

Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership

Summary Action Plan: 2025-26

Antrim and
Newtownabbey
Labour Market
Partnership are
here to support your
employment journey



Employment
Academies



Careers Fairs



Job Fairs



Promoting
Accessible
Employment



Employment
Support
Programmes



Upskilling



School and
Industry
Engagement



Apprenticeships



ANTRIM AND
NEWTOWNABBEY

LMP

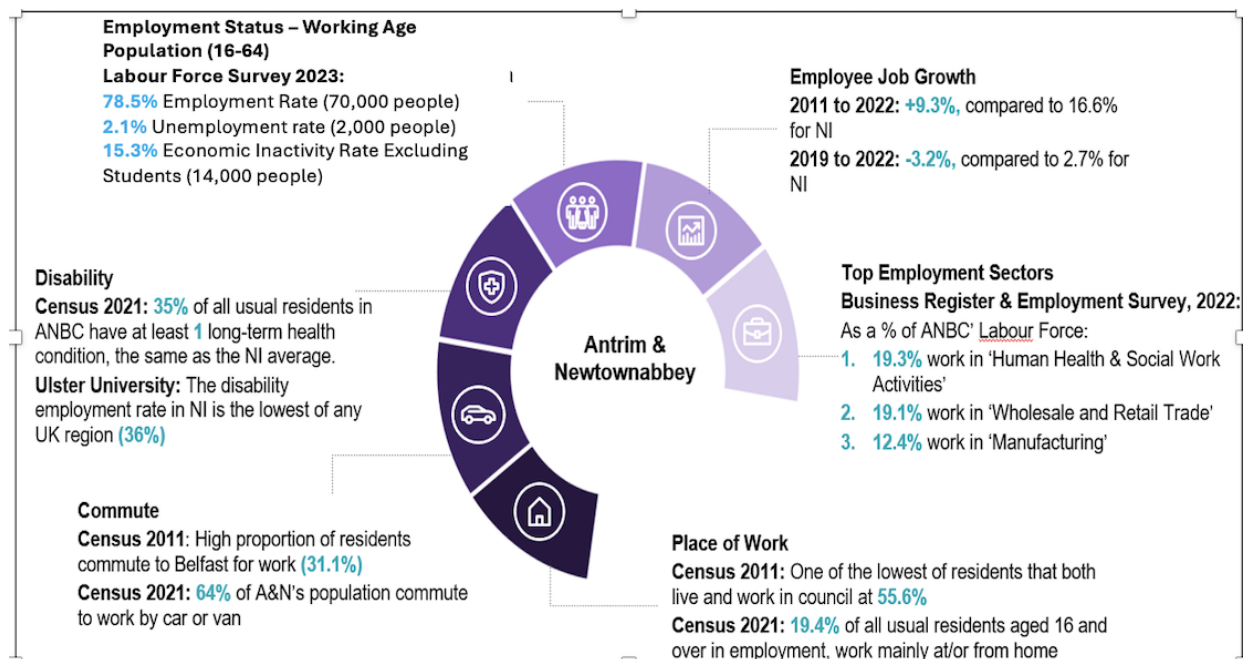


The aim of the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is to improve labour market conditions by working through **coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships, achieving regional objectives whilst being flexible to meet the needs presented by localised conditions and helping to connect employers with employees**. Importantly, the development of the LMP Plan has involved a broad range of opinions on **how to improve employability and labour market performance** in the Borough.

LMPs play a key collaborative and supporting role in the Department for Communities (DfC's) approach to supporting those who are unemployed to get back to work. DfC have a number of programmes that they use to provide a range of interventions. These interventions will aim to:

- Deliver a reduction in economic inactivity and long-term unemployment;
- Provide increased support for those with physical/mental health conditions and disabilities; and
- Implement an intervention that enables collaboration between Central Government Departments and Local Council area to offer direct and unique interventions.

The rationale for labour market interventions requires a clear evidence base for the scale of challenges faced. The infographic below provides a snapshot of Antrim and Newtownabbey' labour market, using the most up to date data available.



Strong labour market performance is evident, but challenges remain and are evolving and confirm the need for employment support

As previously assessed by the LMP in 22-23, the Borough's labour market before the pandemic was demonstrating significant growth, like that experienced across NI, where a job-rich recovery followed the Great Financial Crisis. The pandemic halted this growth but the fears of a major labour market downturn, brought on by the pandemic, were avoided thanks to the government supports provided.

The labour market had been recording strong growth and improvement across a range of indicators prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic, which forced the economy to shut down for periods of time, imposed a significant impact on employment but Furlough schemes shielded large parts of the economy from a much worse outcome. Following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, the labour market has shown significant resilience. At the time of the development of the 3-Year plan early in 2024, many indicators were back to pre-pandemic levels and the labour market performance was positive.

The statistical evidence underpinning the plan was refreshed in December 2024 and, further improvements are evident. For instance, within the working age population (16-64) there has been a growth in the employment rate; a fall in levels of economic inactivity; improvements in the proportion of residents that are highly skilled (to RFQ level 4 and above) and a reduction in those that have no qualifications. Improvements in median gross annual pay (resident and workplace) are evident, which reflect the high skill base that prevails. Finally, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough is an inclusive labour market for individuals with a disability, with an employment rate for this constituency that is 10 percentage points above the Northern Ireland average. Across many of the labour market indicators detailed in Section 4, Antrim and Newtownabbey is within the top performers (sometimes 'top table') across the 11 LGDs in Northern Ireland. This is a solid basis for the LMP to continue delivery into the Action Planning periods of 25/26 and 26/27.

However, challenges remain and indeed are evolving. There is evidence in the Borough from the monthly 2024 claimant count data, that levels of unemployment are on an upward trend, which mirrors the very recent NI-wide picture. Historically the Borough has had a higher proportion of young people who are Not in Education Training and Employment (NEET) and at local levels there are pockets of unemployment and economic inactivity that are higher than elsewhere in the Borough. Suggesting that localised targeting with entry level skills and related 1-to-1 support is likely to be a prerequisite to overcoming barriers to employment in these local areas, working in collaboration with local stakeholder and community groups.

Whilst the labour market is not as 'tight' as in recent years, with reported vacancies falling slightly, there remains a need for an adequate supply of skilled labour to address the vacancies that do exist and to support the growth ambitions of employers in the Borough. Upskilling and preparation of the local labour market to support the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) project is a key aspect of this.

A partnership approach to identifying labour market issues

A crucial element in developing the LMP Action Plan has been consultation with key partners. Issues and topics emerging from the consultations (at the time of the development of the 3-Year plan) included:

Labour Market Context	Tight labour market – demand v supply imbalance	Little incentive to move from benefits	Lack of awareness of job opportunities, skills gaps – need cohesion	Transport Infrastructure
Future Learning /Skills	Apprenticeship schemes underutilised	Life-long learning and transferable skills key	Soft skills' or 'employment work ready skills' required	Re-skilling and upskilling especially around digital
Cohorts to engage	Youth – importance of engaging early	Disability Cohort should be addressed alongside existing agencies	Women returners – childcare barriers	Apprenticeships schemes underutilised
Role & ideas for LMP	Academies work well but need for more niche areas and job opportunities	Test and trial approaches other academies that can become self-sustaining	Act as a central hub for job programmes and postings	Build relationships between employers/ groups/ potential employees

Labour Market Partnership Plan

The updated strategic assessment and Action Plan 25/26 reflects local employability and labour market needs, priorities and emerging issues. It is consistent with the aims/objectives of the Borough's Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan (2024-30).

The Action Plans are structured around the following Strategic Priorities:

- **SP1:** To form and successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area;
- **SP2:** To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally;
- **SP3:** To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally.

Through the statistical analysis and TTC ambitions, the following themes have been set:

- **Economic Inactivity** - People not in employment who have not been seeking employment within the last four weeks and/ or are unable to start work in the next two weeks;
- **Unemployment** - People who are without a job, currently available to work, and have been actively looking for work within the previous four weeks;

- **Disability** – People who report a physical or mental health condition(s) or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more where this reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities; and
- **Skilled Labour Supply** – DfE's 2021 Skills Barometer utilises the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Skills Classification.

The following tables provide information on the strategic intent, targets, key actions and milestones of the Action Plan.

Strategic Intent	Targets	Key Actions	Milestones
To successfully deliver the functions of the local Labour Market Partnership for the area	<p>Continue to ensure the functions of LMP activities through a cooperative and coordinated partnership in the Borough.</p> <p>Continue to foster relationships with local schools in the area to help inform effective delivery of LMP activities to prevent students becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).</p> <p>Develop a business sub-group of local organisations to help inform effective delivery of LMP activities, particularly those targeted at economically inactive, unemployed, people with disabilities and skilled labour supply.</p>	<p>Partnership</p> <p>Continue to develop a strong Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership to provide a co-ordinated response to jobs and skills challenges in the Borough.</p>	Bi-monthly meetings of the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership and sub group meetings as required.

Strategic Intent	Targets	Key Actions	Milestones
<p>To improve employability outcomes and/or labour market conditions locally for the following target groups:</p> <p>Economically Inactive</p> <p>Unemployed</p> <p>People with disabilities</p> <p>Skilled Labour Supply</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase skills and support for economically inactive to allow for entry into the workforce • Decrease the number of unemployed by specifically targeting those in areas of deprivation • Decrease levels of youth unemployment and identify alternative pathways • Increase the number of people in employment with a disability and reduce the barriers to employment for people with a disability. 	<p>Pathway Programme</p> <p>Deliver a programme targeted at youth unemployed providing a pathway of support to move people towards training or employment and providing aftercare once in training and employment. This pathway of support recognises that moving people towards employment is not a 'one size fits all' solution and requires a broad mix of options and levels of support, tailored to individual needs.</p>	<p>33 unemployed accessing dedicated support for their employability and skills journey.</p>
		<p>Inspo Programme</p> <p>A prevention programme to inspire school age residents to want to achieve more and prevent those at risk of leaving education with no destination or becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).</p>	<p>140 students being more aware of local careers opportunities and routes to employment.</p> <p>Additional employers offering work placement opportunities.</p>
		<p>Employment Academies</p> <p>Deliver a wide range of employment academy programmes to connect residents with new or better employment opportunities. This will include industry-specific training and qualifications with involvement from local employers.</p>	<p>93 residents participating in academies to gain new skills and qualifications to help them secure new employment or self-employment.</p>
		<p>Upskilling Academies</p> <p>Provide opportunities for local employees to achieve skills and</p>	<p>38 local employees participating in the programme.</p>

Strategic Intent	Targets	Key Actions	Milestones
		therefore improve their employment opportunities by delivering a project targeted at the underemployed (job level or hours worked) to support them into appropriate level employment – in turn, creating entry level positions.	25 moving into higher paid employment and 20 gaining a qualification after completing the project.
		Enable Project Deliver the Enable Project which is designed to increase awareness in the area for employers and residents of the number of supports and opportunities available to them with the aim of increasing the number of people with a disability in employment benefitting both employers and residents.	14 employers committing to make changes to recruitment methods to accommodate people with a disability. 14 employers encouraging applications from people with a disability.
To promote and support delivery of existing employability or skills provision available either regionally or locally	Raise awareness of the work of the Labour Market Partnership and regional programmes and initiatives / opportunities open to our residents	Awareness Develop an online and physical marketing campaign to promote the support available from the Partnership and opportunities for residents to access apprenticeship programmes etc. Events including job fairs to allow residents to meet employers and support organisations. Engagement and Outreach Officer Dedicated resource to support the objective of the LMP with the overall aim to support those seeking work to move	800 residents engaged through events. 80 employers engaged in events and provided with suitable events to help them fill vacancies.

Strategic Intent	Targets	Key Actions	Milestones
		into education, employment or training through direct engagement with local employers training providers and support organisations increase awareness of, and make referrals to employability and skills programmes within the local area.	

For further information on the Antrim and Newtownabbey Labour Market Partnership, contact us:

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W: www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/skills

To find local employment, visit our Facebook page www.facebook.com/ANBoroughjobs/

