Picture of the Council Logo

# Audit of Inequalities

# 2023

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# Section 1 - Introduction

## Welcome to Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council’s Audit of Inequalities 2023

* 1. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is proud to present its Audit of Inequalities which identifies potential inequalities across all of the nine Section 75 categories relevant to our functions and services. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) recommends Council undertakes an audit of inequalities on a five-yearly basis. This audit will inform our Equality Action Plan and align with our Corporate Planning processes. The actions within the Equality Action Plan will mitigate or remove barriers noted in the audit to ultimately improve both service provision and the quality of life for our citizens and visitors. As a result the actions will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

## **The Legislative Background and our Equality Scheme**

* 1. What is Section 75?

Section 75 is part of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It requires public authorities in carrying out their functions to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the nine equality categories of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without. It also requires them to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relation between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group.

* 1. The Equality Scheme

In parallel with the development of the Equality Scheme, it was recommended that the Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council undertake an Audit of Inequalities to establish whether any of the aforementioned Section 75 categories (2.1.1) are or could be adversely affected or negatively impacted by the activities of the Council and, where such inequalities were detected or suspected, to develop an Action Plan to address them.

* 1. The Audit

The Equality Commission guidance on Section 75 (2010) recommends that “public authorities undertake an ‘audit of inequalities’ to inform the development of their plans” (p.48). The audit should comprise “a systematic review and analysis of inequalities which exist for service users and those affected by a public authority’s policies” (p.49).

* 1. The Action Plan

The guidance further recommends that public authorities should develop “an action plan which details action measures relevant to a public authority’s functions, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations and address inequalities for the Section 75 categories.

The Commission also emphasises the importance of linking equality action planning to corporate and business planning. It advises that “public authorities link the development of action plans to their corporate planning cycle, in order that equality of opportunity and good relations are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level into the business of the public authority. At an operational level, we recommend that implementation of action plans are included in a public authority’s business planning cycle” (p.47).

In its 2010 document entitled Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities the Commission explains that an equality scheme is “a document which outlines a public authority’s arrangements for complying with its Section 75 obligations” (p.84). The guide likewise provides details on the form and key elements of the scheme.

The Council has taken on board these recommendations and has conducted an audit of inequalities. This audit has enabled the Council to identify potential areas for the further or better discharge of our Section 75 duties and it is anticipated that this will further mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations into its service delivery.

## **Linkages to the Community Plan and Council Strategy**

* 1. Linkages to the Community Plan ‘A Better Future Together 2017-2030 and the Council’s Corporate Strategy document 2021-2025.

The first Community Plan for Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council was launched in June 2017.

The Plan was based on extensive evidence gathering and community engagement and has identified three strategic population outcomes, as follows:

1. A Healthy, Safe Community

2. A Thriving Economy

3. A Sustainable, Accessible Environment

These strategic population outcomes are underpinned by 12 more detailed outcomes.

Our Corporate Strategy provides a focus and direction for the Council considering the challenges that face us now and into the future.

It ensures all people representing the Council are working towards a shared and agreed direction. The key focus of our mission statement is on improving the quality of life for our citizens and visitors.

The current Corporate Strategy identified five strategic priorities:

- Cohesive Leadership

- Local Economy

- Improvement and Innovation

- Healthy and Engaged Communities

- Climate Change and Our Environment

# Section 2 – What the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area looks like

Causeway Coast and Glens stretches from Lough Foyle in the west to the Glens of Antrim in the east covering an area of 1,968 square kilometres. This makes Causeway Coast and Glens one of the largest Councils in Northern Ireland in terms of land mass.

Whilst largely a rural borough, there are a number of established settlements.

Causeway Coast and Glens population in the 2021 Census was 141,746 (7.45% of Northern Ireland’s population). Between 2011 and 2021, the population of the Borough increased by 846 persons, a growth rate of 0.6% which is well below the NI average of 5.1%[[1]](#footnote-1). Causeway Coast and Glens had the smallest percentage growth across all Councils in Northern Ireland.

# Section 3 – Methodology used

The process of scoping the audit of inequalities began with developing a four-stage approach for taking the process forward, as follows:

**Stage 1: Review of Legislative Responsibilities**

**Stage 2: Review of both internal and external evidence / research**

This involved a statistical examination of baseline data on the S75 groups in Northern Ireland and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Other data used to inform the Audit included strategies, plans, programmes, policies, complaints, surveys, consultations a range of completed section 75 screening templates and any Equality Impact Assessments.

**Stage 3: Review of Previous Audits/Action Plans**

Examination of previous Audits of Inequalities and Equality Action Plans produced by the four legacy Councils and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

**Stage 4:** **Audit of Service Areas/Functions and Policies**

Audit of service areas and functions through the perspective of the Council’s management and organisational structure. This included a review of recent work and new or amended policies and procedures.

# Section 4 – Audit findings

* 1. **Review of Legislative Responsibilities**

The Councils Equality Scheme was approved by the Equality Commission in March 2012 and reviewed in August 2020. The scheme will be reviewed again in 2025.

* 1. **Review of both internal and external evidence / research**

The review looked at each of the 9 Section 75 categories in turn reviewing them in an NI and Causeway Coast and Glens context. (Age, Disability, Men and Women generally, Race, Religious Belief, Political Opinion, Sexual Orientation, Marital Status, People with or without Dependants)

The review incorporated relevant research by other bodies such as the census alongside internal strategies, surveys, recent screenings and adopted policies.

* + 1. **Age**

What we found:

On census day, 18.32% (25,964) of the population were children aged 0 to 14. Those aged between 15 and 64 years represented 62.41% (88,468) of the population and the remaining 19.27% (27,314) were aged 65 and over.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age Comparison for CC&G Borough Council for the years 2011 and 2021** | | |
| Age Range (years) | 2011 | 2021 |
| 0-14 | 19% | 18% |
| 15-39 | 33% | 29% |
| 40-64 | 33% | 34% |
| 65+ | 15% | 19% |
| Total numbers | 140,877 | 141,746 |

[[2]](#footnote-2) 2021 [[3]](#footnote-3) 2011

As demonstrated in the preceding table; over the 10-year period, the population has increased by 0.61% (869); with those in the 65 and over segment displaying the largest increase of 4% (6,182).

**General trends:**

General trends in Northern Ireland revealed that the number of children aged 0 to 14 years are decreasing whilst the proportion of the population aged 65 and over has increased. It is expected that within the next ten years, there will be more people in Northern Ireland aged 65 and over than children aged 0 to 14 years.[[4]](#footnote-4) However Causeway Coast and Glens has reached this point already.

**Our staff profile:**

Our staff profile also indicates that the majority of our workforce is in the age bracket 50+ as demonstrated in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Age** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
| **Age Group** | Number of staff |
| **22-29** | **21** (3.47%) |
| **30-34** | **28** (4.63%) |
| **35-39** | **64** (10.58%) |
| **40-44** | **71** (11.74%) |
| **45-49** | **99** (16.36%) |
| **50-54** | **115** (19.01%) |
| **55-59** | **92** (15.21%) |
| **60-64** | **88** (14.54%) |
| **65-120** | **27** (4.46%) |
| Total | **605** |

The age range of the staff profile would be similar to the area in that there is an older workforce. However, this may indicate an inequality with regards to individuals in the younger age brackets.

**Relevant research:**

According to a Workplace Employee Survey carried out by the Equality Commission in 2020; 20% of all employees and 32% of employees aged 55 and over in Northern Ireland have experienced unwanted behaviour on the grounds of age.[[5]](#footnote-5)

One of the key factors for all age groups over the past 10 years has been the uptake and provision of digital access, whether to support education or social inclusion. According to the Centre for Aging Better while factors such as income and levels of education play a part, age is still the biggest factor relating to digital exclusion.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Although age in itself is not a key factor in the impacts of neuro-diverse conditions such as Autism or Asperger Syndrome, the levels of diagnoses outlined in the next page do appear to be strongly impacted by individual’s age. As this was a new question in the census there are no figures to support a comparison over the last 10 years.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Residents who have Autism or Asperger syndrome**  Census 2021[[7]](#footnote-7) | | |
| Age Range (years) | Causeway Coast and Glens | Northern Ireland |
| 0-14 | 4.90% | 5.25% |
| 15-39 | 2.04% | 2.34% |
| 40-64 | 0.33% | 0.32% |
| 65+ | 0.08% | 0.09% |
| Total numbers | 2,282 | 35,367 |

According to research undertaken by The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) the rural nature of or area impacts young people by increasing their feelings of loneliness and isolation causing increased levels of stress and anxiety. The research highlighted young people lacked access to youth clubs, sport and exercise and safe places to meet. This research also noted the need for free period products.[[8]](#footnote-8) There has been a rise in concerns about finances and this may be attributed to the cost-of-living crisis.

Homelessness[[9]](#footnote-9)

In June 2023 there were 3619 people within the Causeway area waiting for a home. Although perhaps encouragingly the number of people presenting as new cases in our area fell from 489 (2022) to 471 (2023).[[10]](#footnote-10) The top 3 reasons for homelessness were:

1. Accommodation not reasonable
2. Sharing breakdown or family dispute
3. Loss of rented accommodation.

The most common types of people presenting as homeless in Northern Ireland were families followed by single males 26-59 years and after a larger gap; pensioners.

Fuel Poverty  
In 2016 the NIHE House condition Survey found Causeway Coast and Glens had the 3rd highest fuel poverty level with an estimated 27.1% of households in fuel poverty compared to the NI average of 22%.[[11]](#footnote-11) (This survey is being updated in 2023). However, these historic figures coupled with the proposed closure of the affordable warmth scheme to new applicants demonstrates the potential for adverse impacts on our older population and individuals with disabilities[[12]](#footnote-12).

Loneliness  
Research by NISRA in 2019/2020 highlighted that Causeway Coast and Glens had the 5th highest incidence of people over the age of 16 feeling more often lonely at 35.3%[[13]](#footnote-13).

**Work in recent years relating to Age:**

Over the past Equality Action Plan Council has updated the Absence Policy to support individuals going through the Menopause, which generally, although not always; impacts older female staff members in the 40+ age brackets.

Council has joined the UK Network of Age-friendly communities and developed its own Age-friendly Charter. An age friendly strategic alliance was formed in 2022 which brought together key statutory partners and a baseline map regarding age was compiled. A dedicated Age-Friendly co-ordinator has been employed. An Age-friendly Forum has been founded to increase older people’s participation and support co-design of services.

The Safeguarding Adult Policy and Procedure and the Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure were reviewed and updated. This supports individuals of all ages at risk by setting clear procedures.

The development of an outdoor recreation strategy facilitated a clear pathway to meet the exercise and wellbeing needs of all age groups.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* Responses from our citizens survey undertaken in 2022 highlighted the need for activities for teens across the Council area (including rural areas). This could include social events, classes, youth clubs, a skate park or youth hub. Suggestions for locations were townhalls, community centres or play parks.
* Give our youth skate parks, somewhere to roller skate/blade, climbing walls, ice rinks, waterparks, youth groups and options.
* Resources and activities for young people who have disabilities (including hidden disabilities) were also highlighted as lacking in the Council area.
* Citizens highlighted the need for activities and support for the elderly across the Council area (including rural areas). This could include social events, exercise/activity classes and support for those who live alone. Suggestions for locations were townhalls, community centres or play parks.
* Other responses suggested local hubs for all generations. It was highlighted that these hubs would reduce isolation and act as a warm space for those in need.
* Safety for young people with disabilities was listed as a major concern.
* It was highlighted that the numbers of children's spaces in carparks were inadequate.
* Citizens highlighted that Leisure facilities such as swimming were not fully inclusive for people of all ages as local access was not the same across the borough. They also highlighted the need for improved access to swimming pools for older people who although not disabled may have reduced mobility.
* There should be additional day swimming slots for pre-school and the elderly as these are currently biased towards school age children.
* Pavement parking left unaddressed means those who are less mobile must step onto roads and take unnecessary risks.
* Arts / leisure facilities (leisure centres) / recycling centres are virtually inaccessible to working people due to opening (closing) hours. Recycling centres also close too early on a Saturday.

**What the Age strategy survey told us:**

The research by Age Friendly Causeway, found that access to transport and information were the two primary barriers to older people’s participation.[[14]](#footnote-14) As a result of poor information individuals experienced increased loneliness and isolation.

* + 1. **Disability**

**What we found:**

On census day, 25.61% (36,304) of the population had a long-term health problem or disability. This was slightly higher than the Northern Ireland figure of 24.33%.[[15]](#footnote-15)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A Comparison for Causeway Coast and Glens of the number of people who had a long-term health problem or disability in both 2011 and 2021** | | |
|  | **2011** | **2021** |
| Percentage of the population | 20.17% | 25.61% |
| Number of the population | 28,415 | 36,304 |

[[16]](#footnote-16) 2021

[[17]](#footnote-17) 2011

As demonstrated in the above table; over the 10-year period, the number of residents with a long-term health problem or disability has increased by 5.44% (7,889).

**General trends:**

General trends in Northern Ireland revealed that the number of individuals with a long-term health problem is also increasing.

As demonstrated in the table below, in our borough long-term pain or discomfort affects the most individuals, followed by mobility or dexterity that limits physical activities.[[18]](#footnote-18)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Long-term Condition** | |
|  |  |
| Deafness or partial hearing loss | 8,914 (6.29%) |
| Blindness or partial sight | 2,560 (1.81%) |
| Mobility or dexterity that requires the use of a wheelchair | 2,145 (1.51%) |
| Mobility or dexterity that limits physical activities | 15,951 (11.25%) |
| Intellectual or learning disability | 1,340 (0.95%) |
| Intellectual or learning difficulty | 4,334 (3.06%) |
| Autism or Asperger syndrome | 2,282 (1.61%) |
| An emotional, psychological or mental health condition | 11,787 (8.32%) |
| Frequent periods of confusion or memory loss | 2,681 (1.89%) |
| Long term pain or discomfort | 17,396 (12.27%) |
| Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | 14,525 (10.25%) |
| Other condition | 13,214 (9.32%) |

Hate Crime

The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 30 June 2023 noted that disability related incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland had fell during the 2022/2023 period when compared to the year before.[[19]](#footnote-19)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Disability related incidents and Crimes comparison 2021 / 2022 and 2022 / 2023 (Northern Ireland)** | | | |
|  | 2021 / 2022 | 2022 / 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 131 | 122 | -9 |
| **Crimes** | 106 | 81 | -25 |

PSNI statistics[[20]](#footnote-20) highlighted that during the period 31 July 2022 to 31 July 2023 there had been four hate crimes reported within our Borough area relating to disability.

**Our staff profile:**

Our staff profile also indicates that we have a lower-than-expected number of employees with a long-term health problem or disability when compared to the figures for our borough population and that of Northern Ireland as a whole.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Disability** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
|  | Number of staff |
| With a disability | **14** (2.31%) |
| Total | **605** |

**Relevant research:**

According to Disability Action “1 in 4 people in Northern Ireland are disabled people, yet they continue to experience barriers in accessing housing, transport, employment, education, leisure, health and public services”. [[21]](#footnote-21)

The Equality Commission’s Statement of Key Inequalities (2018)[[22]](#footnote-22)showed a persistent employment gap between people with and without disabilities.

Furthermore, in the Equality Commissions research document ‘A Welcoming and Inclusive Workplace’ (2020); people with disabilities were less likely to feel that their workplace culture was welcoming and inclusive across most statements. For example, people with disabilities, were less likely to agree with statements, such as “my workplace seeks to support employees with disabilities”[[23]](#footnote-23). This was further compounded by people with disabilities (34%) also being more likely to have experienced unwanted behaviour during the past 12 months.[[24]](#footnote-24)

**Other impacts**

The most common reason a person contacted the Equality Commission for advice in 2020/21 was due to ‘Disability discrimination’. 21 88% of People with disabilities feel there is still negative attitudes towards them in Northern Ireland.[[25]](#footnote-25)

In addition, 76% of d/Deaf and disabled people do not have access to enough support to live independently and there is a lack of accessible toilets and play facilities.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Northern Ireland has the highest prevalence of mental health problems in the UK, which has been amplified by COVID-19.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Information about services should be available in alternative formats for service users with disabilities who require it.[[28]](#footnote-28)

**Economic inactivity:**

Economic inactivity in Causeway Coast and Glens for people with disabilities is an ongoing issue with 8,625 people declaring in the Census to be inactive in the employment market and having a disability[[29]](#footnote-29). Moreover, Northern Ireland has consistently had the highest percentage of those aged 50-64 classified as having a disability, 32.4% in 2020 compared with the UK average of 26.8%.[[30]](#footnote-30) According to Disability Action’s Manifesto[[31]](#footnote-31) in 2022:

* 9 out of 10 disabled people continue to find it difficult to find and keep a job.
* 9 out of 10 disabled people feel that there are negative attitudes and discrimination towards them in NI.

NISRA statistics in 2020 showed the employment rate for people with disabilities was 38.1% compared to 80.3% for those without this equated to a disability employment rate gap of 42.2 percentage points[[32]](#footnote-32). This gap according to the Department of Communities reduced slightly to 41.1 percentage points in 2021. However, research by the Department of Communities; in July 2022 showed that out of all the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland; Causeway Coast and Glens area had the highest rates of economic inactivity at 25.5% of the NI total. In the same report Causeway Coast and Glens area also had a higher percentage of economically inactive people with disabilities at 60.6% compared to the NI average of 56.6%[[33]](#footnote-33).

As a result of the economic downturn, in Disability Action’s 2023 manefesto they highlighted that the disparity for disabled people and their families will increase due to the rising costs of essentials including heating, insurance, and powering equipment such as ventilators, feeding pumps, electric wheelchairs, and stair lifts.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Disability Action also found that accessibility to buildings, housing and transport was lacking and needed addressed.

**Work in recent years relating to Disability:**

Over the past Equality Action Plan, a number of Everyone Counts Audits have been undertaken and there are action plans in progress to support accessibility, but there is still a disparity in this area.

Council has embraced agile working and supports employees to work on a 3-days in work and 2 days working from home or another frequency within these remits. This may encourage a younger range of applications as research by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that flexibility and hybrid working opportunities were in the top 3 actions taken by organisations to improve their employer brand. [[35]](#footnote-35)

Council has developed an Autism Action Plan which supports the fact that Autism is the fastest growing disability in Europe. The action plan will remove barriers to participation and where removal is not possible support the implementation of mitigation, thereby enabling our citizens to live healthier and fuller lives. This plan is supported by a clear communication strategy enabling the use of new technology and methods of virtual communication.

Although not limited to this Section 75 category the Redeployment policy supports staff redeployment to a more suitable position allowing Council to retain key skills. The eye test policy and procedure ensures clarity surrounding the health and safety of employees with specific reference to their eyesight, display screen equipment and work area layouts.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* Responses from our citizens survey undertaken in 2022 highlighted the need for activities for increased facilities for people with disabilities across the whole area.
* Citizens highlighted that disabled access and parking requires improvement to meet with changes to car sizes and access needs from cars. Hatching is required fully around the car parking space to support all vehicle exits and various types of wheelchair and mobility aids storage.
* It was highlighted that disabled parking spaces need to be reviewed in both car parks and town centres.
* Council should recognise that mobility scooters are more prevalent and need wider spaces and more dropped kerbs to support individuals to manoeuvre in our parks and facilities.
* Citizens felt that beach and seafront access for disabled people was not the same across the borough and required a dedicated action plan.
* There is a lack of facilities for young disabled people both with physical and hidden disabilities. Suggested more accessible play parks and sensory rooms in community centres, leisure facilities, town halls etc.
* The spread of accessible play parks is not equal across the borough; rural children’s needs should be reviewed and addressed.
* Citizens highlighted that Leisure facilities such as swimming were not fully inclusive for people with disabilities; and that local access was not equal across the borough. Suggestions included a disabled swimmer’s zone for entry and exit.
* Citizens felt that service provision did not always take account of disabled people’s needs and gave examples of bins left blocking access ways and parking spots, poor lighting, plant debris and rubbish creating unnecessary risks.
* Lack of action regarding pavement parking which leaves individuals with disabilities vulnerable or trapped in their homes.
* There is also a lack of awareness by citizens about the current support services offered to individuals who have a disability or who are elderly.

**Issues raised with the Equality Section:**

Issues raised with the Equality section also highlighted the need for accessibility in both Council owned buildings and visitor attractions in the area. Although there has been a lot of work with regards to Changing Places toilets in recent years, residents felt there were still some areas such as Rathlin Island which could benefit from improved provision.

Event barrier placement and removal has caused issues for people with disabilities leaving them stranded indoors due to lack of footpath access.

**Summary of key findings:**

* Further work needs to be done surrounding accessibility in our facilities and to support individual’s specific toileting needs.
* Measures should be put in place to reduce the Disability Employment Gap and employers need educated about the benefits individuals with disabilities can bring to their organization and how to avoid discrimination in this area.
* The work on accessible play and inclusive equipment needs to continue.
* Public realm work needs to use the principles of universal design and support inclusion.
* The issue of Hate Crime needs to be addressed.
* Individuals with disabilities need to be co-producers of Council policies and services.
* Accessible communication needs to be expanded to support individuals with a variety of communication requirements.
* Staff recognising if someone needs a little more time or an alternative communication method is important to support them to avail of our services. The JAM (Just a Minute) card supports communication by alerting people with conditions such as a brain injury, learning disability or a mental health condition to service-user’s needs.[[36]](#footnote-36)
* Lived experience is often key to support understanding of the issues and barriers individuals with a disability face. Equality and diversity training is necessary to create understanding within the workforce, as a result interactive segments and scenarios are a useful tool to support learning.
* Causeway Coast and Glens employment levels for individuals with a disability is extremely low.
* Support and guidance are necessary for individuals dealing with mental health concerns.
  + 1. **Men and Women generally**

**What we found:**

On census day, 21 March 2021, Northern Ireland’s population was 1,903,100. This comprised of 967,000 females and 936,100 males, which means that for every 100 women there were 97 men[[37]](#footnote-37).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| (Census 2021 **–** Table MS-A07) [[38]](#footnote-38) | **Causeway Coast and Glens** | **Northern Ireland** |
| **Male** | 69,848 (49.28%) | 936,132 (49.19%) |
| **Female** | 71,898 (50.72%) | 967,043 (50.81%) |

As demonstrated in the table below; over the 10-year period, the number of men and women generally has only experienced a slight variation. This is a similar pattern to that of the rest of the UK.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A Comparison of the numbers of male and females in both 2011 and 2021** | | |
|  | 2011 | 2021 |
| Male | 69,671 (49.46%) | 69,848 (49.28%) |
| Female | 71,206 (50.54%) | 71,898 (50.72%) |

[[39]](#footnote-39) 2021

[[40]](#footnote-40) 2011

Life expectancy at birth for both females and males within the Borough are above the NI average at 83 and 79 respectively.

**General trends:**

Crime

The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 31 August 2023 noted an increase in the number of sexual offences and a decrease in violence against the person.[[41]](#footnote-41) This paper noted the drop in the level of police recorded crime as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown measures. However following lockdown they noted a general increase in sexual offences and breaches of non-molestation orders.[[42]](#footnote-42)

There were 17 domestic abuse incidents and 11 domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population. Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023[[43]](#footnote-43)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Domestic Abuse incidents and Crimes comparison 2021 / 2022 and 2022 / 2023 (Northern Ireland)** | | | |
|  | 2021 / 2022 | 2022 / 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 33,187 | 33,210 | 23 |
| **Crimes** | 22,086 | 21,841 | -245 |

Not all domestic abuse will be severe enough to be recorded as a crime. The report also noted that the large decrease in the number of crimes, was impacted by a change to how ‘behavioural crimes’ are recorded.

The figures relating to Causeway Coast and Glens mirrored this trend as there was an increase in the number of reported incidents and a drop in the number of recorded crimes[[44]](#footnote-44).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Domestic Abuse and Crimes comparison 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 (Causeway Coast and Glens)** | | | |
|  | 2021 – 2022 | 2022 – 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 2,135 | 2,178 | 43 |
| **Crimes** | 1,404 | 1,401 | -3 |

Domestic abuse is often perceived to be a male-on-female offence; however In Northern Ireland during 2020/21 males represented 31% of all domestic abuse victims.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Hate Crime

PSNI statistics highlighted that during the period 31 July 2022 to 31 July 2023 there had been one hate crime reported within our Borough area relating to Transgender Identity.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Gender Specific Changing and Toilet facilities

Council continues to operate gender specific changing and toilet facilities with the provision of only one village changing area in its leisure portfolio.

**Our staff profile:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Gender** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
| **Gender** | Number of staff |
| Male | **335** (55.38%) |
| Female | **270** (44.62%) |
| Total | **605** |

The Article 55 return completed on 1 January 2020 showed that of the total 670 staff; 385 (57.46%) were Male and 285 (42.54%) were female. At first glance when compared to our area population the figures show a disparity in that there are more females than males, however if looked at in terms of the eligible population to work coupled with our aging population there is no evidence of an inequality in this category with regards to staff.

**Relevant research:**

26.9% of complaints of discrimination to ECNI during 2020/21 were sex related.[[47]](#footnote-47)

According to Carers UK, women are more likely than men to be forced out of the labour market due to unpaid, domestic work or caring responsibilities; in Northern Ireland 69% of carers are women. Women have a 70% chance of providing care in their adult life; compared to 60% for men. By the time they are 46, half of all women have been a carer (11 years before men). This remains a key issue for Council as almost half our staff are female.[[48]](#footnote-48)

There is a higher proportion of women working flexible working patterns than men. Work quality data also show lower proportions of women than men earning above the Real Living Wage and agreeing that their job offers opportunities for career progression.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Period inequality can create poor mental health and wellbeing for those who are unable to access the basic hygiene essentials of period products. Stormont has recognised this and as a result the Period Products (Free Provision) Act 2022 was made pursuant to a Private Members Bill in the Assembly and received Royal Assent in May 2022. However, intervention is becoming more important following the notification of planned cuts to the period poverty programme in schools.

**Economic inactivity:**

According to research undertaken by the Department of Communities; during the period 2016 to 2019 in Causeway Coast and Glens area, there was a decrease in female economic inactivity alongside an increase in economic inactivity for males. In turn this has reduced the gender pay gap from 22 percentage points to 7.3 in 2019[[50]](#footnote-50). At that time this resulted in a poverty rate decrease (from 25% in 2009 to 21% in 2020[[51]](#footnote-51)) yet we are still the second highest poverty rate by Council area in Northern Ireland. In addition, as a result of the pandemic, Brexit impacts and rising inflation have all created a major increase in living costs leaving more people in poverty.

**Work in recent years relating to men and women generally:**

In 2020, Council reviewed its Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure to include Menopause to support women going through perimenopause and menopause. Also, in 2021 Council introduced a breastfeeding policy for both staff and residents, this was specific to younger women and was a follow on from the menopause review.

Council has continued to support staff affected through its domestic violence and abuse policy to ensure as far as possible that its workplace a safe and supportive environment for all employees.

The introduction of an agile working policy supports the use of modern working practices to balance staff members work and home life commitments.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* Councils spending is not consistent across all areas which has created disparity even though the rates are applied equally to all. Those from rural areas feel the strongest about this issue.
* Central point of contact regarding service provision to ensure a response is provided in a timely manner. This was also linked to improved communication from Council generally.
* There needs to be improved consultation and transparency regarding Council service provision/programming and variety of classes, projects and decisions.
* There is a need for improved access to swimming pools for those who are unfit or unable to pull themselves out using the integrated steps.
* Leisure provision - improved Tennis facilities, gym equipment needs updated and regular servicing.
* Council should engage more with women.
* There is a need for more places like Men Sheds for both male and female to relieve loneliness for the elderly.
* There was a recurring theme that Council concentrates more on tourism than its own citizens.
  + 1. **Race**

**What we found:**

The 2021 Census detailed 98.55% of our population is white, with 1.45% from an ethnic background. The largest minority ethnic groups in Causeway Coast and Glens are Chinese (0.22%), Indian (0.15%) and Filipino (0.10%).

On Census Day 21 March 2021 the resident population was**:** [[52]](#footnote-52)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Census 2021** | **CC&G Borough Council** | **Northern Ireland** |
| **White** | 98.55% | 96.55% |
| **Irish Traveller** | 0.03% | 0.14% |
| **Roma** | 0.01% | 0.08% |
| **Indian** | 0.15% | 0.52% |
| **Chinese** | 0.22% | 0.50% |
| **Filipino** | 0.10% | 0.23% |
| **Pakistani** | 0.03% | 0.08% |
| **Arab** | 0.03% | 0.10% |
| **Other Asian** | 0.10% | 0.28% |
| **Black African** | 0.12% | 0.42% |
| **Black Other** | 0.04% | 0.16% |
| **Mixed** | 0.51% | 0.76% |
| **Other ethnicities** | 0.11% | 0.19% |

The proportion of ethnic groups from a non-white background has increased in Causeway Coast and Glens over the last 10 years by 0.95% slightly increasing the diversity in our population.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Country of Birth** (basic detail)Table MS-A16: Census 2021 | **CC&G Borough Council** |
| Europe: United Kingdom: Northern Ireland | 127,171 |
| Europe: United Kingdom: England | 5,991 |
| Europe: United Kingdom: Scotland | 1,556 |
| Europe: United Kingdom: Wales | 234 |
| Europe: Republic of Ireland | 1,931 |
| Europe: Other EU countries | 2,733 |
| Europe: Other non-EU countries | 149 |
| Africa | 384 |
| Middle East and Asia | 825 |
| North America, Central America and Caribbean | 499 |
| South America | 55 |
| Antarctica, Oceania and Other | 219 |

As can be seen in the table above, 3.45% of our residents were born outside the UK/Ireland and as demonstrated in the table below this is an increase over the last 10 years of 0.56%.[[53]](#footnote-53)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of people born outside UK/Ireland in Causeway Coast and Glens for the years 2011 and 2021** Census 2021 | | |
|  | 2011 | 2021 |
| Number of people born outside UK/Ireland | 4,100 | 4,900 |

Although our population is becoming more diverse 97.8% speak English as their main language. The other main languages spoken are Polish, Irish and Portuguese closely followed by Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese and Cantonese.[[54]](#footnote-54)

It is important to note that while other family members may be able to support translation, 1.30% or 750 households do not speak English as their main language and therefore require translation services[[55]](#footnote-55).

The census demonstrated that 10% of our population had some ability in Irish[[56]](#footnote-56) and 19% had some ability in Ulster-Scots[[57]](#footnote-57). It also showed 4.85% of individuals spoke Irish[[58]](#footnote-58) in their daily lives (daily/weekly/less frequently) and 7.22% of individuals spoke Ulster-Scots[[59]](#footnote-59) in their daily lives (daily/weekly/less frequently).

**General trends:**

Hate Crime  
The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 30 June 2023 noted that racist incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland had fell during the 2022/2023 period when compared to the year before.[[60]](#footnote-60)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Racist incidents and Crimes comparison 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 (Northern Ireland)** | | | |
|  | 2021 – 2022 | 2022 – 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 1,301 | 1,267 | -34 |
| **Crimes** | 897 | 876 | -21 |

The figures relating to Causeway Coast and Glens vary slightly, in that 2 more incidents were reported, however there was a drop in the number of recorded crimes.[[61]](#footnote-61)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Racist incidents and Crimes comparison 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 (Causeway Coast and Glens)** | | | |
|  | 2021 – 2022 | 2022 – 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 44 | 46 | 2 |
| **Crimes** | 29 | 25 | -4 |

This is within the background of the Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025[[62]](#footnote-62) which determined government departments should work to tackle inequalities and eradicate racism and hate crime.

Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT 2019-21 dataset) found respondents from Causeway Coast and Glens were more supportive of Protestants (77%) and Catholics (79%) than people from another ethnic group (64%). Respondents from our area were also less likely to believe the culture and traditions from minority ethnic communities (59%) added to the richness of NI society, when compared to the NI average of 64%.

**Our staff profile:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Racial Group / Ethnic Origin** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
| **Racial Group / Ethnic Origin** | Number of Staff |
| Mixed Ethnic Group | **1** (0.16%) |
| Other | **2** (0.33%) |
| White / White European | **546** (90.25%) |
| Unknown | **56** (9.26%) |
| Total | **605** |

As demonstrated in the table above 9.26% of staff did not disclose their racial group / ethnic origin. It is key that we as a public body collect robust information on both our citizens and staff to monitor inequalities, develop evidence-based policy and to plan service delivery. Without ethnic monitoring, it is difficult to identify gaps and monitor whether racial equality and good relations work is having any impact.[[63]](#footnote-63)

**Relevant research:**

An all-Ireland Traveller Health study identified digital exclusion as an additional barrier for the Roma community.[[64]](#footnote-64)

In addition, the Equality Commission’s Equality Awareness Survey (2018) found the most negatively viewed groups were: Irish Travellers, Roma, asylum seekers and refugees, migrant workers and minority ethnic groups. In fact Travellers, Roma, migrant workers and minority ethnic groups were also viewed the most negatively by responds when asked who they 'would mind' most as a work colleague, a neighbour or as an in-law.[[65]](#footnote-65) The same report found alongside harassment at work, individuals were often centred in low grade, low paid employment as their qualifications were not recognised or their lack of English language skills acted as a barrier in employment.

Perhaps this is one factor why the Equality Commission in its report on the Protection of National Minorities highlighted the need to identify the specific strategies to meet the needs of different ethnic groups.[[66]](#footnote-66)

**Work in recent years relating to Race:**

Council hosted an information event for those living in the area who are seeking asylum. This event aimed to support individuals’ integration by bringing them together with relevant support organisations.

There has been a drive to support clear communication which has resulted in the increase of Easy Read documents. This supports people whose first language is not English to understand information.

Increased knowledge of staff that translation and interpreting services may be required to overcome issues with language and communication barriers.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

• Apparent indifference to the fact that the population is becoming more diverse and utter disregard for equality legislation.

* + 1. **Religious Belief**

**What we found:**

At the last census in Northern Ireland the main current religions were: Catholic (42.3%); Presbyterian (16.6%); Church of Ireland (11.6%); Methodist (2.5%); Other Christian denominations (6.9%); Other religions (1.3%). In addition there were individuals who stated they had no religion (17.4%) and the remaining population (1.6%) did not answer this question.

There was a similar picture in Causeway Coast and Glens where the main current religions were: Catholic (37.6%); Presbyterian (23.2%); Church of Ireland (15%); Methodist (0.7%); Other Christian denominations (6.4%); Other religions (0.7%). In addition there were individuals who stated they had no religion (15%) and the remaining population (1.4%) did not answer this question.

By comparing statistics in 2011 and 2021 and religion of upbringing (see tables on the following 2 pages) it is clear that residents in our area as in the whole of Northern Ireland are becoming more secular. This mirrors the trend across Northern Ireland as a whole.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **A Comparison of the main current religions in both 2011 and 2021** | | |
|  | 2011 | 2021 |
| Catholic | (37%) | (37.6%) |
| Presbyterian | (25.6%) | (23.2%) |
| Church of Ireland | (16.5%) | (15%) |
| Methodist | (0.9%) | (0.7%) |
| Other Christian denominations | (5.5%) | (6.4%) |
| Other religions | (0.6%) | (0.7%) |
| No religion | (8.4%) | (15%) |
| Religion not stated | (5.6%) | (1.4%) |

[[67]](#footnote-67) 2021

[[68]](#footnote-68) 2011

Religion / religion brought up in: [[69]](#footnote-69)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Census 2021 | CC&G Borough Council | Northern Ireland |
| Roman Catholic | 40.12% | 45.70% |
| Protestant & Other Christian (including Christian related) | 51.17% | 43.48% |
| Other Religions | 0.78% | 1.50% |
| None/Not stated | 7.94% | 9.32% |

**General trends:**

Hate Crime

The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 30 June 2023 noted that Faith/Religion related incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland had fell during the 2022/2023 period when compared to the year before.[[70]](#footnote-70)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Faith / Religion incidents and Crimes comparison 2021 / 2022 and 2022 / 2023 (Northern Ireland)** | | | |
|  | 2021 / 2022 | 2022 / 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 66 | 36 | -30 |
| **Crimes** | 51 | 24 | -27 |

PSNI statistics highlighted that during the period 31 July 2022 to 31 July 2023 there had been no racist hate crime incidents reported within our Borough area.[[71]](#footnote-71)

**Our staff profile:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Religious Belief / Community Background**   (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | | |
| **Religious Belief / Community Background** | Gender | Number of Staff |
| Roman Catholic | Male | **119** (19.67%) |
| Female | **126** (20.82%) |
| Protestant | Male | **199** (32.89%) |
| Female | **128** (21.16%) |
| Non-Determined | Male | **17** (2.81%) |
| Female | **16** (2.65%) |
| Total |  | **605** |

The Article 55 return completed on 1 January 2020 showed that of the total 670 staff; the majority of staff came from a Protestant community background (377 - 56.27%) followed by members of the Roman Catholic community (251 - 37.46%) with a large drop to individual’s classed as non-determined (42 – 6.27%). When compared to the figures in October 2022, it is clear that our staff numbers have dropped with the largest departure being individuals whose religious backgrounds were non-determined followed by Protestants. It is unclear if these changes relate to normal turnover or if there is an underlying inequality, however these figures should be reviewed each year for potential patterns.

**Relevant research:**

Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT 2019-21 dataset) found respondents from Causeway Coast and Glens were more supportive of mixed religion workplaces (89%), along with mixed religion neighbourhoods (81%). However, were less supportive of mixed schooling (64%) than the NI average of 66%.

**Work in recent years relating to religious belief:**

Café Culture events were developed to create an understanding of how our beliefs influence our daily lives. Diversity through sport brought young people together to experience different activities and build relationships with others from different religious backgrounds.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* It was highlighted that due to demographic changes consultation should be a priority for requests to Council where there is a religious connotation e.g. scripture painting.
  + 1. **Political Opinion**

**What we found:**

There has been some movement in the electoral representation since the last audit, there are still 2 majority parties. The breakdown of current electoral members is detailed in the table below.

The Glens and Benbradagh electoral areas have a nationalist-orientated majority, while Limavady, Bann, Causeway, Ballymoney and Coleraine have a unionist orientated majority of representation.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Political Party | Seats | | |
|  | After 2023 Election | 2023 | 2019 |
| Sinn Féin | 12 | 9 | 9 |
| SDLP | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| DUP | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| UUP | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Alliance | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| PUP | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Independent | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| TUV | 2 |  |  |
| Total | 40 | 40 | 40 |

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2021) provides the following information on the political parties people in Northern Ireland feel closest to (this information is not available at local government level)[[72]](#footnote-72):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Political parties people in Northern Ireland feel closest** | **%** |
| **DUP/Democratic Unionist Party** | 12 |
| **Sinn Féin** | 13 |
| **Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)** | 13 |
| **Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)** | 13 |
| **Alliance Party** | 19 |
| **Green Party** | 5 |
| **Other Party** | 4 |
| **None of these** | 11 |
| **Other answer** | 1 |
| **Don't know** | 9 |

The Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT 2019-21 dataset) found respondents from Causeway Coast and Glens felt relationships between Protestants and Catholics had improved over the last 5 years (43%), compared to the NI average (38%). Respondents in our area were also more likely to think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years' time than now (40%) compared to the NI average (32%). Respondents also felt our leisure facilities (96%) and parks (94%) were shared.

**General trends:**

Hate Crime

The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 30 June 2023 noted that Sectarian related incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland had risen during the 2022/2023 period when compared to the year before. [[73]](#footnote-73) See table below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sectarian incidents and Crimes comparison 2021 / 2022 and 2022 / 2023** | | | |
|  | 2021 / 2022 | 2022 / 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 1,084 | 1,219 | 135 |
| **Crimes** | 774 | 913 | 139 |

PSNI statistics highlighted that during the period 31 July 2022 to 31 July 2023 there had been 48 sectarian hate crime incidents reported within our Borough area. Although this was a reduction of 26 on the previous year.[[74]](#footnote-74)

This would correspond with the Northern Ireland Life and Times survey (NILT 2019-21 dataset) which found 59% of respondents from Causeway Coast and Glens felt towns and city centres were safe.

**Our staff profile:**

No information is held. It is considered that staff may be cautious about sharing this type of information with their employer. As a result there is no key data to support the development of actions to address inequalities.

**Relevant research:**

There is a correlation between political opinion, health inequalities and negative impacts on health outcomes as indicated by the measurement of health deprivation for the population within Northern Ireland.[[75]](#footnote-75) Based on the NIMDM 2017[[76]](#footnote-76) within our borough 3 areas ranked in the top 100 most deprived Greystone in 11th place, Ballysally in 31st place, and Coolessan 34th place. The same urban areas were also in the top 100 most health-deprived neighbourhood areas as well as income, crime and employment.

**Work in recent years relating to Political opinion:**

There have been numerous pupil voice events to engage students in politics from different backgrounds.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* There are still pockets of rising sectarianism and paramilitary activity in our council area which needs to be addressed not ignored.
  + 1. **Sexual Orientation**

**What we found:**

The 2021 census for the first time included a question on sexual orientation and the findings are detailed in the 2 subsequent tables.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sexual orientation[[77]](#footnote-77)** | **CC&G Borough Council** | **Northern Ireland** |
| Straight or heterosexual | 104,205 (91.28%) | 1,363,859 (90.04%) |
| Gay or lesbian | 906 (0.79%) | 17,713 (1.17%) |
| Bisexual | 596 (0.52%) | 11,306 (0.75%) |
| Other sexual orientation | 135 (0.12%) | 2,597 (0.17%) |
| Prefer not to say | 4,502 (3.94%) | 69,307 (4.58%) |
| Not stated | 3,816 (3.34%) | 49,961 (3.30%) |
| All usual residents aged 16 and over | **114,160** | **1,514,743** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sexual orientation** **by broad age bands**  MS-C02: Census 2021 | **CC&G Borough Council** | **Northern Ireland** |
| All usual residents aged 16 and over | 114,158 | 1,514,745 |
| Straight or heterosexual | 104,203 (91.28%) | 1,363,859 (90.04%) |
| Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation | 1,637 (1.43%) | 31,617 (2.09%) |
| Prefer not to say/ Not stated | 8,318 (7.29%) | 119,269 (7.87%) |
| Usual residents aged 16-24 years | 14,576 | 201,369 |
| Straight or heterosexual | 13,099 (89.87%) | 175,346 (87.08%) |
| Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation | 517 (3.55%) | 9,283 (4.61%) |
| Prefer not to say/ Not stated | 960 (6.59%) | 16,740 (8.31%) |
| Usual residents aged 25-39 years | 24,700 | 369,770 |
| Straight or heterosexual | 22,732 (92.03%) | 330,734 (89.44%) |
| Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation | 649 (2.63%) | 13,991 (3.78%) |
| Prefer not to say/ Not stated | 1,319 (5.34%) | 25,045 (6.77%) |
| Usual residents aged 40-64 years | 47,568 | 617,126 |
| Straight or heterosexual | 44,419 (93.38%) | 571,502 (92.61%) |
| Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation | 419 (0.88%) | 7,459 (1.21%) |
| Prefer not to say/ Not stated | 2,730 (5.74%) | 38,165 (6.18%) |
| Usual residents aged 65+ years | 27,314 | 326,480 |
| Straight or heterosexual | 23,953 (87.69%) | 286,277 (87.69%) |
| Gay, lesbian, bisexual, other sexual orientation | 52 (0.19%) | 884 (0.27%) |
| Prefer not to say/ Not stated | 3,309 (12.11%) | 39,319 (12.04%) |

**General trends:**

Hate Crime

The PSNI statistics branch in their update dated 30 June 2023 noted that Sexual Orientation related incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland had fell during the 2022/2023 period when compared to the year before.[[78]](#footnote-78)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sexual Orientation incidents and Crimes comparison 2021 / 2022 and 2022 / 2023** | | | |
|  | 2021 / 2022 | 2022 / 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 465 | 413 | -52 |
| **Crimes** | 333 | 271 | -62 |

The figures relating to Causeway Coast and Glens mirrored this trend as there was a drop in both reported incidents and the number of recorded crimes.[[79]](#footnote-79)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sexual Orientation and Crimes comparison 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 (Causeway Coast and Glens)** | | | |
|  | 2021 – 2022 | 2022 – 2023 | Change |
| **Incidents** | 24 | 19 | -5 |
| **Crimes** | 16 | 13 | -3 |

**Our staff profile:**

No staff information is held. The council currently has no data specific to its workforce. As a result, there is no key data to support the development of actions to address inequalities.

**Work in recent years relating to Sexual Orientation:**

There were articles in the staff news relating to sexual orientation.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

There were no points raised in relation to sexual orientation.

* + 1. **Marital Status**

**What we found:**

In Causeway Coast and Glens area we have a higher number of married people (47.81%) compared to Northern Ireland as a whole (45.59%), a lower number who are in a civil partnership (0.14%, NI 0.18%) or separated (3.32%, NI 3.78%), however we have a higher number of people who are divorced (6.36%, NI 6.02%), or widowed/surviving (6.71%, NI 6.36%).[[80]](#footnote-80)

Same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland has been legal since 13 January 2020. (Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019)

**Our staff profile:**

Our staff profile shows similar trends to our Borough and Northern Ireland as the highest number of staff are married or in a civil partnership, 55.54%. This is followed by 27.11% who are single.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff breakdown by Marital Status** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
| **Marital Status** | Number of staff |
| Unknown | **60** (9.92%) |
| Married \ Civil Partnership | **336** (55.54%) |
| Divorced | **12** (1.98%) |
| Other | **19** (3.14%) |
| Separated | **12** (1.98%) |
| Single | **164** (27.11%) |
| Widowed | **2** (0.33%) |
| Total | **605** |

**Relevant research:**

Local Government research in 2017 determined that people who are widowed or experiencing relationship breakdown in later life more likely to identify with physical and mental health problems, alcohol abuse, gambling problems and more likely to become homeless.[[81]](#footnote-81)

**Work in recent years relating to Marital Status:**

Our leisure policies have been updated to extend offers to those in the same household as opposed to those who were married.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

Marital Status was not mentioned by any respondents in the survey.

* + 1. **People with or without Dependants**

**What we found:**

When someone has a dependant, they are taking care of someone who is young, old, ill, or has a disability. Family members or friends are classed as unpaid carers.

There were approximately 220,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland in 2022.[[82]](#footnote-82) The number of carers in Northern Ireland is expected to grow to at least 400,000 carers by 2037.[[83]](#footnote-83)

In Causeway Coast and Glens 28% of households include dependent children, compared with the NI average of 29.21%. Whereas 72% of households had no children or no dependent children, which would link with the average age of residents.[[84]](#footnote-84)

In Causeway Coast and Glens 9.61% of households comprise of a lone parent and a dependent child or children, compared with the NI average of 10.58%.[[85]](#footnote-85)

This is coupled with 15.31% of all households with residents being aged 66 and over. There were 17,248 (12.34%) individuals who live alone. 663 (0.47%) of the population were students in full-time education.[[86]](#footnote-86)

As well as those with parental responsibility, at the time of the Census, 15,987 (11.95%) of people stated that they provided unpaid care to family, friends, neighbours or others; this is slightly lower than the NI average of 222,213 (12.42%). In addition, those who provide the most care were in the age group 40-64, which is the largest age group of our Council staff; again this mirrors the NI statistics.[[87]](#footnote-87)

**General trends**

According to carers UK in 2016-18, almost 1 in 5 workers (18%) had experience of caring[[88]](#footnote-88)and therefore require flexibility in work to support their needs.

**Our staff profile:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Staff Family Status** (Figures as at 21 October 2022) | |
| **Family Status** | **Number of staff** |
| Blank | **298** (49.26%) |
| Adults(s) | **11** (1.82%) |
| Child/Children | **157** (25.95%) |
| None | **138** (22.81%) |
| Other | **1** (0.16%) |
| Total | **605** |

**Relevant research:**

Homelessness[[89]](#footnote-89)

Research on Poverty in Northern Ireland found that Lone parents are more likely to be living in poverty and experiencing poorer physical and mental health.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Carers tended to have a lower overall satisfaction with life at an average of 5 out of 10 with an average level of anxiety at 6 out of 10. Almost three quarters of carers (74%) stated they felt isolated or lonely because of their caring role.[[91]](#footnote-91)

When asked about barriers to accessing support, carers said they did not know what services were available in their area, with 44% of carers reporting this as a barrier.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Cost of living/Fuel poverty

The University of York research projected that in January 2023 76.3% of families in NI will be detrimentally impacted by spiralling living costs. This prediction has been seen in real-time through the increased number of people using food banks in Northern Ireland by 36% when compared to the same period in 2019/2020.[[93]](#footnote-93)

**Work in recent years relating to those with and those without dependents:**

Council has the following policies to support individuals:

* Emergency leave policy
* Flexible working hours policy
* Working from home policy
* Family Rights at Work Policy

Flexible working policies are designed to help staff and changes are agreed based on the needs of the service. However, decisions based solely on service needs may create a difference across services and consequently detrimentally impact the individual or Section 75 group (if further requests are made). In turn this could lead to inequalities. A potential example of this may be that generally more females take lead caring roles thus creating an inequality for women carers or women with dependents. Application acceptance and refusal statistics therefore need to be retained and audited to identify if the policy’s application is creating any indirect inequalities, this should include the consideration of impacts on those with multiple identities e.g., numbers of male carers or males with dependents whose requests are refused.

Some carers may be dealing with an end-of-life situation and may require additional support at that time.

In addition, the standing order implementing remote Council meetings supported Elected Members and Staff to remain safe during the pandemic. It also continues to support parents to remain in their home with their children while also attending night meetings.

**What you told us in our citizen’s survey:**

* Car parks should have more children's spaces (are good just not enough).
* The need for additional support for those living alone.
* Unaddressed pavement parking causes issues for people with both young and older dependants.
* Lack of street lighting and cleansing causes unnecessary risks for people with and without dependants.
* Need for more family events in smaller villages for those who cannot afford to travel to towns or have no direct public transport access.
* Changes to the closing hours of leisure centres has created inequalities for carers. Lack of consultation to determine service user’s needs regarding these changes. This adversely impacts on wellbeing.
* Lack of affordable housing or new social housing.
  + 1. **Synopsis of potential inequalities by Section 75 category**

There are potential **Age** related inequalities with regards to:

* Recruiting younger applicants to our organisation.
* Activities for Teenagers.
* Activities for young people with disabilities.
* Age-appropriate services and events for older people.
* Access to leisure facilities.
* Opening hours of our service facilities (leisure, recycling).
* Distribution of budget spending in rural areas.
* Fuel poverty and older people.
* Information provision to older people.
* Being heard by Council (consultation) – teenagers and older people.

There are potential **disability** related inequalities with regards to:

* Carparking provision for blue badge holders.
* Support for neuro-diverse individuals.
* Access to leisure services and activities which include individuals with disabilities.
* Hate crime understanding and education.
* Recruiting applicants with disabilities to our organisation.
* Providing employment opportunities such as work placements for people with disabilities in our organisation.
* Barriers to service inclusion because of poor accessibility (e.g., public realm work, seafront, beaches, marinas).
* Information provision in alternative formats.
* Poverty and living costs.
* Accessible play park provision across the Council area (rural areas particularly).
* Information provision regarding supportive services available using accessible communication formats.
* Staff understanding of how their actions and service provision impact on individuals with disabilities.
* Being heard by Council (consultation).

There are potential **gender (men and women generally)** related inequalities with regards to:

* Gender specific changing and toilet options creating barriers for trans and gender variant individuals.
* Hate crime understanding and education.
* Opening hours to leisure facilities and activities for carers of all genders.
* Support for staff who are carers.
* Period product provision for females.
* Being heard by Council (consultation on service provision, classes, projects, and decisions).
* Improved communication – responsiveness.
* Isolation and loneliness.

There are potential **race** related inequalities with regards to:

* Hate crime understanding and education.
* Improved communication in a variety of formats.
* Recruiting diverse applicants to our organisation.
* Being heard by Council (consultation on service provision, classes, projects, and decisions).
* Staff unwillingness to disclose information on their racial group / ethnic origin.
* Monitoring - our initiatives, projects and citizens’ surveys should include a question on ethnicity to support the identification of needs and evaluate our progress on equality initiatives.
* Digital exclusion / exclusion particularly for the Roma community.
* Lack of Elected member data in this area.

There are potential **religious belief** related inequalities with regards to:

* Individuals with no religious beliefs.
* Staff unwillingness to disclose information on their religious beliefs may be a result of Council did not offering the option of ‘no religion.’
* Lack of Elected member data in this area.

There are potential **political opinion** related inequalities with regards to:

* Lack of workforce specific data in this area.
* Activity which needs to be addressed.

There are potential **sexual orientation** related inequalities with regards to:

* Lack of workforce specific data in this area.
* Lack of Elected member data in this area.

There were no potential **marital status** related inequalities identified.

There are potential inequalities with regards to **people with or without dependents**:

* Children’s spaces carparking provision.
* Opening hours to leisure facilities and activities for carers of all genders.
* Potential support policies; acceptance and refusal rates.
* Carers dealing with an end-of-life situation who may require additional support at that time.
* Access to leisure services and activities which include individuals with disabilities.
* Barriers to service inclusion because of poor accessibility (e.g., public realm work, seafront, beaches, marinas).
* Pavement parking left unaddressed.
* Family events in smaller, rural areas.
* Being heard by Council (consultation).
* Improved data to support decision making.
  1. **Review of Previous Audits/Action Plans**  
     A review of the existing Audits of Inequalities and Equality Action Plans found that these documents focused on a range of service specific areas, strategies and structures ie:
  + Arts
  + Community Development and Good Relations
  + Leisure and Development Services
  + Environmental Services
  + Physical Environment
  + Human Resources/ Organisational Development
  + Corporate Governance/Civic Leadership
  + Overarching strategies
  + Governance structures

The Equality Action Plans included very specific programmes and activities covering a range of these particular service areas and relevant Directors/Heads of Service gave their perspective on the outcomes achieved by the Equality Action Plans.

* 1. **Audit of Service Areas/Functions and Policies**

Council operates using 12 service areas/functions namely:

**Service/ Function Area:** Strategic leadership

**Research:** Processes and structures reviewed

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Equality is not fully embedded across all Council departments or functions, this can only be achieved by Elected members, and Directors emphasising the importance of equality and ensuring measures to support this ethos are in place.
* There are a number of new Elected members who have not received Equality training or been made aware of their equality responsibilities.
* The role of the Diversity Champion is unclear and therefore under-utilised in Council.

**Service/ Function Area:** Corporate Plan development and Business Planning processes

**Research:**

* Examination of the process used to develop the Corporate Plan.
* Content of the agreed vision and core values of Council.
* Monitoring processes for the Council Strategy.
* Stakeholder identification.
* Consultation responses, feedback and other comments.
* The business planning process to be utilised.
* Performance management indicators used.
* Performance management strategy.
* Performance Improvement Plan.
* Impact of new Council functions on business planning.
* Rural needs strategy.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Stakeholders needs and opinions are not routinely sought to inform business planning and performance improvement processes.
* Business plans and performance improvement measures lack specific equality of opportunity and good relations actions.
* Consultations do not include specific Equality of opportunity and good relations questions.
* The above factors are further compounded by a lack of information or data sharing across Council departments.

**Service/ Function Area:** Community Planning

**Research:**

* Examination of the community plan, its delivery plan and its subsequent review.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Data sharing and best practice.

**Service/ Function Area:** Policy Development Process

**Research:**

* Examination of internal policy development process.
* How Councillors determine policies.
* Process of screening of policies.
* Consultation responses.
* Impact of Council functions on policy development.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Lacks systems to record new policies, remind managers of their duty to review, record and be responsive to equality of opportunity and good relations issues.
* Review equality scheme.
* Review equality screening process.

**Service/ Function Area:** Good Relations Strategies and Policies

**Research:**

* Examination of previous Good Relations Strategies and Action Plans

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Data sharing and best practice.

**Service/ Function Area:** Disability Duties

**Research:**

* Examination Disability Action Plan

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Data sharing and best practice.
* Training on inclusion and access.
* Proactive projects and actions to support inclusion and access.

**Service/ Function Area:** Training and development on equality of opportunity and good relations issues

**Research:**

* Previous equality of opportunity and good relations training and awareness raising undertaken.
* Feedback/comments on training provided.
* Future plans for training on equality of opportunity and good relations.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Training on best practice.
* Further training programmes for staff and Elected members on a range of equality of opportunity and good relations.
* Proactive projects and actions to support equality and good relations.

**Service/ Function Area:** Communication and Engagement

**Research:**

* Types of communication issued by Council on equality of opportunity and good relations
* Examination of formats, complaints, comments, other feedback.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Continued review of engagement methods and processes to support inclusion and consultation with all Section 75 Groups.
* Website accessibility and legislative compliance.

**Service/ Function Area:** Monitoring and Data Collection

**Research:**

* Examination of existing monitoring and data collection systems on S75 groups.
* Quality of data produced.
* Use made of monitoring data.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Review existing systems and develop these systems to ensure appropriate S75 monitoring data is being captured and used effectively.
* Explore new methods of capturing S75 data not presently held.

**Service/ Function Area:** Organisational Development /Human Resources Employee Issues, eg recruitment practices, employee policies and practices.

**Research:**

* Existing Council employee profile.
* Article 55 returns for the four legacy Councils.
* Examine recruitment policies and channels used to advertise vacancies.
* Examine employee related policies and practices.
* Employee monitoring policies.
* Disability employment recruitment policies.
* Attraction and retention methods currently used.
* Current external partnerships.
* Best practise employer models.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Screening and identification of mitigation measures for all draft employee related policies.
* Assess rural impacts for all draft employee related policies.
* Explore new methods of capturing S75 employee data not presently held.
* Audit effectiveness of employee support policies.
* Staff appraisal systems to include equality agenda.
* Work placements.
* Review recruitment process for access and inclusion.

**Service/ Function Area:** Procurement

**Research:**

* Examination of existing procurement policy.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Audit effectiveness of procurement activities.
* Explore access and inclusion clauses.

**Service/ Function Area:** Service delivery and council strategies

**Research:**

* Communication and engagement processes with section 75 groups.
* Engagement with rural communities and hard to reach groups
* High level policies and Equality and good relation plans.
* Rural needs and barriers to access.
* Views and feedback from customers with various disabilities.

**Findings of Potential Inequalities:**

* Target all S75 groups in communication materials.
* Understand the issues faced by specific S75 groups.

# Section 5 – Key issues identified

The themes below have been identified as part of the audit. They focus on inequalities experienced by those protected in law by the equality and good relations duties of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The broad themes will be broken down into targeted actions in our action plan to address key inequalities and promote equality of opportunity and good relations. These themes will be consistently reviewed via engagement.

At the point of consultation on this draft Audit, it is likely that new information will emerge and will continue to do so throughout its life cycle because of on-going engagement. As a result, the audit and associated targeted actions below may be subject to change:

1. Foster deep-rooted equality and inclusion

Embedded practices are essential to address inequalities and leadership must not only create the vision but lead by example.

2. The need to tackle both persistent and emerging inequalities in a strategic manner

This approach supports the early identification of inequalities which if feasible may be addressed early or used to inform planned service improvements.

1. Addressing Access barriers

Specific equality groups continue to face particular and unique barriers. Therefore, it is important that we consult to ensure barriers are overcome either through removal or mitigation measures.

1. Identify Service Improvements

Well informed service improvements are key for any successful organisation and Council is no different, our services need to reflect the needs of our citizens.

1. Improving data held in Council

High quality data is essential to support decision-making relating to service provision and the identification of relevant service improvements. Such data would inform action plans to reduce inequalities or demonstrate accurate money spend within our borough.

1. Improved consultation

Without consultation we cannot fully understand the needs of our citizens, therefore we must ensure that we reach the right groups and where possible join consultation exercises together to create efficiencies.

1. Support improved feelings of safety for all Section 75 groups

Safety is a human need and we all want to have the freedom to enjoy life without fear.

1. Improve service provision for hard-to-reach groups

It was clear from the citizens survey that some groups feel left out and therefore their needs must be addressed as part of our service delivery programmes too.

1. Protecting our environment

We live in such a beautiful area it is important that it remains that way for our children and theirs. Therefore, we must look at ways to protect our environment while we are delivering our essential services.

We have developed our Equality Action Plan to reflect the themes identified and developed associated actions and outcome measures to address the prioritised inequalities. To ensure these themes have the standing they require; they have also been linked to our strategic priorities to support future business planning and identify further actions in the future.

# Section 6 – Further information and alternative formats

This document can be made available in alternative formats including:

* Large Print
* Braille
* Easy Read
* Audio alternative format
* Other languages

It can also be downloaded from the Council’s website at:

[www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](http://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

If you would like a copy in an alternative format, please contact:

Policy Officer by:

Telephone 028 2766 0201

Email: [equality@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:equality@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

In writing: Equality Office, Riada House, 14 Charles Street, Ballymoney, BT53 6BY.

# Section 7 – Publication

Following a 12-week consultation the Audit of Inequalities and Equality Action Plan will be submitted to the Equality Commission and will be published on the Council’s website.

# Section 8 – Monitoring and Review

As this Plan is intended to be a ‘living document, it will be reviewed in line with the corporate and business planning processes. This linkage to the corporate planning cycle will also ensure that the equality of opportunity and promotion of good relations are incorporated and mainstreamed at a strategic level.

Appendix 2 outlines our actions for the next four years. We will keep this plan under regular review and report annually on progress to the Equality Commission NI. The results of this monitoring will be included in the Council’s Annual Equality Progress Report which is forwarded to the Equality Commission. Responsibility for monitoring and review of the Equality Action Plan will rest with the relevant officers within Council.

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