (10 Councils)	0-19 years	20-34 years	35-49 years	50-64 years	65+ years	Unknown
Male employees	60	835	1980	2645	291	0
Female employee	45	659	1903	1397	117	0
Prefer not to say/unknown employees	0	1	0	0	0	0

However, only 1 Council provided known figures for Elected Members and therefore a baseline on Age Profile of Elected Members is not possible.

### 6. Disability

Only 5 Councils provided known figures (see table in Appendix II) and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown', and therefore a baseline on Disability of employees is not possible.

Only 4 Councils provided known figures on the breakdown of the workforce on Disability (see table in Appendix II), with high numbers of 'prefer not to say/unknown', and therefore a baseline is not possible.

No Councils provided known figures for Elected Members and therefore a baseline on Disability of Elected Members is not possible.

### 7. Racial Group Profile

Only 6 Councils provided known figures (see tables in Appendix II) and these included large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category, and therefore a baseline on Racial Group Profile of employees is not possible.

Only 1 Council provided known figures (see table in Appendix II) on Racial Group Profile of Elected Members and therefore a baseline is not possible.

### 8. Marital Status

Only 6 Councils provided known figures (see tables in Appendix II), and these included large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category, and therefore a baseline on Marital Status of employees is not possible. Only 1 Council provided known figures on Marital Status of Elected Members and therefore a baseline is not possible.

## 9. Dependants/Caring Responsibilities

Only 6 Councils provided known figures (see tables in Appendix II), and these included large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category and therefore a baseline on Dependants/Caring Responsibilities of employees is not possible.

No Councils provided known figures on Dependants/Caring Responsibilities of Elected Members and therefore a baseline is not possible.

## 4.2 Focus Groups

The main responses to the focus group questions are summarised below:

### 1. *How do you ensure that your recruitment strategy reaches a diverse audience and attracts diverse talent?*

The main approach for attracting diversity in recruitment is a combination of internal processes and community outreach.

Internal processes include activity within the existing workforce such as setting targets, training on equality and diversity, disability action plans, gender action plans and women's steering group, LGBT staff network and action plan, apprenticeship schemes, and retaining people through flexible retirement and flexible/hybrid working.

Community outreach includes sharing information with the wider public (e.g. using social media), partnerships with relevant organisations (e.g. disability organisations), work with schools (e.g. talks about jobs on offer), work placements, site visits, open days and mock interviews. One participant gave an example of engaging with employability organisations and ringfencing jobs for long term unemployed people as a minority group, another participant shared the experience of developing a 'social enterprising leisure centre', and another participant talked about attempts to increase diversity within a Council's overall strategy for job creation and building community wealth across a whole district.

The focus groups discussed some of the issues around recruitment strategies for greater diversity. They discussed the current challenges in the employment market as both a barrier but also potentially an opportunity to fill positions through targeted recruitment of different groups who may not have applied for positions in the past. For example, targeting newcomers by reaching out with workshops on making job applications. An increasing need for agency staff could also be either a barrier or an opportunity for greater diversity.

Other issues discussed included the need for 'not just HR officers going out to do outreach', a stronger link between HR and Equality functions, a need to collect more data within good HR management information systems, a concern that a more representative workforce does not necessarily impact on service delivery and the need for workforce strategy planning on the release of the new Census figures.

Participants explained that to be effective in attracting a diverse audience and talent, Councils need to go beyond Article 55 reviews and practice, but this requires both leadership and a culture change to move beyond simply compliance. It was emphasised that for this to happen both elected members and senior officers would need to be 'bought in' – both morally and in terms of the business case, and there is currently a 'need for more influencing' at that level.

## **2. *Do you have an equality, diversity, and inclusion policy? How do you make staff aware of it?***

Participants referenced their required Equal Opportunities and Good Relation Policies, Equality Schemes, Equality Screening, Action Plans etc. One participant described how their Council was working on achieving a diversity mark that goes further than the statutory requirements of their Equality Scheme. Others participants described how an equality, diversity, and inclusion policy ties in with wider policy development and contributes to good strategy, planning, good customer service and economic growth plans, in a way that goes beyond a 'tick box exercise'.

There was discussion on how to develop more equality measures rather than just policies, how to support staff to overcome fears in relation to policies and finding better ways of measuring impact.

## **3. *Is training (or meetings) structured in a way that lets everyone get involved?***

Participants explained how reasonable adjustments were made to ensure everyone gets involved in training, mainly focusing on disability. The main examples shared were asking in advance for any particular access and/or language needs and bringing in external support such as translators, sign language and interpreters as required. In some cases online meetings increases accessibility.

Challenges include the cost involved in removing barriers to participation, confidentiality and a fear of 'singling people out' and a lack of confidence (which could be increased through learning and training)

## **4. *What does your organisation do to communicate/demonstrate the Council's attitude towards an equal and fair workplace?***

Participants shared a range of examples of what their Councils do. This included:

- *Creating a culture of fairness*
- *Job advertisements supporting minorities to apply*
- *Funding streams e.g. Jubilee funding in a Nationalist controlled Council*
- *Internal and external communications plan*
- *Equality & Diversity Champions – elected representative and officers, who are keen communicators and have a high profile*
- *Diversity Day*
- *Benchmarking*
- *Charter marks/awards*
- *Lectures/guest speakers, newsletters on issues such as autism and mental health*

- *Promotion of Good Relation events with prestigious speakers that staff attend*
- *Gender initiatives such as a men's health network, women's menopause policy*
- *Demonstrating greater gender balance in the members Council and its senior executives*
- *Staff newsletters and videos*
- *Policies, procedures and practice such as disciplinary procedures and a code of conduct*
- *Corporate plans, which include values such as inclusion, and a communications plan*
- *Calendar of opportunities e.g. Celebrating Women's Day, lighting up buildings*
- *Using social media*
- *Age friendly and autism friendly facilities*
- *Training of staff*

## **5. *Are the benefits and perks you are offering accessible to all your employees?***

Participants referred to existing policies on statutory employment rights, and discussed the need to go beyond statutory requirements to offer more such as health benefits, access to leisure facilities, term time working, hybrid working, parental leave and child care strategies.

Participants identified challenges such as the lack of benefits for agency workers (who tend to be older, younger and minorities) and the impact on women/parents of having to wait 6 months before a reduced hours request.

## **6. *How does your organisation demonstrate a culture that supports inclusion?***

Participants highlighted the importance of leadership and role modelling from elected members and Council officers. They emphasised the impact of ensuring role models are 'walking the talk' for staff and potential job applicants to see. Examples included:

- *A constant push from senior management on values and being seen to live the values*
- *Diversity champions (although this has more impact in some Councils than others)*

- *Good managers allowing flexibility*
- *Behaviour being praised or challenged*
- *Council and Officers showing respect in a way that sets the tone for relationships*

Other examples mentioned that demonstrate a culture that supports inclusion included:

- *Practical things people can see such as good access and accessible signage*
- *Frameworks with process built around them*
- *Providing a Quiet Room*
- *Promotion of key days with staff activities highlighting support services*
- *Mental health information and support*
- *Customer Charter*
- *Personal development as part of staff appraisals*
- *Staff surveys that can pick up cultural issues*
- *Communicating key messages on inclusivity to promote a culture of diversity*
- *Openness to being called out where there is not inclusion*
- *Staff feeling they have a voice*
- *Add value rather than 'a tick box exercise'*

## **7. *Do you have examples of partnership working and outreach projects within Council which relate to Equality and Diversity***

Participants highlighted many different partners and projects, mostly in relation to disabilities, such as environment and access improvement schemes and engagement in screening policies.

Other examples included bonfire working groups, the Statutory Duty Network, Equality Forums, sign language, Migrants Forum, Older People/Younger People Reference Groups, Employers' Forum, LGBT network, ethnic minority organisations, 'Race at Work' Campaign, women's programmes and partnership with schools to facilitate pupils on work experience and placements.

Participants highlighted the importance and potential of regional groups, Councils working together and linking in with other public sector bodies, to create a more joined up approach and a sense of pulling together.

## 4.3 Case Studies

All 11 Councils shared examples of their best practice in equality and diversity, to contribute to a baseline of the impact this work has had on communities and employees.

### **Equality/Disability Plans** (Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council)

- *Equality and Diversity Working Group*
- *Inclusive Summer Schemes, Play Parks & Leisure Facilities*
- *Inclusive Council Events*
- *Accessible Communications*
- *BSL and ISL Deaf Charter*
- *White Ribbon NI Charter (to protect women from acts of violence)*



### **Age Friendly Charter Plus** (Ards and North Down Borough Council)

- *Age Friendly Alliance, Strategy and Action Plan*
- *Big Age Friendly Guide (Directory of Older People's Services)*
- *Walking audit of Council maintained space*
- *Establishment of an Older Persons Council*
- *Elected Members Workshops/Involvement*

#### **Age Friendly – Charter Plus**

Ards and North Down's Age Friendly Strategy provides a framework to help make the borough a great place to grow older and an area in which everyone is valued and respected. It provides the structure for cross-sector co-operation, which is essential to improve the quality of life of our older population.



**Mental Health, Disability & Autism Work and Councillor Development Charter Plus** (Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council)

- *Autism Performance Improvement Plan 2022/23*
- *Autism Friendly Working Group*
- *Mental Health Charter*
- *AccessAble Access Guides*
- *Councillor Development Charter Plus*

**Diversity Action Planning** (Belfast City Council)

- *Equality & Diversity Framework, Strategic Group & Operational Group*
- *Women's Steering Group and Gender Action Plan*
- *Women's Support Network*
- *LGBT+ Action Plan and LGBT+ Staff Support Network (PROUD)*
- *Disability Action Plan and Disability Staff Support Network (ABLE)*
- *Race Equality and Diversity Action Planning Group developing a Race/BME Action Plan*

**Equality Forum & Diversity Champion** (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council)

- *Equality Forum Terms of Reference*
- *Councillor Diversity Champion*

**Councillor Development Charter Plus** (Derry City and Strabane District Council)

- *Elected Members Development Charter Plus*
- *Local Democracy Week*
- *Development of a Youth Council*
- *Engagements with under-represented groups*

**'Everyone Belongs' & 'From Around the World'** (Fermanagh & Omagh District Council)

- *Everybody Belongs Campaign*
- *Everybody Belongs Pledge*
- *'From Around the World; Celebrating Our Cultures' virtual exhibition*
- *'From Around the World; Celebrating Our Cultures' book*

## **Inclusion in Sports Services** (Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council)

- *Vitality Household Membership*
- *Inclusive Programmes*
- *Sports Development Disability Hub*
- *Health Initiatives*



## **Menopause Policy** (Mid & East Antrim Borough Council)

- *How to approach sensitive conversations*
- *Carrying out risk assessments and accommodations*
- *Managing performance proactive and positively*

## **Mid Ulster Disability Forum** (Mid Ulster District Council)

- *Mid Ulster Disability Forum*
- *Capital Build Projects*
- *Audit of Hearing Support in Council Facilities.*
- *Linking Generations NI*
- *Connecting Carers Project*
- *Autism Awareness*
- *Chatty Benches*
- *Kindness PostBox*
- *Accessible Leisure Services*

## **Councillors Equality and Good Relations Reference Group & Ethnic Minority Support Centre** (Newry, Mourne and Down District Council)

- *Equality and Good Relations Reference Group - facilitated discussion space for politically sensitive and contentious issues*
- *Ethnic Minority Support Centre - free and confidential advice and support for Minority Ethnic Communities.*

It is notable that many of the examples have a strong focus on disability, which suggests that as a baseline, this is the category where most good practice has been developed to date.

To measure the impact on employees of these practices, and other examples of best practice that are developed for other categories, will require gathering complete data sets for ongoing monitoring.

To measure the impact on communities would require robust research and evaluation of practices against their intended objectives in relation to equality and diversity.

The detailed Case Studies are available on the LGSC website.

## 5. Conclusions

This is the report of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Local Councils Baseline and Impact Study, commissioned by the Local Government Equality and Diversity Group of the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC). The main findings were:

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. However, 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.

However, the study was able to establish the first baseline, with a complete data set from all Councils, on full-time and part-time employees by Sex Profile and Community Background.

Ten Councils provided known figures on Age Profile for Council employees, and 9 Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Sex Profile across the workforce, making indicative baselines possible.

The baseline on the incomplete data sets of employees by category is as follows:

- *7 Councils provided known figures for a breakdown of Community Background across the workforce including a significant number of 'unknown'.*
- *6 Councils provided known figures on Racial Group Profile of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.*
- *6 Councils provided known figures on Sexual Orientation and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown'.*
- *6 Councils provided known figures on Marital Status of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.*
- *6 Councils provided known figures on Dependants/Caring Responsibilities of employees, including large numbers in the 'prefer not to say/unknown' category.*

- *5 Councils provided known figures on Gender Identity.*
- *5 Councils provided known figures on Disability of employees and the vast majority of these were 'prefer not to say/unknown'.*
- *4 Councils provided known figures on the breakdown of the workforce on Disability with high numbers of 'prefer not to say/unknown'.*

The baseline on the incomplete data sets for Elected Members by category is as follows:

- *4 Councils provided known figures for Elected Members on Sex Profile.*
- *2 Councils provided known figures for the Elected Members on Gender Identity.*
- *1 Council provided known figures for Community Background of Elected Members.*
- *1 Council provided known figures for Elected Members on Age Profile.*
- *1 Council provided known figures on Racial Group Profile of Elected Members.*
- *1 Council provided known figures on Marital Status of Elected Members.*
- *No Councils provided known figures for Elected Members on Disability, Dependants/Caring Responsibilities or Sexual Orientation.*

A comprehensive baseline and ongoing monitoring of diversity in Local Councils is possible, but this will require a commitment of the time and resources required to start to gather all of the information requested using a consistent methodology on an ongoing basis.

The main approach reported for attracting diversity in recruitment is a combination of internal processes and community outreach. Internal processes include activity within the existing workforce such as setting targets, training on equality and diversity, disability/gender/LGBT action plans, apprenticeship schemes, and retaining people through flexible retirement and flexible/hybrid working. Community outreach includes sharing information with the wider public, partnerships with relevant organisations, work with schools, work placements, site visits, open days and mock interviews.

Current challenges in the employment market can act as a barrier but also potentially an opportunity to fill positions through targeted recruitment of different groups who may not have applied for positions in the past. To be effective in attracting a diverse audience and talent, Councils need to go beyond Article 55 reviews and practice, which

requires both leadership and a culture change to move beyond simply compliance. To demonstrate a culture that supports inclusion needs leadership and role modelling from Elected Members and Council Officers to be visible to both existing staff and potential job applicants.

All 11 Councils shared examples of their best practice in equality and diversity, to contribute to a baseline of the impact this work has had on communities and employees. It is notable that most of these examples have a strong focus on disability, which suggests that as a baseline, this is the category where most good practice has been developed to date. To measure the impact on employees of these practices, and other examples of best practice that are developed for other categories, will require gathering complete data sets for ongoing monitoring. To measure the impact on communities would require robust research and evaluation of practices against their intended objectives in relation to equality and diversity.

## 6. Recommendations

**1) —** *It is recommended that 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.*

**2) —** *To create a comprehensive baseline, it is recommended that 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.*

**3) —** *It is suggested that 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.*

**4) —** *It is recommended that Councils share good practice and develop strategies for reducing the number of 'unknown' responses that currently limit their ability to accurately monitor diversity.*

**5) —** *To be effective in attracting a diverse audience and talent, it is recommended that 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.*

**6) —** *It is recommended that Councils 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.*

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Focus Group Participants

### Focus Group 1: 16th June 2022 morning

- 1) Mary McSorley, Equality Officer, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council*
- 2) Elizabeth Beattie Head of Policy, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council*
- 3) Karen Mailey, Head of HR & Organisational Development, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council*
- 4) Colin Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council,*
- 5) Lorraine Dennis, Equality and Diversity Officer, Belfast City Council*
- 6) Catherine Christy, HR Manager, Belfast City Council*
- 7) Gillian Robinson, Compliance Manager, Ards and North Down Borough Council*
- 8) Phillip Moffett, Head of Democratic Services, Mid Ulster District Council*

### Focus Group 2: 16th June 2022 afternoon

- 9) Martina McNulty, Head of Department: Performance and Strategy, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council*
- 10) Geraldine Dyson, Head of Human Resources, Mid Ulster District Council*
- 11) Louise Horner, Corporate and Strategic Services, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council*

## Appendix II: Incomplete Data Sets

<b>Community Background Profile (7 Councils)</b>	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 –Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Part-time Grade 1-5
Members of the Protestant community	16	0	636	41	480	73	1404	507
Members of the Roman Catholic Community	17	0	539	42	348	58	828	560
Not members of either Protestant or Roman Catholic communities	3	0	61	3	62	8	140	73
Unknown	10	0	248	0	104	0	500	21

<b>Sexual Orientation (6 Councils)</b>	Straight	Bisexual	Gay	Lesbian	Prefer not to say/ unknown
Employees	2484	13	24	19	5612
Elected Members	0	0	0	0	161

<b>Marital Status Profile (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
Married or in a civil partnership	2493	700
Prefer not to say/unknown	2566	546

<b>Marital Status Profile (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 –Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Part-time Grade 1-5
Married or in a civil partnership	39	0	847	120	483	118	1079	458
Prefer not to say/ unknown	15	0	679	38	487	70	1686	702

<b>Disability (5 Councils)</b>	<b>Full-time employees</b>	<b>Part-time employees</b>
Number deemed disabled with impairments	146	21
Physical impairment such as difficulty using arms, or mobility issues, requiring use of crutches or wheelchair	13	2
Sensory impairment such as being blind or having serious visual impairment, or being deaf or having serious hearing impairment	9	5
Mental health condition such as depression or schizophrenia	16	3
Learning disability or difficulty such as Down's Syndrome or dyslexia or Cognitive impairment such as autistic spectrum disorder	24	5
Long standing or progressive illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV infection, diabetes, epilepsy or chronic heart disease	22	1
Other	50	16
Prefer not to say/unknown	2486	602

<b>Disability Profile (4 Councils)</b>	<b>Full-time Chief Executive &amp; Directors</b>	<b>Part-time Chief Executive &amp; Directors</b>	<b>Full-time P01-P14</b>	<b>Part-time P01-P14</b>	<b>Full-time S02 – Grade6</b>	<b>Part-time S02 – Grade6</b>	<b>Full-time Grade 1-5</b>	<b>Full-time Grade 1-5</b>
Number deemed disabled with impairments	2	0	39	3	27	3	74	17
Physical impairment such as difficulty using arms, or mobility issues, requiring use of crutches or wheelchair	0	0	4	0	6	0	6	2
Sensory impairment such as being blind or having serious visual impairment, or being deaf or having serious hearing impairment	0	0	5	0	0	2	5	2
Mental health condition such as depression or schizophrenia	0	0	6	1	4	0	6	4
Learning disability or difficulty such as Down's Syndrome or dyslexia, or Cognitive impairment such as autistic spectrum disorder	0	0	5	0	4	0	16	6
Long standing or progressive illness or health condition Such as cancer, HIV infection, diabetes, epilepsy or chronic heart disease	1	0	8	0	2	0	11	1
Other	1	0	7	3	9	3	30	10
Prefer not to say/ unknown	16	0	618	53	431	74	1412	485

<b>Racial Group Profile (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Elected Members
White	4074	1194	40
Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Black African	2	0	0
Black Other	1	1	0
Chinese	3	2	0
Irish Traveller	2	0	0
Indian	1	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Mixed ethnic group	7	2	0
Other ethnic group	22	9	0
Prefer not to say/ unknown	2450	577	121

<b>Racial Group (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 – Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Full-time Grade 1-5
White	44	0	1208	135	846	143	1971	923
Black Caribbean	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1
Black African	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Black Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chinese	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2
Irish Traveller	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Indian	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed ethnic group	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	1
Other ethnic group	1	0	10	0	4	2	11	8
Prefer not to say/ unknown	17	0	601	50	384	61	1442	482

<b>Dependants/ Caring Responsibilities (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time employees	Part-time employees
No	1499	252
Yes	1135	223
For a child or children	1204	253
For a disabled person or persons	15	2
An elderly person or persons	9	0
Other	78	16
Prefer not to say/Unknown	4201	1276

<b>Dependants/ Caring Responsibilities (6 Councils)</b>	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 – Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Full-time Grade 1-5
No	17	0	431	20	296	18	754	207
Yes	14	0	435	50	223	35	408	121
For a child or children	20	0	485	57	255	42	458	134
For a disabled person or persons	0	0	7	0	2	1	6	1
An elderly person or persons	0	0	5	0	1	0	3	0
Other	2	0	31	3	15	3	29	10
Prefer not to say/Unknown	26	0	992	95	740	145	2434	1050

<b>Gender Identity (5 Councils)</b>	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Elected Members
Identify as a man	2832	413	75
Identify as a woman	1586	704	25
Prefer to self-describe	0	0	0
Prefer not to say/unknown	970	380	121

<b>Gender Identity (5 Councils)</b>	Full-time Chief Executive & Directors	Part-time Chief Executive & Directors	Full-time P01-P14	Part-time P01-P14	Full-time S02 – Grade6	Part-time S02 – Grade6	Full-time Grade 1-5	Full-time Grade 1-5
Identify as a man	21	0	603	22	412	23	1796	371
Identify as a woman	24	0	690	72	409	99	463	491
Prefer to self-describe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prefer not to say/unknown	6	0	220	23	197	40	547	317

