

GENDER ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2024

Year 3 , 2023 - 2024 DRAFT

Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in our social, economic, and cultural systems. There is overwhelming evidence that women disproportionately experience disadvantage and discrimination. This is a reflection of historical unaddressed inequality, but inequalities have also been exacerbated by austerity, welfare reform and by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 25 years since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement's commitment to the 'full and equal participation of women in public life', statistics affirm the persistence of gendered inequalities, which continue to inhibit women's life opportunities in Northern Ireland. Men will also benefit from gender equality as they too face gender-specific issues including lower life expectancy, bad health and lower education levels and are impacted negatively by rigid gender norms.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE COUNCIL to ensure that Belfast City Council organisational culture, policies and practices empower talent development at all levels, for elected members and officers alike, and remove any form of discrimination			
Action	Year	Who	Budget
Review terms of reference/structure for Women's Network Group and develop a programme of events and activity	3	WNG	£3,000
Hold annual IWD and IMD events / celebrations for staff	3	HR WNG	£6,000
Deliver a mentoring programme for staff of all genders	3	HR	Corporate OD Budget
Develop guidance for managers to welcome staff back from periods of extended leave including maternity, parental leave , periods of long term absence	3	HR	Staff resources
Encourage all staff to work together to understand and champion gender issues through joint events, communications, workshops, outreach programmes etc	Ongoing	HR Depts	Staff resources
Prepare for NI Diversity Chartermark assessment with the goal of attaining Gold level accreditation	3	HR	£3,600 pa

Review “on boarding” for all staff to include leadership responsibilities around equality, diversity and inclusion and responsibilities	3	HR	Staff resources
Explore and challenge existing culture/perceptions around “presenteeism”: flexible working at a senior level, long hours culture etc. and develop actions to help address / change culture	3	HR WSG CMT	Staff resources
Ensure effective promotion of Belfast City Council as an employer that values and supports equality and diversity (interlink, external website, job information for potential applicants, media releases, City Matters, social media.)	Ongoing	HR MarComms Staff networks	Staff resources
Retain Onus Domestic Violence Charter ‘platinum level’ status by continuing to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse issues, support staff experiencing domestic violence and abuse and ensure employees know what support is available	3	HR	£2,000
Deliver activity to develop skills for working in a political environment - e.g. mock committee sessions	3	HR Democratic Services	Staff resources
Deliver targeted active travel activity	3	HR Sustrans	Active Travel Plan Budget
Review, update and communicate maternity, paternity, and other parental/caring related guidance for staff and managers, including flexible working, as part of the review of the Work Life Balance Handbook	3	HR Depts MarComms	Staff resources
PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY			
with the purpose of increasing the representation of women in leadership positions throughout communities across Belfast by ensuring that processes are in place to increase women’s involvement in decision making in communities			
Fund annual external IWD event.	Ongoing	Equality and Diversity Unit	£6,500
Recognise Transgender Remembrance Day and Transgender Day of Visibility	Ongoing	HR Proud Staff network	LGBT+ action plan
Increase awareness and understanding of the gender spectrum including “non-binary”	Ongoing	HR Proud Staff network	LGBT + action plan
Hold an event for WSG/ WNG to engage with the Youth Forum and to identify opportunities for future collaboration on gender issues	3	HR WSG CNS / YF	£1,000

Develop capacity of women's sector in procurement processes /funding applications etc	3	CNS CPU	Staff resources
PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ECONOMY			
to ensure all council policies and strategies influence and facilitate the active and fair participation of both women and men in the economy			
Review frontline job opportunities including apprenticeships, and associated working arrangements and facilities, to make these opportunities more attractive to female applicants. Deliver targeted employability outreach to get more women into work by promoting Belfast City Council role models	Ongoing	CNS HR Place and Economy MarComms	Staff resources / Employment Academies
Enterprise and Employability support for underrepresented groups – Belfast City Council programme of support to enable underrepresented groups (including women) to overcome the barriers to starting a business or accessing employment opportunities. Working in partnership with a range of organisations across the city we will put in place targeted interventions to engage women in this support and engage female entrepreneurs in business start-up activity, helping them to develop ideas and create networks to support them to start a business. This will also include support for Women in Businesses International Voices of leadership conference.	3	Enterprise and Business Growth	£50,000
Employability support for underrepresented groups – Belfast City Council programme of support to enable underrepresented groups (including women) to overcome the barriers to accessing employment opportunities through the delivery of Employment and Upskilling Academies. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement with women-specific provision to encourage and actively support women into under-represented sectors through access to Employment Academies in fibre, tech, logistics/transport and construction. - Employment Academies in female-dominated sectors (professional services, education, health and social care, working with children sectors) which include upskilling qualification to underpin career progression which includes Level 2 through to Level 5. - Active barrier-removal to participation on Employment Academies – such as embedding childcare provision, travel and subsistence expenses etc. 	3	Employability and Skills	£300,000 (indicative spend pro rata, based on female engagement in Employment Academies)

Work with city partners to deliver a STEM / leadership employability event for girls.	3	HR ED External partners	£3,000
PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CITY			
to ensure that the needs of women across the city are identified and used to influence and impact upon the regeneration of the city including social infrastructure design and community facilities provision			
As part of the ongoing baseline audit of all council assets, determine if our assets meet the needs of all genders and that gender needs are considered as part of the development of any new council asset.	3	Capital programmes Department C&NS Place & Economy Dept	Staff resources Potential cost if additional works required
Deliver a pilot to collect data on users of parks, MUGAs, skate parks, outdoor gyms or other BCC facilities and review findings with a view to ensuring that design and public investment is benefitting women and girls.	3	Capital programmes Place and Economy C&NS Customer Hub	Staff resources
Develop staff capacity to support inclusive place making and design both internally and with external partners with a view to improving engagement processes to ensure that women and girls are involved in the co-design of projects from the earliest stage to ensure better outcomes.	3	HR Capital programmes Place and Economy C&NS Strategic Hub	£3000
Convene a cross departmental meeting to consider opportunities and actions to influence place shaping through gender lens with a view to engaging external partners for discussion such as QUB, Make Space for Girls and Her City	3	Capital programmes Place and Economy C&NS Strategic Hub	Staff resources

Continue to support and raise awareness of the Raise your Voice Project to help address misogyny, sexual harassment and violence, and engage with all stakeholders.	3	HR External partners	£3,000
Work with city partners to retain Onus Safe City status by funding training and awareness raising across the city. Explore the Safe Haven initiative and its potential link to Safe City activity.	3	HR CNS ONUS and other external partners	£3,000 + PCSP resource
Extend pilot to provide free period products for staff Extend pilot to provide free period products for the public in council buildings and facilities Evaluate both pilots and assess costs for future provision	3	CLS Dept CNS	Staff resources / existing budgets
Extend pilot to make available reusable period products for staff	3	HR /CNS	£2,000
Develop Anti-Harassment Policy for all council facilities and council-run events (linking in with Safeguarding Policy and relevant training)	3	CNS P&E	Staff resources

Total approximate Year 3 budget: £36000 (excluding ED funded initiatives)