

Community
Planning
Mid Ulster



MID ULSTER COMMUNITY PLANNING

Draft Performance Statement 2019-2021

Part 1: The Story So Far

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Vision

Mid Ulster... a welcoming place where our people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where our economy is thriving; our environment and heritage are sustained; and where our public services excel.

Background

The Mid Ulster Community Plan was launched in May 2017. Our plan was shaped by consultation with local groups in 2015 and 2016, where over 1700 people provided their opinions and views of what was important for Mid Ulster. Qualitative analysis was also used to help shape the plan. The process of engagement and evidence based statistics allowed us to arrive at consensus with the community/voluntary sectors and with our business and statutory partners on 15 outcomes to achieve over the life of the 10-year plan.

The Mid Ulster Community Plan not only sets out a shared vision but it highlights the importance of process, people, communities and of organisations coming together to improve local well-being and quality of life, and making sure that strategies, priorities, projects and programmes at all levels integrate effectively with each other. The Plan is ambitious, as it brings together over 40 different partner organisations to work collectively in tackling difficult issues with the aim of improving the lives of our local people. This includes 12 Statutory Partners¹, as well as representatives from community, voluntary, business, colleges, NI Government Departments, Mid Ulster District Council and other sectors. Partners are represented on the Strategic Partnership Board and Thematic Working Groups.

¹ Statutory Partners: Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHST), Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT), Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency (PHA), Education Authority (EA), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI), Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sport NI), Northern Ireland Library Authority (Libraries NI), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS).

In order to ensure participation and engagement the Plan is delivered under four thematic groups to include Economic Growth & Infrastructure, Education & Skills, Health & Wellbeing and Vibrant & Safe Communities.

Introduction

Covid19

Not long after the publication of the first Performance Statement in November 2019, the world was hit by the biggest global pandemic in 100 years. Covid19 has had a significant and lasting impact on societies the world over. Government priorities dramatically shifted to the preservation of life and wellbeing of its citizens, diverting focus and resources from other areas of government. Businesses have needed to adapt to how they interact with their customers, sell their products and manage their employees, some unable to meet the challenges and causing many to lose their jobs. Health services have been stretched to their limits, dealing with unprecedented numbers of very ill people with Covid19, while at the same time grappling with the dilemma of how to continue to provide every day services to people whose lives depend on them. Schools and children shifted continuously between remote and in-class learning, exams have been cancelled and childhoods have been disrupted. Loved ones have been separated for months on end, many have been isolated from social contacts and services, leading to what some have termed a “mental health pandemic”.

It was stated in the last Performance Statement in 2019 that, *“One of the key opportunities of Community Planning has been partners engaging and building relationships to agree the key strategic actions for Mid Ulster and a commitment by all to deliver. Informal networking has had a positive impact where organisations can partner quickly in response to issues that arise that require an integrated approach or to an emergency situation.”* Little did we know at the time, the relationships that were fostered in the first years of the Community Planning process, would prove so vital to the Covid19 response in the Mid Ulster.

Community Planning Mid Term Review

The Statutory Guidance for Operation of Community Planning (2014) states, *“The Act also requires the council and its community planning partners, before the fourth anniversary of the publication of the community plan, to carry out a review of the plan.”* Although the fourth anniversary of the Mid Ulster Community Plan was not until May 2021, the events which started in the first half of 2020, and which will impact upon the district and its residents for years to come, created an urgency to review the Community Plan before this scheduled period. There was an accelerated need to reassess our actions and determine their relevance in a Covid19 environment and as a result, a review of the Mid Ulster Community Plan was carried out in late 2020.

A number of previous pieces of work laid the foundations to a review of the Community Plan. In 2018, the Short Term Delivery Plan for the Mid Ulster Community Plan was published. This Delivery Plan identified the actions across the 5 themes that partners agreed to deliver within the first 3 years (2017-2020). Then in April 2019, members of the Community Planning Strategic Board took part in a Planning Day in order to set the strategic direction for Community Planning in Mid Ulster and identified a number of actions that should be prioritised for delivery in the remaining short-term delivery period and moving into the next phase of delivery.

In November 2019, Mid Ulster Community Planning published its first Performance Statement. This report gave a detailed picture of the achievements of Community Planning delivery to date, underlining a large number of actions from our Community Plan that have been initiated, delivered and even completed.

The priorities set by the Strategic Board, our achievements to date as outlined in the 2019 Performance Statement and the impact of the COVID19 pandemic, were all considered when identifying the actions from the Community Plan to take forward in the next phase of delivery. The actions from the Mid Ulster Community Plan were assessed against these and a traffic light system was used to determine the following:



Actions to be taken forward. Some actions may merge with other similar worded actions. Others may have a change in wording to be more reflective of the current environment.



Actions to be paused and reviewed. This may be the result of other external factors that are preventing their delivery at this time.



Actions that have been completed as detailed in the Performance Statement 2019.

As a result of the review, the following actions were agreed to be brought forward in the next phase of the Mid Ulster Community Plan:

Economic Growth & Infrastructure

1. Secure Mid South West Region Growth Deal and NI Executive Complimentary Fund to deliver the following strategic actions:
 - i. Advance the development of the Strategic Road Network, including bypasses for the main towns and villages on the strategic routes.
 - ii. Facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure schemes such as the Desertcreat Safety College.
 - iii. Scope, develop and deliver an Engineering Centre of Excellence
 - iv. Deliver a Skills Action Plan
 - v. Optimise the provision of co-located health and social care wellbeing services in our three main towns.

2. Provide support to businesses under 3 priority areas: - COVID-19 Recovery; Business Growth; Brexit & Beyond.
3. Develop and implement broadband and mobile phone connectivity solutions across Mid Ulster.
4. Tourism Recovery & Growth, through activity tourism and natural heritage assets
5. Create a competitive advantage for our principal towns, complimenting a 'Town Centre First Principle'.
6. Develop and deliver coordinated village planning and renewal initiatives.
7. An asset management plan for public sector estate in Mid Ulster and the identification of potential co-location of public services with priority given to town centre locations.
8. Develop an Intra-Town Transit System which will include shuttle bus, cycling and walking links. (Focus on cycling and walking links)
9. We will work to mitigate against the impacts of climate change by taking steps to reduce our carbon emissions.
10. Progress development of our Blueways and Greenways.

Education & Skills

1. Numeracy & Literacy Recovery & Support
2. Extend and enhance after-school drop in centres in schools and in the community
3. Provide a Family Support Centre in each school providing for disadvantaged communities, with the aim of building educational attainment levels.
4. Extend the number and range of Foundation Degrees and Degree courses delivered locally.
5. Extend the provision and access to part-time education for adult returners
6. School based mental health support programmes to improve the resilience of children and young people
7. Invest in the school and Further Education College estates, including an enhanced local Campus for Northern Regional College in Magherafelt.
8. Extend provision of Shared Education across Mid Ulster.
9. Establish a Mid Ulster Career's Forum to support the preparation of our young people for work.

Health & Wellbeing

Operational Actions

1. An 'Aging Well' initiative.
2. A 'Healthy for Life' strategy, team and portal' coordinating all health initiatives, programmes and literature available in the District.
3. Deliver a Recreation and Active Lifestyle Plan which will provide formal and informal recreation and play opportunities.
4. Develop Healthy Places Plans across the district.
5. Develop and implement an integrated response to mental health and wellbeing
6. Enhance Adult Learning initiatives across Mid Ulster.

Strategic Actions

1. Progress the new-build scheme for the Oakridge Social Education Centre in Dungannon.
2. Extend and enhance supported and independent living provision across Mid Ulster.
3. Optimise the provision of co-located health and social care wellbeing services in our three main towns.
4. Developed enhanced access to ambulatory and acute care for the Mid Ulster population, ensuring equitable access to safe and appropriate services.
5. Investigate the Mid Ulster district as a location for the delivery of a regional service.
6. Develop a Centre of Excellence for Public Safety at Desertcreat and potential provision of an Ambulance Service hub for Mid Ulster.

Vibrant & Safe Communities

1. To support Mid Ulster PCSP to deliver upon outcomes of PCSP Action Plan.
2. Develop and make available to 11-18 year olds an 'Engaged Youth' development initiative (based on the Planet Youth model).
3. To support MUDC Good Relations & Peace Partnerships to deliver upon outcomes of Good Relations and Peace Action Plans.
4. Develop and deliver an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Mid Ulster.
5. Support and develop capacity of volunteers to support community development in their local areas.

6. A community benefits 'planning gain' requirement in the Local Development Plan.
7. Provide an adequate supply of social and affordable 'homes-for-life' through Area Plan policy, direct public provision and partnership working (ensuring adequate sewage and water infrastructure).

Given that the review was undertaken half way through the reporting period of this Performance Statement, it is important to note that some actions will be reported under a new action priority from the review and some will follow the action priority from the original Plan.

Thematic Area Progress Updates (2019 – 2021)

Economic Growth & Infrastructure

Outcomes

- We prosper in a stronger and more competitive economy
- We have people working in a diverse economy
- Our towns and villages are vibrant and competitive
- We are better connected through appropriate infrastructure
- We increasingly value our environment and enhance it for our children
- We enjoy increased access to affordable quality housing

Covid19 Response

The response from businesses during the Covid19 Pandemic was very impressive, including the production of hundreds of thousands of masks and visors in Meadowbank Leisure Centre and the business sector collaborating together, repurposing PPE and making this available to the health sector. Mid Ulster District Council, in partnership with Invest NI, provided Covid19 grants to 1,500 businesses. Mid Ulster District Council's Environmental Health and the Public Health Agency worked together on enforcement and future proofing businesses so that they would be in a state of readiness to start up and survive (e.g. accessibility, outdoor catering, etc.). These practical examples of partnership working were all possible due to the strong, firm relationships and trust developed under the banner of Community Planning.

Mid Ulster businesses were the first to receive COVID-19 business recovery grants, less than 3 weeks after a funding scheme opened for applications. The £562,000 fund, which offered commercial premises grants of between £500 and £3,000 to support their work to help provide a safe environment for their customers and staff, opened in August 2020.

The funding was awarded via the Department for Communities (DfC) for town centres and by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for smaller settlements, with further investment by the Council, which is coordinating the grant scheme.

A second grant scheme for £562,000 of Covid19 funding opened in November 2020 giving commercial premises a further opportunity to apply for discretionary grants of up to 100% of eligible costs of between £500 and £3,000 to support their COVID19 business recovery. Of the overall £1.124million, a total of £266,000 was invested by Mid Ulster District Council, which coordinated the grant scheme.

Mid Ulster District Council and Invest Northern Ireland worked closely to adapt programme delivery and provide Covid19 focused support with a £1.1million business support programme. The funding helped companies to adjust to overcome current economic challenges and sustain businesses, while they are planning for future recovery and growth in a post Covid19 economy. The three-year support package aims to help micro and small businesses in the area recover from the economic impacts of the Covid19 pandemic and sustain and grow employment in more than 600 local firms. Building capacity in key business areas such as, planning, financial management and tendering, innovation, the adoption of new technologies and digital growth, have all been included in the funded programme to help companies sustain and create jobs while competing successfully for new work to increase sales and turnover. This project is part funded by Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the Investment for Growth & Jobs Northern Ireland (2014-2020) Programme.

In May 2020, Mid Ulster District Council supported local businesses by providing a number of online services including webinars and seminars. Local businesses could participate in a number of free online digital seminars and business webinars 'Connecting with Customers', 'Communicating through Uncertainty', 'Building Psychological Resilience'.

In addition, Community Planning partners supported the tourism and hospitality sector in Mid Ulster, through the online forum and accompanying webinar sessions.

The forum with almost 90 participants gave businesses the opportunity to share their own experiences of coping with the current crisis, ask questions, and receive practical help and advice from a number of industry bodies, including Tourism NI, as well as legal, health and financial specialists.

Mid South West Growth Deal

The 3-council collaborative partnership has formed to transform the economic outlook of the region through the delivery of the Mid South West Regional Economic Strategy. Developed as a collaboration between Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council, the strategy is centred on boosting productivity but also seeks to drive business growth; fully realise the region's sectoral strengths and opportunities; create more and better-paid jobs and ensure the ongoing internationalisation of Mid South West (MSW) can be achieved.

The strategy, which stemmed from extensive research and analysis of the region's economy and was informed by engagement with the major employers throughout the region, identifies challenges and opportunities and sets out four pillars to guide investment and grow the collective economy. The pillars are future proofing the skills base, enabling infrastructure, boosting innovation and digital capacity and building a high performing tourism economy.

The Mid South West Regional Economic Strategy is without doubt the most significant means to stimulate and create long-term, sustained economic growth and prosperity across this region. The strategy was launched in September 2020 by First Minister Arlene Foster MLA and deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and work has been progressing since.

Capitalising on the Region's sectoral strengths in manufacturing, engineering, agri-food, health and life sciences, tourism and construction as well as a fast growing digital tech sector, the strategy sets out a number of potential projects under each of the pillars which, with targeted investment, would help boost productivity. These include, for example, further development of critical road infrastructure; the implementation of a Skills Action Plan; the development of an Innovation and Skills Academy through the

South West College and an Agri-Food Robotics Centre at CAFRE Loughry Campus; enabling business development in Carn, Craigavon; delivery of a MSW destination tourism experience; and, further development of cross-border assets such as the Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark. These projects will be subject to further consideration and scrutiny as the Steering Group turns its attention towards the development of the business cases that will be required to secure a Growth Deal for the Region. The £252million Growth Deal, which is just one of the economic levers that will be required to support the delivery of the Strategy, is a medium to long term plan.

Broadband

Project Stratum has been developed to improve broadband connectivity mainly to rural areas (approximately 79,000 premises in total across NI) by delivering 30mbps broadband. The contract for Project Stratum was awarded to Fibrus Networks Ltd and work is now ongoing. In all, there are 12,289 premises in Mid Ulster earmarked for improvements via Stratum however, 354 premises in Mid Ulster are outside the scope of Project Stratum.

A HyperfastNI website² has been developed for Project Stratum to provide information on all key aspects of implementation, including planned phasing and full deployment of the broadband infrastructure across the target intervention areas. There is a postcode checker on this site, and the public can check if they are located in the target intervention area to receive an upgraded broadband service through Project Stratum and if so, get an indication of when they are likely to get access to improved broadband services.

In addition to Project Stratum, Mid Ulster District Council are part of a consortia of 10 Council and Business Services Organisation (BSO) who have now contracted with Fibrus to implement dark fibre to Council and NHS premises across the district through the Full Fibre NI project funded through DCMS and managed by Newry & Mourne District Council. This project will significantly increase the availability of gigabit capable broadband to homes and businesses in Northern Ireland. The project

²<https://hyperfastni.com/>

is mainly grant funded by the DCMS Rural Gigabit Connectivity (RGC) and Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programmes. The application for funding was successful because there is a compelling need for connectivity in our region. The project is being delivered by the Fibrus and Openreach networks and are estimated to make fibre broadband available to around 39,000 premises in or near the Council's area as part of this project, which will be completed by December 2021.

Labour Market Partnerships

Employability and skills development is a strategic economic priority for the Mid Ulster Community Plan and the need for intervention at this time is more important than ever. The aim of Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) is to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by working through coordinated, collaborative, multiagency partnerships. The LMPs will be focused to achieve regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by the District connecting employers with employees. The Partnership is expected to provide an integrated approach to address labour market challenges by bringing together, in a single body, the necessary local knowledge and expertise to build on existing structures locally, operating in a holistic, streamlined and joined up way. This Partnership will form part of a Northern Ireland wide partnership involving all 11 Councils and there will be a regional Labour Market Partnership, managed by the Department for Communities, to oversee the work of the 11 Local LMPs. The Interim Labour Market Partnership for Mid Ulster provides a unique opportunity to greatly affect the district's priorities for skills and employability, ensuring that an appropriate skills pipeline is available to local industry both now and in the future. It has decided that the industry-led, Mid Ulster Skills Forum, as the delivery vehicle to operate the local Interim Labour Market Partnership. The membership of the Skills Forum will be revised to align with the guidance set out by DFC in terms of the local LMP approach.

The award winning Mid Ulster Skills Forum was established in 2017 and launched a comprehensive Mid Ulster Skills Action Plan in 2018 following consultation and engagement with key stakeholders. However, due to a lack of government funding only a small number of initiatives have been delivered which include the

establishment of the MEGA collaborative network. The Mid Ulster Skills Action Plan is the starting point and building block for developing a robust Two Year Employability Action Plan for Mid Ulster.

A key objective of the LMP approach is to develop a two year Action Plan which will be locally focused but still aligned to key strategic objectives identified within the Programme for Government, NI Economic Strategy, 10x Economy, NI Skills Strategy (draft), MSW Regional Economic Strategy, Mid Ulster Community Plan, Council Corporate Plan, Council Economic Development Plan, Mid Ulster Skills Action Plan and LMP member organisations corporate plans. On approval from DfC and subject to funding, the Action Plan will be delivered in 2021-23.

Tourism

In the Mid Ulster District Council Tourism Strategy 2016-2021 the Council clearly identified the value of the strong working partnerships and from the outset this has been at the heart in the delivery of the strategy. During this time the Council has nurtured strong working relationships with Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, DAERA Rural Tourism Department & the Ulster Scots. In addition to the agencies a great deal of importance was placed upon building strong working relationships with the private sector through the Tourism Development Group and the working clusters to ensure that they shared and benefited from the strategic vision of the Council, which has been clearly demonstrated in 24 strong collective Mid Ulster experiential offerings that are and have been developed in line with the 'Embrace a Giant Spirit' regional brand.

Arguably, Mid Ulster contains the richest seam of archaeological, historic, natural and heritage sites and facilities in Northern Ireland, stretching from Mesolithic, Neolithic, pre, early Christian and medieval times to the Plantation era and up to the 2nd World War. A key objective of the strategy was to increase the visibility and understanding by residents and visitors alike of the significance of these assets within an all-Ireland as well as a Northern Ireland context and this has been achieved

in the development of strong products such as Hill of the O'Neill & Ranfurly House, OM Davagh Dark Sky Park and Observatory, US Grants Homestead which are now presented as world class visitor attractions.

The strong and compelling association of Seamus Heaney with Bellaghy and the surrounding communities and countryside provided a rich foundation for the development for the Seamus Heaney HomePlace visitor centre at Bellaghy, which opened in mid-2016, with literary and heritage trails 'Open Ground' immersing the visitor into the rich local landscape to place connections referenced in Seamus Heaney's poems and literature.

Education and Skills

Outcomes

- **Our people are better qualified and more skilled**
- **We give our children and young people the best chance in life**
- **We are more entrepreneurial, innovative and creative**

Covid Response

Fuel Vouchers

A total of 4,000 Mid Ulster families received support to tackle fuel poverty in a scheme co-ordinated by Mid Ulster District Council, funded by the Department for Communities and delivered in partnership with primary and secondary schools in Mid Ulster. The £200,000 programme aimed to help those experiencing difficulties in heating their homes, with fuel vouchers being distributed in partnership with post-primary and primary schools to families in receipt of free school meals. In a matter of weeks from announcing the scheme, over 4,000 families received vital support towards fuel costs, helping to ease the overall financial burden that people most in need in local communities were facing.

Summer Get Active 21 Free Voucher Scheme, Reduced Leisure Rates and Summer Free Play Scheme

The benefits of exercise to promote positive mental health and wellbeing are well known. To encourage young people to get out and about this summer, Mid Ulster District Council developed a free Summer Get Active 21 leisure voucher scheme for post primary students in receipt of Free Schools Meals. Council partnered with all post primary schools to distribute the vouchers for young person and their friends/family to avail of 10 free sessions in Council leisure facilities from July to October 2021. In addition to this, young people not in receipt of Free Schools Meals could avail of a reduced leisure cost initiative, accessing a variety of activities for £1 per session. The scheme was well received with almost 6000 sessions/activities used.

Free Play Scheme

Free Play Schemes for children aged between seven and 11 years were held at two Council facilities and supported via primary schools across the towns in the District. In total, ninety-six sessions at 10 venues in Dungannon, Magherafelt, Cookstown, Fivemiletown, Coalisland and Maghera were held. A healthy lunch was also provided each day to every child. Very positive feedback has been received from both schools and participants.

Peer Mentoring Programme

The Paired Reading Project, delivered by Learn Spark, involved training older students (Mentors) how to deliver reading support to younger students (Mentees) who were finding reading uninteresting and challenging. In the initial year, Learn Spark invited 20 schools in the Mid Ulster District area to get involved. Seventeen schools took up the invitation and each school selected 10 students to train as Mentors. Twenty Mentees were selected to receive the training and support. A celebration event for all Mentors and Mentees was unable to proceed due to Covid19.

In this second year, 15 schools signed up to the programme. Due to Government restrictions, all training sessions were delivered virtually. Students were provided with a support booklet to guide them through the training and Learn Spark produced two support videos to enhance the virtual sessions. The next step in the project involved follow-on virtual sessions answering questions from teachers and students. The virtual training sessions were impacted again with school closures because of Covid19 and the project had to be suspended. The project evaluation indicates a very high level of satisfaction with the training and on-going support provided.

Schools for Hope

The Schools for Hope programme is funded by Mid Ulster District Council through the Peace IV programme and led by St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore and The Royal School, Dungannon.

Schools for Hope seeks to equip pupils and teaching staff with the tools they require to build resilience and promote good mental health through early intervention,

combating mental health before it advances and negatively impacts on wellbeing and academic performance. It seeks to provide young people with capacity and coping mechanisms prior to requiring intervention by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and combines a model of teacher training with pupil engagement.

The programme aims to build resilience and good mental health within our school communities and comprised distinct elements as follows:

- A needs analysis and evaluation of pupil's mental health in the Mid Ulster District and teacher response to increased pastoral demands conducted by Ulster University
- Hopeful Minds and Trauma Informed Schools whole school training pilot programmes in St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore and The Royal School, Dungannon delivered by Hopeful Minds and Ulster University
- Engagement sessions (Dungannon and Cookstown Area Learning Partnership and Magherafelt ALP) covering topics such as sources of support and providing schools with the opportunity to share experiences and approaches to mental health and wellbeing.
- Schools for Hope Virtual Conference held on 4 June 2021
- A business plan will explore the potential for a mental health and wellbeing schools hub and the format this could take.

Following on from the Conference in June 2021, the two lead schools are undertaking training in mindfulness with a view to being able to deliver joint sessions/programmes in the future and having a skills set in school to continue this work. A Mindfulness App is being purchased by the two lead schools. Another Hopeful Minds resilience training programme is planned before the end of 2021 for the two lead schools and Magherafelt post-primary schools. A business plan on the potential for a Schools for Hope learning and training hub for Mid Ulster is being developed and should be ready in November 2021.

Careers Forum

As part of the delivery of the Education & Skills strategic outcomes a Mid Ulster Skills Forum and Action Plan have been developed which, as previously mentioned, will now be brought forward under the newly established Labour Market

Partnership (LMP). The LMP will lead on the achievement of a number of specific actions identified through business engagement and skills sector.

Another key area for potential engagement is with the education careers sector, seeking to build linkages with skills and industry to ensure our young people are in the 'right destination'. As a result, a Mid Ulster Careers Forum has been established to: -

1. Support the education careers sector to build awareness of future business and employment opportunities and the relevant education requirements for accessing future opportunities.
2. Support the careers sector in making linkages and greater awareness of the skills training and apprenticeships opportunities.
3. Support the education careers sector to maximize resources and education vocational provision through partnerships.
4. Support networking within the sector to allow for sharing of practice.
5. Identify issues and opportunities and facilitate discussion where relevant.

The first workshop was held on the 6th March 2020, where careers teachers from post primary schools and colleges, from across the district, were given overviews of Community Planning, Mid Ulster Skills Forum, MEGA Programme and participated in the development of resources for a Careers Attractiveness Programme. A new workshop programme has been developed for 2021/22, with workshops on local work placement opportunities, apprenticeships and Interview and work readiness.

Health and Wellbeing

Outcomes

- **We are better enabled to live longer healthier and more active lives**
- **We have better availability to the right health service, in the right place at the right time**
- **We care more for those most vulnerable and in need**

Covid Response

Through a multi-agency partnership with Mid Ulster Council, Department for Communities, both Health Trusts and the community and voluntary sector, the system to distribute food parcels was up and running within 14 days from the government announcement to move to 'lockdown' in March 2020. To manage this, a Community Support Hub was established, with staff from the Northern and Southern Health Trusts making referrals to relevant support agencies and services, including pharmacies, local charities and groups, as well as referrals to Mid Ulster District Council staff for the allocation of food parcels. In addition to the distribution of food parcels, a befriending call service was set up. Officers from Mid Ulster Council made regular calls to 80 who were experiencing extreme isolation and loneliness. They too would have made onward referrals to other support services.

The Agewell Partnership, which is funded by the Community Planning partners (Public Health Agency, Northern Health & Social Care Trust, Southern Health & Social Care Trust and Mid Ulster District Council) also continued to provide Good Morning Calls to their clients during the Pandemic. The partnership working between these community planning partners, helped to create a strong support system for the districts most vulnerable. Up to 200 food boxes were distributed every by over 30 local community groups and over 100 volunteers. Eighty older and vulnerable people were contacted each week through a Befriending Scheme which ran from April to August 2020.

Mid Ulster District Council re-purposed Meadowbank Sports Arena for local company Bloc Blinds as the Magherafelt based manufacturer went into production of frontline Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The company repurposed its production line

producing 22,000 face shields per day. Joint initiatives with the Public Health Agency to use Council facilities and leisure centres for mobile testing and vaccinations has proved hugely effective during the Covid19 Pandemic. All Community Planning partners have continually reinforced key public health messages on behalf of the PHA. Partners will link with Community Planning on future regional and local Recovery Plans, planning for future pandemics and living with Covid19 in the years to come.

World Health Organisation Age Friendly Community

The Ageing Well Vision is one of the outcomes within the Mid Ulster Community Plan. This includes the development of further Ageing Well Actions including 'Making Every Contact Count' and 'Age Friendly Society'. In addition, the Vibrant & Safe Communities Theme has identified actions including the promotion of the Ageing Well Programme, Older people engagement and information events, Intergenerational Programmes, Link to Ageing Well initiative for older people (contact and home safety).

Mid Ulster District Council is in the process of gaining a World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly status and has appointed an Age Friendly Co-ordinator to take forward the Age Friendly agenda. An Age Friendly Alliance is to be established with relevant partners which will help raise awareness and interest in the Age Friendly concept and engage with local stakeholders across the Council area.

Age Friendly is a framework developed by the WHO to enable the development of Age Friendly communities. An Age-friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people and things which are important to them. It also helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages.

Mid Ulster Loneliness Network

The Mid Ulster Loneliness network was launched virtually on 26 August 2020 in response to a need to provide a co-ordinated and consistent approach to preventing and addressing loneliness in the Mid-Ulster area. Loneliness impacts on people of all

ages and backgrounds and has increased significantly due to the restrictions and limitations placed on daily life and social interactions by the coronavirus pandemic. Partnership working is central to the Network. It is supported by a Steering Group and made up of statutory, community and voluntary organisations working together to tackle loneliness in the Mid-Ulster area.

What does the Network aim to achieve?

- ❖ Engaging with Community Planning and other key partners to promote a culture of inclusiveness for all ages
- ❖ Raising greater awareness around loneliness across the generations and help reduce the stigma around it
- ❖ Initiating actions which address loneliness and increase opportunities for socialisation
- ❖ Sharing good practice and learning

To date the Network has:

- ✓ Met regularly to update and share information with members on the ongoing work within partner organisations
- ✓ Ensured that loneliness actions are included in the Mid Ulster Community Plan
- ✓ Distributed a range of activity packs and slow cooker packs across the generations, during COVID-19.
- ✓ Issued funding to members carrying out projects to tackle loneliness
- ✓ Created a brand logo to identify the Loneliness Network
- ✓ Launched a 'Chatty Bench' pilot initiative in Dungannon Park during Loneliness week with intentions to expand throughout the Mid Ulster Council area.

Vibrant & Safe Communities

Outcomes

- **We are a safer community**
- **We have a greater value and respect for diversity**
- **We have stronger communities with less disadvantage and poverty**

Covid Response

Mid Ulster District Council launched an interactive online map with details of all the local community support during the COVID19 pandemic. The online community hub provided details of the many local groups and organisations offering support, including community groups, food banks, pharmacies delivering prescriptions and local shops offering food delivery services.

Food Parcels

Over 1200 people were supported each week, for a period of 16 weeks from April to July, where a food parcel of estimate £35 was distributed to the most vulnerable. The food parcels were part of a scheme introduced by the Department for Communities (DfC) that aimed to provide food to vulnerable people who have been notified to shield by their GPs, who could not afford food and did not have access to local support networks. Dedicated teams in the health trusts and Mid Ulster Council managed referrals from the COVID-19 helpline and worked with over 30 local community groups and over 100 volunteers, each week, to arrange deliveries to those in real need.

Food Banks

In the region of £225,000 was distributed, in partnership between DfC and Mid Ulster District Council, to support people in food and fuel crisis over the year. Support was provided to local foodbanks and SVP Societies to support them in assisting groups, including bringing groups together to network and maximize resources targeting as many people and families as possible. Over 5,000 food packages and fuel were distributed over the period to over 1,500 people/families for a number of weeks. This was complemented by the foodbanks and SVP's own resources.

PPE

Partner grant funding between DfC and Mid Ulster District Council was allocated to local groups to support groups help their communities during this period. Mid Ulster District Council purchased £25,000 of PPE to support the community and care sector. Over 50% of the PPE purchased was allocated to care homes so that they could continue to look after their residents safely and the remainder was distributed to community groups supporting the delivery of food parcels to those in need across the district. Volunteers across Mid Ulster were also supported to make scrubs with a donation of £3000 to source the material required. This provided over 300 scrubs to those in need.

Community Counselling

£80,000 support was provided to eight local community counselling services across the District to support networking, capacity building and engagement with other mental health provision. Over 2,500 counselling sessions were provided to over 500 people.

Advice Services

Additional funding support of £100,000 was provided by DfC, through Mid Ulster Council, to support the districts main advice provision contract, to allow for additional support and tribunals.

Fuel Vouchers

A total of 4,000 Mid Ulster families received support to tackle fuel poverty in a scheme co-ordinated by Mid Ulster District Council, funded by the Department for Communities and delivered in partnership with primary and secondary schools in Mid Ulster. The £200,000 programme aimed to help those experiencing difficulties in heating their homes, with fuel vouchers being distributed in partnership with post-primary and primary schools to families in receipt of free school meals. In a matter of weeks from announcing the scheme, 4,000 families received vital support towards fuel costs, helping to ease the overall financial burden that people most in need in local communities were facing. Mid Ulster District Council continues to provide support to charities responding to local people in food and fuel crisis.

Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan

Mid Ulster Community Planning produced an Anti-Poverty Plan in early 2021, the purpose of which is to work in partnership to reduce poverty and the impact of poverty on individuals and communities within Mid Ulster and to seek to reduce inequalities between areas over time, moving towards a better quality of life for everyone. The ethos of the Anti-Poverty Plan is that poverty is real and exists within our District, poverty is not a lifestyle choice and poverty is not inevitable, we can do something about it.

Work on the Anti-Poverty Plan began in 2019 when the Mid Ulster Community Planning partners came together to consider a range of issues that impact on poverty and to create an Anti-Poverty Plan. The Plan was developed following desk-based data analysis and research on the key determinants of poverty. A local Elected Member Working Group was established and a Community Planning Cross Thematic Workshop and virtual workshop were held to identify key issues of poverty, partner agency commitment to addressing poverty, examples of good practice, gaps in provision and strategic actions for partner delivery.

The Actions in the Plan have been developed under the Community Planning interlinking themes of Economic Growth, Education and Skills and Health and Wellbeing. Delivery of each action will be taken forward by Community Planning Partners with progress reported on a six monthly basis. Mid Ulster District Council has developed a Delivery Plan for the actions that Council intends to develop and take forward.

The Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan will closely link with the regional NI Anti-Poverty Strategy currently being developed by the Department for Communities. Community Planning continues to contribute to the development of the regional plan at every available opportunity.

Housing

The Mid Ulster Housing market has experienced a great deal of change over the last 20 years as a result of the significant increase in population and growth. The levels of growth, particularly in Dungannon, has had an impact on housing demand and

rental values and the limited increase in social housing stock has led to issues of poverty in the area. A number of Housing Actions have come to the fore in the Mid Ulster Community Plan and as a result, a Housing Forum was established in 2019 to consider and address pertinent housing issues faced by our local communities.

Housing Forum & Housing Working Group

Mid Ulster Community Planning established a Housing Forum to support the delivery of the Mid Ulster Community Plan strategic actions on housing and housing related issues. The Forum aims to maximise the provision and access to social and affordable housing for Mid Ulster District and provides an opportunity for partners to work together on an integrated approach to address social and affordable housing issues.

The main areas of focus are:

- Rent Controls for Mid Ulster
- Development Planning and provision of housing for Mid Ulster
- Social housing provision to meet increasing needs
- Social housing provision re location of need
- Access to social and affordable housing – housing allocations, housing allowance and income after housing analysis and poverty
- Rural social housing provision and latent demand testing
- Housing and impact on regeneration (to include open space and community, wider development planning considerations, mixed tenure etc).

The Forum membership is comprised of representatives from Mid Ulster District Council, the Department for Communities, the NI Housing Executive, NI Federation of Housing Associations, local Housing Associations, Mid Ulster District Council Planning and Environmental Health and other housing organisations and networks.

Members discuss and share their expertise on housing issues, analyse data and information and identify solutions to address social and affordable housing need and housing need in general. The Forum provides an opportunity to monitor housing need in line with the Mid Ulster Development Plan provision and delivery and to lobby on local issues relating to housing need, policy, good practice and solutions.

Dungannon Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan

Mid Ulster Community Planning has initiated a pilot Dungannon Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan in partnership with NIHE. This plan will identify 'Place Shaping Principles' that we will seek to have adopted and implemented. Mid Ulster Community Planning will seek NIHE support to replicate this process across all hub towns to achieve a better balance between town centre regeneration and the provision of social and affordable housing.

NIHE recently advised that 90% of the proposed social housing development list was utilizing town centre retail units across the main towns. The Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan will address the provision of social housing in town centres that does not meet real housing need, particularly that of families, and impacts negatively on the retail and leisure economy of our hub towns.

The Plan will seek to ensure that provision of an adequate supply of sustainable and quality social and affordable 'homes-for-life' through Area Plan policy, direct public provision and partnership working (ensuring adequate sewage and water infrastructure) while creating a competitive advantage for our principal towns, complimenting the 'Town Centre First Principle'.

Supported Housing Women's Aid

Mid Ulster Community Planning Housing Forum is seeking a review of supported housing as there has been no provision in the last number of years but engagements with partners suggest there is a real need for this housing type. Mid Ulster District Council is currently working with Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid and Department for Communities on the delivery of much needed Move On accommodation for their clients in Cookstown, as the next step back to normal housing situations. Such developments address the specific needs of those affected by violence and release other properties to address the wider social housing need in the area.

Latent Demand Testing

Mid Ulster Community Planning has been working with NIHE to carry out Latent Demand Tests in rural areas. The Community Planning partnerships offer an avenue to raise awareness of rural housing need tests with local councils, elected members and other public sector bodies and community representatives. Focused engagement on rural housing issues at this level help to increase the support for each test and maximise the impact of each consultation as well as potentially unlocking other opportunities, such as accessing land for housing development where it is needed.

Community & Voluntary Sector Engagement Structure Review

Community engagement within the Community Planning process is essential. As part of Community Planning structure, Council established a Community Panel in 2017, made up of representatives from community groups across Mid Ulster. As part of the Community Planning process, regular reviews of the community engagement must be undertaken. A review of the current Community Panel, through discussion and survey of members, highlighted that due to the strategic level of discussions within the Community Planning process, the input from local groups from specific areas was not always relevant. Community representatives from smaller groups also found it is difficult to feedback to the wider community group sector.

In light of this, a new two-tiered community engagement structure has just recently been formed. Firstly, networks have been established in each of the seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs) within the district. The networks are made up of community & voluntary groups operating in each DEA, as well as the local elected representative for that area.

The next tier comprises of a Strategic Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) Forum, made up of CVS groups and organisations that operate across the district. A number of members of the Strategic CVS Forum participate in one of the four Community Planning Thematic Working Groups, where they will support the delivery of the Mid Ulster Community Plan.

The purpose of both the DEA Networks and Strategic CVS Forum is provide the sector with a platform to participate in the Community Planning process. It will also be used to keep them informed on the various grants and programmes being delivered by Community Planning partners and provide groups the opportunity to communicate and work with other groups across the district.