

Welcome ... to the December edition of engage!

This edition of Engage will look at how we can all move towards a more sustainable Christmas...Tis the season of good will, not landfill! Pages 4-5 provide 4 Top Tips for an easy, cost effective approach to a greener holiday season. Pages 2-3 provide an update on the work of Community Planning within the borough. Feeling lonely this Christmas? This season can be especially challenging for those experiencing feelings of loneliness. Pages 6-7 look at how we can help overcome these feelings and how we can help others in our community who may be feeling isolated. As always, this edition of Engage will sign post those in need towards support this holiday season on pages 8-9. Page 7 will provide information on home heating help for those in need. Ards and North Down Borough Council and Community Planning wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.

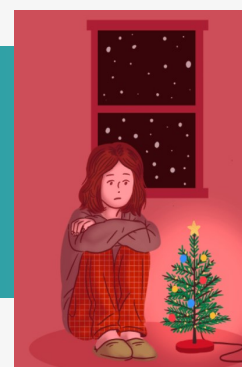


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Community Planning Update



Big Plan Outcomes

The Big Plan, centred around five outcomes, provides a commitment from the Strategic Community Planning Partnership to the people of Ards and North Downs on how they, as public service providers, will work together to maintain and improve the well-being of all people who live in the borough.

Big Plan Priorities

A four-year review of the Big Plan was recently concluded and this identified ten priority issues that the Community Planning Partnership agreed to focus on. Priorities were identified based on need and the impact of Partners working together.

Big Plan Workstreams

Each priority is taken forward via appropriate focused workstreams. The activities of the workstreams help assess the impact of the partnership and help the Partnership make progress towards the agreed Big Plan outcomes.

Big Plan Performance and Progress

A fourth Performance Update Report was recently presented to Ards and North Down's Strategic Community Planning Partnership. This provided Partners with an overview of the Big Plan priorities and the workstreams. This report also contained updated information on the population indicators that are used by the Strategic Partnership to assess the well-being of people in Ards and North Down.

Each Big Plan outcome has two priorities that are supported by workstreams and action plans. Page 3 of Engage provides a summary of some of the information contained in the Performance Update Report.

Together we Made a Difference

Together we Made a Difference summarises the work of Community Planning Partners to help deliver food, essential supplies and community connections since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be viewed by clicking the image above.



The Performance Update Report and Together we Made a Difference can both be viewed on the Council's website or by clicking the link below.

[Monitoring the Big Plan | Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)

Outcome 1

The **Big Conversation Panel** took place between 2020 and 2021, consisting of 3 surveys, to give residents the opportunity to give their views on a range of issues and public services. By taking part in these surveys, residents have helped us to understand the impact of Covid-19 and the initiatives that are needed to help communities and individuals recover. By participating in these surveys, you are also helping Ards and North Down Borough Council and its Community Planning Partners design and deliver better services that will have a positive impact on your personal wellbeing. Thank you to those who took part. Increasing opportunities for people to participate is important.

Outcome 2

We have had great success with the **Moved by Nature Big Calendar 2021**, which was produced in collaboration with National Trust, Sport NI and Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership. The interactive calendar focused on activities for nature prescriptions for improved health, wellbeing and mindfulness. The **Moved by Nature Big Calendar 2022** will focus on responsible recreation outdoors, with lots of ideas for places to visit within the borough and fun activities to do whilst taking care of nature and your own health and wellbeing. Look out for the new calendar in January [here](#).

Outcome 3

Age Friendly Alliance members were updated on the results of a survey of older people living within the SE health Trust area. The survey identified the problems that older people have accessing information and knowing who to contact when they have a problem. Survey participants also told us they don't feel included in decisions that are taken. The Age Friendly action plan has been updated to reflect the information gathered and some new actions to address the issues raised have been added.

Ards and North Down's **Multi-agency Support Hub** has been set up to enable vulnerable people to get help from a range of organisations. The person seeking help is asked for their consent to be referred to the Hub as the individual's opinions and welfare are at the centre of any decision and action taken. In Ards and North Down, the Support Hub was established in September 2019 and since then 11 vulnerable people have been referred. This has led to onward referrals to mental health services, GP's, Extern, The Link, Samaritans, Lifeline and Men's Sheds Groups.

Outcome 4

An Interim **Labour Market Partnership** has been established to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions by working through coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency partnerships, that helps to connect employers with employees. A Strategic Assessment of Ards and North Down's Labour Market has been undertaken by Council's Community Planning Service to ensure that the actions taken forward by the Partnership reflect employability and labour market needs within the area.

Outcome 5

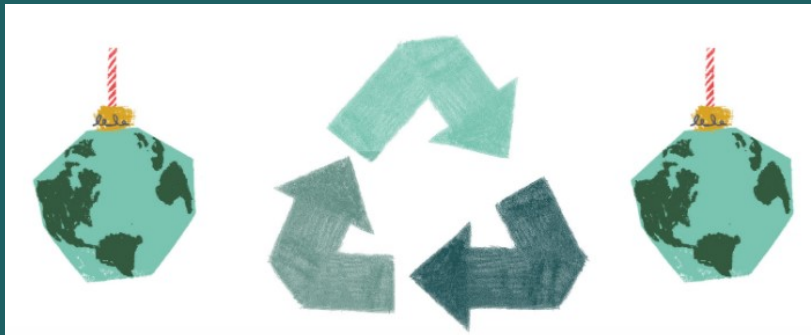
A **Sustainable Tourism Group** has been convened to take a holistic view of local tourism. An action plan that considers the impact of tourism on local communities has recently been updated to also consider the impacts of a changing climate on our tourism environment. While the remit of the group is to develop and promote sustainable (responsible) tourism within the borough, it is important to future proof tourism offerings.

See Community Planning's full Performance Update Report [here](#).

A Sustainable Christmas

4 Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas

1. Wrap Responsibly
2. Decorate Wisely
3. Shop Sustainable
4. Waste Less



This Christmas give the gift of caring for our planet. Christmas is often seen as a time to indulge, often to the detriment of our environment. Following the 4 Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas is an easy and cost effective way to be more eco-friendly this holiday season.

1. Wrap Responsibly

It is estimated that in the UK we get through 227,000 miles worth of Christmas wrap every year, so it's important to consider wrapping responsibly! (RSPB, 2021)

The name 'wrapping paper' is a misleading term as most wrapping paper is not recyclable, unlike plain paper. This is due to gift wrap often being made with shiny foil and glitter which cannot be recycled. A top tip is to avoid anything with glitter! Another way to identify recyclable paper is if it stays crumpled after you scrunch it. Try avoiding too much sticky tape when wrapping as the glue is problematic, alternatively tie your presents with natural string such as twine. Sustainable methods of wrapping include using fabric, known as furoshiki, a traditional Japanese method of using cloth to wrap and transport gifts, making for beautiful and sustainable packaging.



Look out for the FSC logo when purchasing wrapping paper and cards as this logo signals that a product meets Forest Stewardship Standards and is responsibly sourced



2. Decorate Wisely

Many of us look forward to the twinkling lights during the holiday season, sadly these pretty lights can have an ugly impact on our environment. Make the switch to LED lights, which use 3 to 10 percent of the energy of traditional Christmas lights and look just as good. This is good news for our planet and your energy bill. Always turn your Christmas lights out when you are not using them to save energy and keep you safe against the risk of house fires.

The Christmas tree is the focal point in many of our homes in December, whether you prefer the real thing or an artificial alternative there are many eco-friendly options. If you opt for an artificial Christmas tree make sure that you're going to reuse it for at least 10 years, otherwise it would have been better to buy a living tree from a sustainable forest. If buying a real tree, make sure it's FSC-certified. When the Christmas season is over why not turn it into a log pile in your garden? Stacking the wood in your garden will create a habitat for birds and bugs. Purchasing a potted tree is also a good solution as you can reuse it each year, which is sustainable and cost effective!

Be innovative when decorating and upcycle old decorations or make your own from natural materials. Foraging for natural Christmas decorations is a fun activity the whole family can get involved in! A simple handful of pine cones can be transformed into elegant home décor. Always be sure to follow responsible foraging guidelines, that can be found [here](#). When decorating your Christmas table be mindful that most Christmas crackers aren't recyclable. Look out for the FSC logo to identify recyclable crackers or why not make your own? Avoid single-use tablecloths and napkins and opt for material versions which have a longer lifecycle than their paper equivalents.

3. Shop Sustainable

A good rule to follow when aiming to shop sustainably is to **Buy Less and Buy Local**. Local independent sellers have lots to offer and shopping locally means you will be supporting small suppliers and makers, while minimising the carbon footprint associated with the transportation of the products you're buying.

4. Waste Less

When food shopping be realistic about how much food you will need, especially when shopping for perishable items. Make a shopping list and stick to it, this is also a good way to cut costs. A good tip when buying food is to **Cook it, Freeze it, or Eat it**. Leftover food may be unavoidable, but you can save it and enjoy it the next day by covering it with eco-friendly cling film alternatives such as Tupperware or wax cloth covers. You can freeze most foods as long as they are frozen before their use by date. Ensure the food is air tight and date and label food, always eating food within 24 hours of defrosting. Find out more about freezing tips from the NHS [here](#). Don't forget to buy locally and in season when you can as these foods use less energy to grow and transport. To help you, the **GKI app** provides ethical and sustainability information about more than 280,000 supermarket products.

Reduce waste even further by buying gifts with little to no packaging. If packaging is unavoidable, opt for something plastic-free or made from recycled, or recyclable, materials. Don't forget your reusable bags to carry all your shopping home!

Coping with Loneliness this Christmas

The Big Conversation Survey took place over 12 months between 2020-2021 and consisted of 3 surveys which explored a range of topics including health and well-being and how Covid-19 has affected residents. The Community Planning Partnership and Emotional Health and Wellbeing Group worked together to gauge emotional health in the borough as part of the surveys. The results highlighted that mental health needs to be prioritised within the borough to address emotional (mental) health, loneliness and social isolation.

MENTAL HEALTH

"Support for mental health and those who may suffer loneliness/isolation"

"Access to family and friends—this has an impact on mental health"

"Mental health ... it takes 8-10 weeks to see a councillor, this is totally unacceptable..."

"Online and peer help groups..."

"Help for older people"

"Easier to access mental health services"

Feedback from participants of the Big Conversation Survey can be seen in the left textbox. The stress of lockdown over the past two years has had a detrimental impact upon residents mental health.

How is Community Planning addressing social isolation and loneliness?

Community Planning has prioritised tackling social isolation and the negative impact it can have on families and individuals regardless of whether it stems from where you are geographically located, your mobility or your age. Outcome 2 of the Big Plan, an aspirational aim, states that "All People in Ards and North Down Enjoy Good Health and Well-being". We believe this can be achieved by continuing to work collaboratively with communities and its partners to address poor mental health.

Why is loneliness more pronounced during the holiday season?

For those already experiencing loneliness this time of year can be especially hard, as there is an expectation to be with friends and family. The poor weather conditions also make it harder for people to get out and about, especially those with mobility issues.

The 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing

There are **5 steps to mental wellbeing**. These steps could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. The first step is to connect with other people, as good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. The second step is to be physically active as evidence shows it can improve your mental wellbeing by causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood. The third step is to learn new skills as this can improve mental wellbeing by raising self-esteem, creating a sense of purpose and connecting with others. The fourth step is to give to others as research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth. The final step is to pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness). Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

AWARE
OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.

aware-ni.org
f y i t in

18-30 YEAR OLD'S SUPPORT GROUP NEWTOWNARDS

For 18-30 year olds who are experiencing mental health problems such as depression, bipolar disorder, stress or anxiety.

The purpose of the group is to bring you together with other young people to support each other, share experiences, discuss self-help strategies, improve and develop your coping skills, build resilience and reduce stress and anxiety. At our first meeting we will be chatting over pizza and coffee will be provided at our fortnightly meetings by our friends at Haptik.



Where: IG Podiatry & Wellbeing Clinic, 69 Frances St

When: Fortnightly from 8th Dec 7-8.30pm

Email: joy@aware-ni.org with any queries or to confirm your space

Support this Christmas

GET IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS WHO CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT

FOOD

If you are finding it difficult to afford food:

Bangor Foodbank – **0782 1791 674**

Storehouse North Down – **0752 6541 168**

Newtownards Foodbank – **0790 2933 297**

FUEL

If you can't afford to heat your home:

Society of St Vincent de Paul –
02890 351561

If you are a Housing Executive Tenant –
02895 982068

BEFRIENDING SERVICE

If you are feeling lonely and would like to have a chat over the phone:

AGEnda – **02891 271968**

Caring Communities Safe and Well –
02897 566934

AGE NI – **0808 808 7575**

Education Authority Stay Connected Local Service for young people – **07780 743 858**

BENEFITS

If you need advice and information on benefits or you are worried about issues around debt:

Community Advice Ards and North Down –
0300 123 9287

Benefits Advice – **0800 232 1271**

Christians Against Poverty –
0800 328 0006

Check if you're getting all the money, support and services you're entitled to by contacting the DfC Make the Call team:
0800 232 1271

HOME ACCIDENT SUPPORT

If you would like some advice, support or equipment to help with home accident prevention:

Ards and North Down Borough Council's Home Safety Team – **0300 013 3333** ask for extension **40336**

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE

If you are experiencing domestic or sexual abuse and need support or information:

24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline – **0808 802 1414**

North Down and Ards Women's Aid –
02891 273196

FAMILY SUPPORT

If you are a parent and need support for yourself, your child or your family:

Family Support Hub (SEHSCT) –
02892 501357

Barnardo's NI – **028 9127 1538**

Home-Start Ards, Comber and Peninsula area – **028427 88369**

Home-Start North Down – **028 9127 1201**

SureStart Ards – **02891 819722** Ards or **028427 39322** Peninsula

SureStart – Bangor – **02891 457248**

OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

Ards and North Down Borough Council –
0300 013 3333

Ards Community Network – **02891 814625**

County Down Rural Community Network –
028 9182 8884

North Down Community Network –
02891 461386

NI Housing Executive – **0344 892 0900**

PSNI- 101 or if an emergency **999**

Samaritans – **116 123**

Education Authority Youth Services in Ards and North Down – **02890 566245**

Volunteer Now – **02890 232020**

Living in rural Ards and North Down and need transport support?
Call Down Community Transport on 028 4461 7900

Home Heating Help

Are you struggling to keep warm this winter?

winter WARM PACKS

The criteria to be able to receive warm packs is:

1. Be experiencing fuel poverty.
2. NOT have received a keep warm pack from a different source.
3. Fall into at least one of the following six categories:
 - a. A person with a long-term health condition including: an underlying issues that makes them more vulnerable in colder weather (e.g. asthma, chronic bronchitis or emphysema, coronary heart disease, stroke) or a physical or mental health condition which results in them spending more time at home.
 - b. A person with a disability that makes them less mobile or means they need to spend more time at home.
 - c. Anyone aged over 65 years old.
 - d. A family with dependent children.
 - e. A pregnant woman.
 - f. A person who is homeless.

LIMITED
NUMBER
AVAILABLE

HSC Public Health Agency

NDCN

Community Hub



If you meet the criteria and would like a warm pack either call in to the NDCN Community Hub on Main Street Bangor (facing Halifax) phone: 02891 461386 or email: admin@ndcn.co.uk

TAKE A RAPID TEST BEFORE MEETING OTHERS



Heading out this weekend?
Help keep friends and family safe by
taking a Rapid #COVID-19 test before
meeting others.

The tests are free, quick and easy to
do.

Find out more: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/
articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing)
[Northern Ireland Executive](#)

We are always here to support you,
even after Covid-19

The Here2Help app is a pocket guide of
services and advice that may be able to
give you some direction or help if you are
worried about someone or if you are feeling
the pressure of life. Download the **FREE**
Here2Help App to your phone so it is
always handy.

Information and Advice is available 24/7

Available on [Google Play Store](#) and [Apple
iTunes App Store](#)

CONTACTING US

We are currently working from home. If
you would like to get in touch, please:

Email us:

@
[communityplanning@ardsandnorthdown.gov
.uk](mailto:communityplanning@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Tweet us:

@[thebigplanAND](#) and we will get back to
you as soon as we can!

Stay informed:

Stay part of the conversation by signing up
for this newsletter,

following us on twitter or view the
community planning section hosted on the
Ards and North Down Borough Council's
website.

Please stay safe:

Keep 2 meters apart from others when you
can, wear a mask and wash your hands well
and often. Stay at home if you show any
symptoms. Download the app —
StopCOVID NI.

A NEW
FREE
APP
FOR
EVERYONE...



INFO + ADVICE 24/7

A free app, designed to give quick advice on
many subjects and fast contact info for a
majority of life's problems.
Download it today as a source of great info...

Available on the  

www.here2helpapp.com

