

*Northern Ireland Housing Executive*

# HousingExecutive

## Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2017-18

**Contact:**

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality.htm>

**Signature:**

**This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.**

**It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.**

**This report reflects progress made between April 2017 and March 2018**

## **PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme**

### **Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice**

- 1** In 2017-18, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

*Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.*

The Housing Executive's draft Corporate and Business Plans 2017/18 - 2020/21, currently out for consultation until the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 2018, provides strategic housing policy and strategy business objectives across not only the social housing sector but also the private and privately rented housing sectors. Our Vision is

***“Everyone is able to live in an affordable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe and attractive place”***

Many of these objectives are aimed, fundamentally, at promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. The draft Plan sets out our high level outcomes for which we can assess at the end of the four years, whether we were successful in delivering these. The four high level outcomes are:

1. Helping people find housing support and solutions;
2. Delivering better homes;
3. Fostering vibrant sustainable communities; and
4. Delivering quality public services.

The high level four year draft Corporate Plan is supported by one year business plans which set out in more detail our work under the four outcomes.

In setting the organisation's priorities we are guided by the draft Programme for Government (PfG), Department for Communities (DfC) priorities, and other relevant government policies and research findings.

One of the Housing Executive's Core Values is fairness - which we have always kept at the heart of our organisation. We measure the impact of our work on stakeholders to aid our processes and regular policy reviews include employment issues, Equality Screening and Equality Impact Assessment, and we work along with our partners in the Consultative Forum on Equality, Disability Forum and Housing Community Network.

In the past year we have moved from Regional and Landlord specific objectives to three themes, applicable to all Divisions. These are:

- **People** - To provide housing solutions, services and support to the people

of Northern Ireland.

- **Property** - To ensure everyone has access to a quality home which is safe, affordable, warm and appropriate to their needs;
- **Places** - To work with others to develop, maintain and sustain attractive, connected, healthy and economically active places.

The organisation has a statutory role in researching housing issues and our housing policies are founded on a combination of research evidence and consultation. Our research, which includes targeted equality based research and equality based questions as part of general housing surveys (see Section 1:Part 2), focuses on customer trends and satisfaction, housing conditions, an annual review of the NI Housing Market, and a number of technical areas, and helps to set the context for the Corporate and Business Plans.

We carry out a range of consultations each year (detailed in Section 3), and consult widely on the draft Corporate and Business Plans to ensure that the views of consultees are taken into account when these Plans are finalised.

Over time a framework for communication with tenants at Estate, Area, Regional, and Central levels has been developed through the Housing Community Network (HCN) consisting of around 400 community groups. Through this, representatives can debate new and developing policies along with more local issues, with the appropriate levels of management.

The Consultative Forum on Equality brings together around 150 organisations from the voluntary and community sector (covering Section 75 groups) to debate housing policy issues with a focus on equality. The Chair of the Forum is shared between the Housing Executive (the officer who develops the Corporate and Business Plan) and a representative from the voluntary sector.

## **People Theme**

**Our People purpose statement is:**

**“To provide housing solutions, services and support to the people of Northern Ireland.”**

People have different housing requirements and are looking for suitable housing solutions to meet their needs. These can range from the need for social and affordable housing options to supported living accommodation, or ways in which they can remain in their own home when a situation presents that a home needs to be adapted. Others find themselves in challenging or potentially vulnerable circumstances such as facing homelessness and we offer a range of housing services to help deal with the differing housing needs of our customers.

Under this theme we have set out actions under our high level outcomes 1 and 4.

### **Outcome 1 Helping people find housing support and solutions**

Our work under this outcome includes:

**Homelessness** – During 2017 we published our new Homelessness Strategy “Ending Homelessness together” to cover the period 2017 -2022. The strategy supports a multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness and recognises the importance of local service delivery and partnership working. During 2018/19 we will carry out an annual assessment to track the progress of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

**Supporting People (SP)** - SP funds housing related support services to a wide range of clients, many of whom have significant vulnerabilities. The SP budget is invested mainly to support the work of voluntary and community organisations in providing the SP Programme. This work allows people to avail of supported living, helps people to remain in their own homes through the provision of floating support and encompasses Traveller accommodation. A review of Supporting People was carried out by the then Department for Social Development (now the Department for Communities) in November 2015, along with a two year Action Plan, for which the Housing Executive has responsibility for the delivery of a number of the actions.

**Adaptations** – We have set a four year target to streamline the adaptations for Housing Executive homes, and for the processes for this type of work through grants for the private Sector. This work will assist in the provision of accessible homes and help to reduce the time that people wait in hospital for this work to be completed. At the end of 2017/18, a baseline was set which we will use to measure progress up to 2020/2021.

We have commenced the development of an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) and this work will continue into the 2018/19 business year. Having information about accessible housing is a key enabler for people with a disability as it promotes independent living and social inclusion.

**Sustaining Tenancies** – As part of our Housing Options service, we want to ensure that the support needs of customers are clearly identified and taken into consideration in the analysis of the range of appropriate solutions for the client. The aim is a more sustainable tenancy from the outset.

## **Outcome 4 Delivering quality public services**

Our work under this outcome includes:

**Landlord Services** - We own a stock of around 85,900 properties and a commercial property portfolio of just over 400 units. We want to improve our services and retain our position of being a first quartile landlord. It is important that we manage scarce resources effectively to ensure value for money to provide better services for our customers. Our ‘Journey to Excellence’ work to redesign our customer facing services commenced roll-in during the 2017/2018 business year and by the end of the business year all offices had introduced the new ways of working.

**Welfare Reform** – We will provide an efficient Housing Benefit Service in line with key targets and manage the transition to Universal Credit to project timescales. We want to ensure that our customers are informed and assisted during the transition. We include regular updates on our website and we have provided internet facilities in some of our outlets that customers can use to enquire about Universal Credit payments and accounts.

**Research and customer feedback** - Providing services to meet our customers' needs is important to us and we carry out research on an annual basis and other targeted housing service research such as the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey to help shape our services. Details can be found on our website.

We listen to our customers and our tenant scrutiny panels have a say in how our services are delivered and shaped around their needs.

**Digital inclusion and engagement** – We are exploring ways to increase the number of digital services that we offer to our customers, including a new customer focussed website and other digital services. In addition, we published our new customer Strategy 2017/18 – 2019/20 which sets out our plans to improve customer services.

## Property Theme

**Our Property purpose statement is:**

**To ensure everyone has access to a quality home which is safe, affordable, warm and appropriate to their needs.**

The Housing Executive has a wide remit of statutory duties including identifying housing needs and developing plans to meet needs; identifying and reporting on housing conditions; and to consult with District Councils on our plans and programmes in their areas. In addition, we are also a landlord providing over 85,900 social homes for rent across Northern Ireland which is provided in a variety of design, from the traditional three bedroom house through to multi storey apartments and labourers' cottages and bungalows.

Delivering a new build programme helps to address social housing need and each year we carry out housing need assessments and plan an annual new build programme which is delivered by Housing Associations. These new homes can include traditional two and three bedroom homes, apartments (including a percentage of one bedroom homes), supported living accommodation or homes for wheelchair users, based on our needs assessments.

Homes falling into disrepair or deemed to be unfit require interventions and we have a grants scheme, to help with this work. However, we are currently only accepting applications for mandatory Disabled Facilities and Repair grants. Discretionary Renovation, Replacement and Home Repair Assistance grants are only available in exceptional circumstances due to a reduction in grants funding. Under this theme we have set out actions under our high level outcomes 2 and 4.

## **Outcome 2 Delivering better homes**

Our work under this outcome includes:

**Housing Executive Homes** - We have developed an investment plan to maintain the Housing Executive's housing stock and this includes examining the long term viability of some of our stock. We also deliver a response maintenance service and carry out cyclical health and safety compliance work to our stock. Currently there is a small scale voluntary stock transfer programme in place to transfer a small number of homes to Housing Associations, subject to tenant vote. This will enable investment to be made to these homes.

**Increase the number of new social homes** – Our work includes the development of a programme to deliver new social homes in areas of social housing need. Our Land and Regeneration Department undertake an assessment of our land holdings each year and surplus land is made available to help to deliver new social homes. We have a target to provide 5000 new units of accessible social housing over the period of the draft Programme for Government.

**Energy conservation** – As the Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland our aim is to increase energy efficiency in Northern Ireland's domestic stock. Our programmes of work include delivering the Affordable Warmth and Boiler Replacement schemes on behalf of the Department for Communities (DfC) and baselining SAP ratings in both Housing Executive stock and in the Private Sector so that improvements can be measured.

## **Outcome 4 Delivering quality public services**

Our work under this outcome includes:

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)** – We continued our work registering and inspecting HMOs. This function is due to transfer from the Housing Executive to local councils. The date for transfer is likely to be during 2019.

**Energy advice** – We have a programme of work to 2020/21 to educate householders on preventative interventions. This assists in our work to help to prevent fuel poverty.

### **Places Theme**

#### **Our Places purpose statement is:**

**To work with others to develop, maintain and sustain attractive, connected, healthy and economically active places.**

We have been working closely with communities since our inception and this remains a priority for us. The segregated nature of some of our estates prevents

the best use being made of existing housing and land resources so, in certain areas we are curtailed in meeting housing need.

### **Outcome 3 - Fostering vibrant sustainable communities**

Our work under this outcome includes:

**Our Community Cohesion Strategy 2015 -2020** will be delivered across five themes – Residential Segregation/Integration; Flags, emblems and sectional symbols; Race Relations; Interfaces; and Communities in Transition.

We are focused on delivering shared housing through the twin-track approach of shared new build schemes and the Shared Neighbourhood Programme. Our work is aligned with the objectives of the Together: Building a United Community strategy (TBUC) launched in 2013 by the Northern Ireland Executive. To date, 21 shared new build housing estates have been created and more than 150 existing communities have been trained and supported to bring together residents from all backgrounds, through our Shared Neighbourhood Programme.

Community cohesion depends ultimately on trust and safety and we will do all we can to help to build that trust and safety for our tenants. We also work to support the DfC's 'Building Successful Communities' programme through neighbourhood-based housing investment programmes and we also delivered the Department's Small Pockets of Deprivation (SPOD) programme to support 17 community groups to deliver localised programmes to support community priorities.

Although our **Community Safety Strategy** ended in 2017, an Action Plan continues to be implemented throughout all areas. A new Community Safety Strategy will be developed and will reflect the direction set out in the Department of Justice (DOJ) Strategy, one developed (see page 8).

Addressing anti-social behaviour requires a multi-agency approach and we continue to build on relationships, partnership solutions and multi-agency forums.

The Community Safety Action Plan is based around three areas of work as follows;

- (a) Building Community Confidence;
- (b) Ensuring Local Solutions; and
- (c) Working Together.

**The Hate Incident Practical Action (HIPA)** scheme continues to be available to support victims of hate harassment where there is damage to property, by providing additional security measures to homes which allow victims to feel safer.

**Our Community Involvement Strategy 2017 - 2023** aims to give our tenants, residents and leaseholders a real say in making their neighbourhoods better places in which to live.

**Our Social Housing Enterprise Strategy 2015 -2018** aims to empower our

social housing communities to tackle difficult issues which affect their quality of life. Social Enterprises are businesses, operating on a sound commercial footing, which return their profits to the communities within which they operate, and help build social capital and social value for the residents. The impacts of our social investments will help to transform local social housing communities, and the lives of the individuals and families within them, by increasing inward investment, creating new and innovative self-sustaining development opportunities, and improving life chances.

Our Land and Regeneration services carry out a range of actions to help to deliver housing in both the public and private sectors. This work helps to inform our 11 Housing Investment Plans and sets the context for working with Councils on Community Planning, in our role as a statutory consultee. In addition, we work in collaboration with Councils on their local development plans to provide mixed use, mixed tenure communities.

During 2016, we published our **Rural Strategy and Action Plan** entitled 'Sustainable Rural Communities 2016 - 2020' which sets out our contribution to sustaining Northern Ireland's rural communities. We recognise the growing pressures from rural communities for local, affordable homes, the need to address increasing levels of unfit and fuel poverty, and the national recognition that there is a need to support an ageing population, especially in isolated rural areas.

We work in partnership with a number of statutory and voluntary agencies on cohesion and integration both in the public and private sectors.

### **Community Safety**

With our Community Safety Strategy "Safer Together" 2014-2017 we set our strategic direction and action plan across three main thematic areas:

- building community confidence;
- ensuring local solutions; and
- working together.

The current political stalemate at Stormont impacted on the publication of a new DOJ strategy. In the absence of an amended DOJ strategy the Housing Executives CXBC committee approved a 6-12 month extension on the current Community Safety Strategy and associated action plan. Work on the new strategy is underway.

We continue to respond to all reports of anti-social behaviour in a speedy and effective manner, through a range of housing management services which are delivered through our network of local offices.

We fund a range of initiatives to address anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in our estates. Such funding covers a number of warden schemes, street pastors, home security schemes, good morning services, diversionary activities, physical works to communal areas and inter-generational workshops to name but a few. In



so doing, the Housing Executive works with its voluntary and statutory sector partners including Councils and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).

Our Hate Harassment Toolkit aims to help those who are experiencing or know someone who is experiencing harassment, persecution and/or intimidation, all of which can be described as hate harassment. The toolkit provides practical information and advice to staff and other practitioners throughout Northern Ireland to enable them to provide a comprehensive service to victims and witnesses of hate crime.

## **Promoting Good Relations 2017/18**

### **Outputs and Outcomes of our Cohesion Services**

Throughout the year we have invested in community involvement and community cohesion we have created opportunities to improve community relations, address difficult and contentious cohesion issues and help develop greater bonding, bridging and linking within our estates.

We have increased opportunities for integration, improved responses to hate crime and raised awareness of race relations issues and opportunities. Empowering, enabling and engaging communities to get the best outcomes for their neighbourhoods has assisted in the reduction of anti-social behaviour and will impact on the delivery of our services and enhance tenant, resident and leaseholder participation, capacity, engagement, challenging, lobbying across our business.

We have successfully sought external funding to support and enhance our cohesion work and are currently working in collaboration with a number of partners in respect of Peace IV programmes on of which we are leading on.

### **2017/18 publications**

A Good Relations booklet has been produced to showcase good practice across the 5 cohesion themes and is available on the internet and distributed to staff, community and key stakeholders. Hard copies were delivered to area and local offices.

### **Community Cohesion Strategy 2015 – 2020**

The refreshed Community Cohesion strategy was formally launched in February 2016 in Girdwood Community Hub and the cohesion team in partnership with the area offices (13 across Northern Ireland) continue to translate the strategy into practical actions on the ground with both internal and external key stakeholders.

We feel that working in partnership is pivotal to the delivery of this strategy on both an internal and an external basis. The strategic cohesion forum provides a clear sounding board regards our good relations approach ensuring that it is both contemporary and relevant. The Housing Executive is represented on a number

of strategic forums and also at an operational level to ensure joined up delivery of services.

The Community Cohesion Unit's overarching objective is: "To contribute to the creation of more stable, safer neighbourhoods by working in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a diverse and divided society."

Our Community Cohesion Strategy is delivered across five themes:

- Integration / Segregation
- Race Relations
- Communities in Transition
- Interface Areas
- Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols

The main focus of our activities in 2017/18 across all five cohesion themes has been:

### **Integration / Segregation**

#### **BRIC Programme**

The Building Relationships in Communities (BRIC) Programme ended in September 2014. The post project evaluation highlighted a number of examples of good practice within the BRIC Programme and recommended this learning be incorporated into new good relations programmes. This has resulted in the Housing Executive developing a new BRIC2 programme as part of its mainstream activity.

Phase 1 of the BRIC2 Programme has been implemented and the seven Good Relations Officers continue to work across the initial 26 areas in partnership with Supporting Communities.

Phase 2 of the BRIC2 programme is on-going and a further 26 BRIC 2 areas have been identified in collaboration with our Area Managers and are signing up to the terms of engagement and to developing good relations plans.

Grass roots delivery of the good relations plans, which are bespoke to each area, includes good relations training programmes and bonding, bridging and linking opportunities.

#### **TBUC Shared Housing**

The Housing Executive's Head of Income and Communities is the chair of the Together Building a United Community (TBUC) Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub Group facilitated by the DfC Housing Branch. This is made up of representatives from NIFHA, statutory agencies, private agencies, and community and voluntary organisations.

The Housing Executive's role is to support and assist housing associations in the

implementation and delivery of the programme. Currently 6 of the 10 TBUC shared neighbourhood schemes supported through the TBUC strategy have met the criteria of being Shared.

The Cohesion Unit in partnership with DfC have developed a brief for the delivery of Shared Neighbourhoods to support housing associations on their journey in achieving the objectives of TBUC.

### **Housing for All**

The initial TBUC commitment to deliver 10 shared schemes has seen the delivery of 6 schemes completed with a further 4 on site.

Going forward the draft programme for government has committed to support a further 200 units annually and the programme has been rebranded as '*housing for all*' led by DfC and supported by the Housing Executive.

### **Race Relations**

Work on promoting good Race Relations continues in line with the Housing Executive's Race Relations Policy and Action Plan initiated in 2006. The Equality Unit is developing an updated Race Equality Strategy in line with the Executive Office Race Equality Strategy produced in 2015.

During 2017/18 the Housing Executive through various internal strategies and units contributed to delivering race relations related projects. In 2017/18 we funded 35 race relations projects. Below is a flavour of what we have supported through good relations:

- **Greater Shantallow Community Arts – An Turas (The Journey)**  
With the support of NIHE the group set out to create a project highlighting the richness that embracing cultural diversity brings to all our communities culminating in the successful production of 'An Turas' (The Journey) at the Millennium forum on Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018. In delivering the project, the group worked with over 240 participants from many different ethnic minority communities within the city ensuring a very strong representation from both Protestant and Catholic communities too. On completion of the project the group feel that tolerance of diversity has been encouraged and welcomed by the community.
- **Bushmills Residents Environmental Forum – Cultural Diversity, The Next Generation**  
A cultural diversity programme with 20 young males (aged 10-18) with the aim to allow these participants to gain a more in-depth understanding of their own Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist Culture and also Catholic, Republican and Nationalist culture. This will also focus on the ever changing ethnic diverse cultures in Northern Ireland. The 10 week programme featured guest speakers from different cultural backgrounds including Polish, African, Republican and Nationalist. As a result, the young people developed mutual understanding and respect for other cultural traditions as well as their own. Other outcomes achieved include,

increased confidence in addressing silent sectarianism and racism in the village and increases in positive peer influence amongst the young people.

- **Melmount & East Bank Estates Community Associations Forum – Building a United Society**  
This project encouraged community bonding and engagement throughout the Melmount and East Bank Estates area. The project brought residents of seven local housing areas together for a night of social bonding through the medium of a Christmas dinner and light entertainment. This event had the goal of reducing negativity and social isolation in these areas. The event was attended by a variety of residents from different cultural and religious backgrounds. As a result, the event allowed for a channel of communication to be opened between long term residents and those newer residents from varying religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the area. It created an opportunity to continue on from this event and the promotion of shared space for those who have been somewhat neglected and/or fallen into a sense of isolation over the years.
- **Off the Street – Community Hub Project**  
This project featured provision of funding to develop a community youth transport hub programme that is used to work with young people from targeted areas and to provide detached youth services for those most in need. Services provided such as a, 'listening ear service', 'peer mentoring', 'facilitated group work' and 'safe space' provision. As a result, this project contributed to promotion of positive relations between young people and residents within Galliagh by offering opportunities for the community to participate in personal development programmes. It also resulted in support of young people in the area to play a positive role within their community and provide an opportunity to exhibit their work and ideas for enhancing community safety in the area. The project also created a foundation for defining a sense of place as the area was often blighted with tales of anti-social behaviour in the past.
- **Annadale Haywood Residents Association – Chinese New Year Event**  
The group hosted a celebratory event for the Chinese New Year in early 2018. The project aimed to build upon previous celebrative community events and encouraged further integration and acceptance of the growing Chinese community living in Annadale. This celebration enabled children and adults to celebrate different cultures, meet their neighbours and form friendships. This project builds on promotion of the area having a greater understanding and increased engagement with all sections of the community.
- **Association Darfur NI – Bus Trip to Newcastle**  
The group with the assistance of NIHE arranged an 'exchange' event with local people that involved experiencing each other's food as well as exhibiting Irish dance and dance indigenous to the Darfur region. This project encouraged residents from different cultural backgrounds to learn about each other and build connections. It engaged with local young people from the community and improved confidence and their ability to

relate to others from differing backgrounds.

- **Greater Village Regeneration Trust – Urban Nature Reserve**  
The group recovered a derelict piece of land in Rydalmere Street. The aim of the project was to improve the appearance of the site by organising a community clean up and “upcycle” the area through power washing and painting of damaged railings in the alleyway. This project encouraged members of the community and surrounding area to come together and work side by side to improve the appearance of the area but also reduce social isolation, and improve intergenerational relationships.
- **Dunmurry Community Association – Building Unity Through Interactive Arts & Crafts**  
The group refurbished the community artwork in the hall of Dunmurry Community Centre. This project has encouraged integration between the older and younger generations within the local community and aid in socialising the young people into a new set of norms in order to help them to value their community and develop respect for each other and the environment in which they live. As a result, this project succeeded in bringing residents together and increased community involvement. Social isolation was actively reduced and bonds formed between community members, young and old.
- **Polish Association Let’s Keep Together – Education Project**  
The group with the assistance of NIHE organised a trip to Belfast (Titanic Centre) in November 2017 with the aim to learn more about local culture. By learning more about local culture, the group will feel more confident in getting to know their neighbours in Northern Ireland. This will give the group the confidence and enthusiasm to integrate into society locally.
- **North Down YMCA – My Space, Your Space Multicultural Festival**  
This project aimed to change attitudes to different cultural identities in communities across the North Down and Ards area. The project was successful in this feat by showcasing this rich culture, through song, dance, food and creative arts. By promoting this common vision of a rich cultural diversity the group sought to break down issues of segregation in housing and promote integration, tolerance and interest in other cultures. The project provided an opportunity for diverse ethnic minorities from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Syria and Africa to meet with local communities and share community space to engage with each other in a friendly environment. This project contributed to building a more stable, safer and cohesive community and better integration for new citizens.
- **Tanmamore Community Development Group – Refurbishment & Developing Opportunities for Sharing Community Space**  
The group with the support of NIHE, started up their own community newsletter. They purchased necessary items so they could produce a monthly newsletter and distribute throughout the area. This resulted in the group being able to connect with residents in the community and keep them updated on local news. This facilitated the improvement of

community relations and community participation. It encouraged cross community participation in activities and events to help build good relations between neighbours who are from different cultural backgrounds. It also directly spreads good news to people living in the area and provides opportunities for people to find out what's happening in their local area and to reduce social isolation.

- **Bush Community Group – Relieving Isolation & Exploring History**  
Through different activities (such as a tour of Stormont & Crumlin Road Gaol) the group were able to build more positive relationships within and between the older people living in the village. This activity reduced feelings of isolation and helped to reduce feelings of fear of crime for older and also single parents. Not only did the project increase knowledge and respect for different cultures but also increased the confidence of participants to work towards a more sustainable community in which fear of crime is reduced and a sense of wellbeing & companionship for older people & single parent families is increased.

### **Communities in Transition**

The Areas at Risk programme was established in 2006 to identify and intervene in areas at risk of slipping into a spiral of decline. In 2017/18 the Community Cohesion Unit co-ordinated and delivered the programme in North Belfast (Greater Whitewell and Glenbank) on behalf of DfC.

### **Interface Areas**

Following on from the successful interface removal work at the Ardoyne Road, we are continuing to make significant progress at our interface sites in partnership with the Department of Justice, local Councils and the IFI Peace Walls Groups.

### **Removal of the Crumlin Road wall**

The successful removal of the interface along the Crumlin Road in North Belfast has been a monumental and positive change on the landscape. The area has suffered some of the highest levels of violence and has a legacy of deep division and mistrust.

This project involved local residents, the Lower Shankill Community Association, TASCIT and North Belfast Interface Network and led the way in terms of interface removal. Residents who have been part of the process have expressed a hope that this innovative model will help others to take the brave steps to open up their neighbourhoods and explore new opportunities to remove or re-imagine barriers. The removal of the wall has transformed the hearts and minds of the community as well as the physical look of the area.

Further projects supported in 2017/18 and ongoing in 2018/19 include Phase 2 of Crumlin Road Interface Re-Modelling– (Shankill side of the Road), North BELFAST (North Queen Street and Short Strand in East Belfast).

## **Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols**

### **Re-imaging**

We continue to support our communities where there is a willingness and readiness to engage in this journey and to share best practice, work with partners to reduce the number of contentious murals, and make our communities visibly more welcoming places.

Communities continued to develop projects with Housing Executive support and 30 community re-imaging projects were funded in 2017/18. Contentious murals have been softened to provide a more acceptable and inclusive message to the wider community.

### **Peace IV**

#### **Listen Share Change**

Listen Share Change is a Peace IV funded programme that we are working on in partnership with Verbal Arts. It's a four-year programme working across Northern Ireland delivering Reading Rooms to various cross communities. Through the power of dialogue this project will enable discussions across a variety of themes including symbols, heritage and diversity. This programme allows for 30 people each year to be trained to become Neighbourhood Champions – they are trained in OCN Level 2 in Facilitation skills for Shared Learning. Another outcome of this programme is the development of the Future Youth Leaders. These young people will be trained to become part of the Housing Youth Committee in a hope to providing a resolution to local tensions in the community e.g. anti-social, sectarian and racial difficulties. This will provide a platform for intergenerational conversations in the future.

#### **BCC CYP programme**

The Futures Project is a programme for young people aged 16-24 who could potentially be our tenants of tomorrow. It is in partnership with Belfast Met and Start 360. This programme encourages active participation in fun and interactive sessions. Participants can benefit from free childcare, monetary incentives, free travel and obtainment of an OCN Level 2 Award. Start 360 will be providing mentorship programmes for those involved to gain further training, education and employment opportunities upon completion of the course.

We have been successful in securing Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) funding with Belfast Met and the Start 360 to develop a regional programme focusing on developing young people's (16-24) capacity in our estates called the futures programme.

This will be delivered through personal development, good relations and civic leadership to create meaningful, purposeful and sustained pathways to

employability. This programme opened in June 2017 and we have submitted a Phase 2 bid and a full business case to SEUPB.

The overall aim of the project is “investing in our future customers our tenants of tomorrow” and it will also assist us with a platform to engage and identify potential champions who will get involved in mainstream succession planning through our housing community networks.

We have also secured funding from Mid and East Antrim Council via their local peace plans to develop the LAN (Local Area Network) programme.

### **Training**

Co-design events have been established and delivered to get the views of staff and community groups involved in BRIC2 and the Housing Community Network in order to design and deliver bespoke positive relations training for Housing Executive staff.

### **Community Involvement Strategy 2014-2017**

Views and comments on the outgoing strategy have been collated from staff and the community to ensure they have their say on the refreshed strategy and associated action plan. Highlights during the 2014 – 2017 strategy included:

- Annual Community Conferences
- Influenced changes to policies and procedures e.g. Latent Demand Testing
- Established Working Groups to challenge and influence business and services
- Now recognised as a benchmark by DfC for Tenant Participation

We also ensured that all voices have been heard during this consultation process by using a number of communication channels. Reading Rooms from the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry/Londonderry have been involved to ensure that hard to reach groups have been included in the consultation process.

The Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023 is now out for consultation for a twelve week period. This commenced on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2018. The consultation will close on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Any comments, views or responses submitted with regards to this strategy will be reviewed and collated in a consultation report, which will be made available to the consultees and also the wider public on request.

### **Community Conference 2017**

The Community Conference held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 was a huge success. The theme was *#FITForFuture*. Throughout this conference we continued living our values via our hard to reach groups such as youth, disability and rural residents:



- Making a difference
- Fairness
- Passion
- Expertise

Our chair of the Rural Residents Forum was involved throughout the entire conference and even helped host the interactive session.

### **Community Grants Programme**

The Community Grant fund aims to enable Area Managers to support community groups in their area who want to bring about positive change in our estates. We want to improve people's lives and sustain our estates and invest in our future customers by strengthening community activity which will add to our overall Corporate Objective 3 of 'building vibrant communities'.

We Want:

- Our Tenants/Residents to participate in their estates/communities
- Our Tenants/Residents to develop their skills and broaden their experience
- Improve Tenants/Residents physical & mental health and Wellbeing

### **Young People**

#### **Northern Ireland Youth Forum**

We are working with the NIYF to address the lack of young people engaged in housing issues/services with a view to developing a succession plan, nominating two members onto the Central Housing Forum & developing a shadow CHF. Via their SLA the Northern Ireland Youth Forum will engage with Area Managers and key stakeholders across the 13 area offices to develop a shadow Central Housing Forum group of young people. The group will be known as YC4C 'Young Champions 4 Change'.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2017-18 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

The previous chapter set out key areas of Housing Executive business that impact directly on inequalities in housing in Northern Ireland.

Equality is squarely placed at the heart of policy making in the Housing Executive and the Housing Executive's Equality Unit works closely with business planners and policy makers to ensure due regard to equality is paid in the development and implementation of policy.

Section 1: Part 1 demonstrates the organisation's commitment to the promotion of Equality of Opportunity and the considerable progress made to date in regard to our good relations duty. Other sections set out the supporting elements that enhance mainstreaming including training, consultation, and access to information and services.

However it is also important to consider other real changes that have been made which have had a positive impact on the lives of people and communities, and in doing so, have promoted equality of opportunity and good relations. Much of the work detailed below helps inform our Equality Action Plan which is firmly embedded within our Corporate and Business plans.

While "headline" activities set out in the previous chapter are important, there is a vast amount of vital work, much of it informal, which should also be recognised. This is carried out with communities at regional and local level through residents groups, community associations, District Housing Networks, Area Housing Community Networks, and the Central Housing Community Network.

There are a number of projects and initiatives set out below that have been carried out, many in partnership with other statutory bodies and voluntary and community organisations, which are integral to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in their widest sense, in the provision of housing in Northern Ireland.

## **Supporting People**

The aim of the Supporting People Programme in Northern Ireland is to:

- achieve a better quality of life for vulnerable people to live more independently and maintain their tenancies;
- provide housing related support to prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care or homelessness;
- and help to smooth the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

The table below shows the number of Supporting People units for 2017/18 by client group. This activity has developed over a number of years through close liaison with the Health sector. Several of the schemes are jointly funded by Health Trusts.

<b>Client Groups</b>	<b>Number of Units 17/18</b>
People with Learning Disabilities	1413
Single Homeless with Support Needs	1315
People with Mental Health Problems	1508
Older people with support needs	9894
Young People	748
Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	1301
Homeless Families with Support Needs	835
People with Alcohol Problems	342
People with a Physical or Sensory Disability	637
Offenders or People at risk of Offending	318
Older People with Mental Health Problems / Dementia	414
Frail Elderly	269
People with Drug Problems	30
Traveller	31
Total	19055

## **Welfare Reform**

The Housing Executive has set up a Welfare Reform Project team to analyse and manage the impact of Welfare Reform changes which impact on many policy and business areas, including Housing Benefit, rent collection and housing and homelessness services and policies. Since April 2016 there have been 18 separate legislative changes implemented by the Housing Executive. In addition other changes, introduced by the DfC, have been communicated to staff, customers and related stakeholders.

Indeed significant changes have been made to Housing Executive staff training packages and regular Welfare Reform awareness sessions continue to be held with staff. Some of these changes introduced have been significant, e.g. Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC), otherwise known as Bedroom Tax & Benefit Cap. The Housing Executive has been working with DfC to ensure that those affected by SSSC and Benefit Cap receive appropriate mitigation payments. Existing mitigation arrangements are due to end in March 2020 and the Housing Executive is currently working with the DfC to explore what “assistance” may be appropriate and how it could be delivered after this date. The negative impacts of Welfare Reform policies on unemployed 18-21 year olds (which came into operation in line with Universal Credit from September 2017) has been greatly reduced due to the exemptions in place and will disappear in November 2018 when this group will be able to receive housing costs within their Universal credit claim.

During the past year the Housing Executive has worked closely with the DfC to retain the right of those in supported accommodation to receive Housing benefit instead of Universal Credit. It was identified that the rules around Universal Credit may have a significant detrimental impact on those people requiring temporary accommodation and arrangements were put in place to allow them to continue claiming Housing Benefit. Support continues to be available for single tenants under 35 in the private sector through the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme and funds are currently available to help tenants who require further financial assistance to meet the shortfall in the Housing Benefit they receive and the amount of rent charged by their landlord. The Housing Executive continues with their programme to provide customer facing digital facilities in Housing Executive local offices which will provide access for customers to digital services and applications.

Our Community Cohesion Unit has also implemented a Digital for Communities (D4C) project to assist tenants to get online in their local community settings.

## **Asylum Development Unit**

The Housing Executive's Asylum Development Unit (ADU) continues to have a responsibility to provide and manage temporary accommodation for Asylum Seekers in Northern Ireland under the COMPASS contract.

Asylum Seekers are housed in private rented properties mainly in Belfast while they await a Home Office decision on their immigration status.

There are currently around 840 Asylum Seekers in National Asylum Support Service (NASS) Accommodation in Northern Ireland. This figure does not include those on subsistence only.

The ADU continues to work closely with Serco (Initial Accommodation Provider), Bryson One Stop Service (Migrant Help), Health Trusts, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit and voluntary and community organisations in dealing with issues relating to Asylum Seekers.

The temporary private rented accommodation provided to Asylum Seekers is inspected and visited by ADU staff at least once a month to ensure they continue to meet contractual standards and are fit for purpose. Serco and the Home Office with the ADU conduct joint inspections and quality assurance inspections on all Asylum Seeker properties on an ongoing basis.

In 2018 after an extensive consultation, the ADU launched a new property Induction Welcome Pack for Asylum Seekers.

The ADU responds to an average of 160 repair requests and conducts over 340 visits per month. Regular quality assurance checks are carried out by Serco, the Home Office and the ADU to ensure that the private rented properties meet contractual standards. All properties, whether HMO or family dwellings, are set up to the highest safety standards recommend by UK or European building controls.

Close links also continue to be maintained with the Housing Executive's

Homelessness Services Unit and EXTERN's Multidisciplinary Homeless Support Team with regard to assisting those households who receive a positive immigration decision in finding permanent accommodation and addressing the challenges associated with mainstream service provision.

## **Community Safety**

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is an issue that concerns everybody. If incidents of ASB go unchecked they can have a detrimental impact on the quality of life of both young and old alike.

The Housing Executive has a range of statutory and non-statutory interventions in place to address ASB using an incremental and proportionate approach as and when necessary. We also have comprehensive and rigorous policies and procedures designed to address ASB thus enabling us to respond in a quick and efficient manner.

## **Partnership Working**

The Housing Executive recognises the importance of partnership working and has forged a range of partnerships with other agencies and with communities in an effort to prevent ASB from arising and to tackle it effectively when it does.

One of these partnerships is with the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs). PCSPs are statutory bodies established under the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 with the overall purpose of helping to make communities safer and to ensure the views of local people are heard on policing and community safety issues. As a designated member of the PCSP the Housing Executive is committed to contributing to these Partnerships and their work relating to community safety, alongside political and independent members.

We continue to have close formal ties with several statutory agencies including PSNI, Local Councils and Youth Justice Agency with whom we have signed information sharing protocols across the province. We work collaboratively with political, community and tenant representatives to ensure our resources are targeted at areas and incidents causing concern to our tenants.

Additionally we support a range of initiatives to address anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in our estates. Examples of these initiatives are community safety warden schemes, a scheme to address hate crime, home security schemes, good morning services, diversionary activities, intergenerational projects and educational initiatives.

## **Strategic Focus**

### **Community Safety Strategy 2014 – 2017**

The Community Safety Strategy, 'Safer Together', identified 3 themes and work continued on these during 2017/18:

- Building Community Confidence - we will work to build community confidence in the ability of the organisation to tackle ASB effectively.
- Ensuring Local Solutions - we will ensure that all our efforts to tackle ASB are relevant to the needs of local communities.
- Working Together - we will work closely with other agencies to improve community safety on our estates.

As mentioned previously the current political stalemate at Stormont impacted on the publication of a new DOJ strategy. In the absence of an amended DOJ strategy the Housing Executives CXBC committee approved a 6-12 month extension on the current Community Safety Strategy and associated action plan. Work on a new strategy is underway.

During 2017/18 a number of key strategic and operational objectives were achieved:

The Hate Incident Practical Action (HIPA) scheme continues to be available to support victims of hate harassment where there is damage to property, by providing additional security measures to homes which allow victims to feel safer. During 2017/18, repairs to 13 properties were undertaken in line with the HIPA scheme (37 in 2016/17). A Service Level Agreement between the NIHE, DOJ, PSNI and DSD is nearing completion.

All Housing Executive Area Offices continue to be represented at their respective Council's Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP). Issues relating to anti-social behaviour and hate crime may be raised at monthly meetings of the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and this joined up working helps tackle issues by ensuring the appropriate response is put in place.

The Community Safety Team developed a Risk Assessment Matrix (RAM) for anti-social behaviour cases. This RAM places an emphasis on how the victim feels about the problem they are experiencing and how they perceive the level of harassment / intimidation. It has been designed to provide a consistent approach to the identification of vulnerable people and to enable local office staff to provide advice on interventions which could support them.

### **Early Intervention**

Preventative measures continue to be used widely and reflect our strategic focus on early intervention. During 2017/18, 52% of concluded ASB cases were due to the use of warning letters and follow up visits.

The Housing Executive continued its working arrangements with our community based restorative partners Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) and Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI). Both organisations delivered a Mediation and Community Support (MACS) service on our behalf as a means of addressing reported incidents of ASB. During 2017/18 they provided mediation and community support in 294 neighbour dispute cases.

During 2017/18, our procured mediation provider, Tides Training & Consultancy,

intervened in 41 neighbour disputes between individuals and families

## **Operational Performance**

During 2017/18 Housing Executive local offices received a total of 1,853 reports of ASB of which:

- 40% (704) related to noise nuisance.
- 14% (252) related to multiple ASB i.e. Noise/ Harassment / Verbal Abuse etc.
- 11% (201) related to problems with pets and animals.

The organisation also served 11 Notice Seeking Possessions, 1 Notice of Proceedings and 1 property was repossessed after court action. Repossession continues to be a last resort for the Housing Executive, having first tested other interventions as a means of resolving problems of anti-social behaviour.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

In the Housing Executive we understand that our staff are impacted by many issues and for that reason we encourage them to be the drivers of the charities that we support and the volunteering activities that we get involved in.

Staff are free to promote volunteering events, raise awareness for their fundraising activities and get support to organise these. They can host and promote events such as coffee mornings, team quizzes, eco days, gardening, and painting and decorating projects, through individual volunteering and teambuilding days.

As a public sector employer the Housing Executive is unable to offer direct financial sponsorship, however the CSR programme offers staff a CSR Leave allowance of up to 37 hours paid leave + 37 hours unpaid leave per individual project per annum, and 14 hours paid leave for a team project.

We gather facts and figures to promote the health and wellbeing activities surrounding their events so that we can support and enable change. We also arrange and promote corporate volunteering activities, organise team volunteering events and administer individual events. During 2017/18 staff contributed almost 600 hours volunteering.

### **Highlights from 2017/18**

Christmas Toy Appeal 2017 – Housing Executive staff across the organisation managed to donate over 250 toys to ensure many children received a present on Christmas morning.

Charity Golf Day – Over 70 golfers from the Housing Executive took part in a charity golf day along with holding a tombola to raise £2600 for the friends of cancer centre.

Easter Ballot – Every year staff from our Income, Rent and Rates section fundraise for the Childrens Hospice Christmas party throughout the year. This year they managed to raise £610 by selling tickets for an Easter ballot.

Housing Executive staff raised money for NI Hospice – Two teams raised a massive £3233.38 for the charity by entering two relay teams in the Belfast Marathon as well as organising a coffee morning.

## **Fundraising**

Our Staff continue to be incredibly generous and have been very active in their fundraising and Payroll giving activities raising over £80,000 during 2017/18. The Give as You Earn (GAYE) scheme enables staff to make a confidential donation to a charity of their choice. This year we earned the Payroll Giving Platinum Award by having over 25% of our staff giving in this way.

## **Charities Supported**

Some of the charities that Housing Executive staff members have made a huge difference to through volunteering, raising awareness and fundraising include:

- Northern Ireland Charities Together
- Cancer Focus Northern Ireland
- NI Chest Heart and Stroke
- Dogs Trust
- NI Hospice
- Trocaire
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- Medicins Sans Frontieres
- The Brooke Hospital for Animals

## **Research and Equality**

The Research Unit plays an important role in guiding the Housing Executive's intervention in the housing market. Under the 1981 Housing Order the Housing Executive has a statutory responsibility to regularly "examine housing conditions and need" and may also "conduct or promote research into any matter relating to any of its functions".

While research into housing conditions and housing need continue to form the basis of the annual research programme, our research also considers a range of other relevant strategic issues and includes an ongoing focus on the views and experiences of customers. Research undertaken by and for the Housing Executive therefore increasingly encompasses equality-related issues in order to provide the necessary evidence base for a continually expanding range of equality-related housing policies.

The House Condition Survey continues to provide regular updates on housing conditions across all tenures in Northern Ireland. The 2001, 2006 and 2011 surveys showed that there were no longer any significant differences between



Catholic and Protestant households in terms of their housing conditions and the most recent findings, which were published in spring 2018, indicated that this remained the case at the time of the latest Northern Ireland-wide survey, in 2016.

Similarly, ongoing customer research, such as the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey, indicates that differences in attitudes to the Housing Executive's services by Protestant and Catholic households continue to be negligible. The Research Unit also collects information on gender, nationality, ethnicity and disability in its surveys. This data helps provide insights into the profile of our tenants and customers and any differences in views and experiences between different groups.

During 2017 and 2018 the Housing Executive published the findings of a number of projects focused on the housing and support needs of people with disabilities. The research considered the experiences of people with learning disabilities who had been resettled from long stay hospital, and also looked at the provision of home environmental control systems and electronic assistive technology, and their role in promoting independent living. The findings of all three projects will help inform future approaches to the provision of housing and support.

The Housing Executive's Research will continue to play an important role during 2018/19 by providing baseline evidence on equality-related housing issues including the housing needs of Travellers and older people. This evidence will help the Housing Executive and its partners formulate policy and monitor its impact.

## **Traveller Specific Accommodation**

The fourth Travellers Accommodation Needs assessment 2018/19 is being undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Research Unit. The Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment is a significant and important piece of work which the Housing Executive undertakes on a 5 year cycle. The needs assessment is used to inform and facilitate decisions around the planning of future accommodation schemes for the Traveller community.

The NI Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) has completed an investigation into Traveller Accommodation in Northern Ireland and published a final report entitled "Out of Sight; Out of Mind" in March 2018. This investigation examined the right to adequate accommodation measured against standards as set out in international human rights law.

At the March 2018 Board meeting the Director of Regional Services tabled a paper giving an overview of the NIHRC report. The report sets out 45 recommendations, 26 of which fall to the Housing Executive and 3 recommendations which are the responsibility for all public authorities.

There are a number of significant challenges facing the Housing Executive in addressing the recommendations of the report. These include the requirement of significant financial investment to upgrade sites and the need to engage and work with Traveller families to ensure that Traveller accommodation solutions are

utilised effectively and efficiently.

## **Group Housing Schemes**

Residential housing developments with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of Travellers on a permanent basis.

- There were no new Group Housing schemes developed in 2017/18.
- The outcomes of the fourth Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment will determine the need for this type of accommodation in any future accommodation programme.

## **Serviced Sites**

Managed accommodation with permanent bases to park caravans or erect timber framed buildings, where electricity, water and sewerage are provided and where other facilities such as communal or individual amenity units may be provided.

- In Craigavon, current planning approval has been extended for a serviced site at Burnside and two additional pitches at Acorn Grove.
- The outcomes of the fourth Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment will determine the need for this type of accommodation in any future accommodation programme.

## **Transit Sites**

A basic facility where Irish Travellers may park their caravans on a temporary basis and where electricity, water and sewerage are provided.

- The Housing Executive continued to investigate lands suitable for transit site provision in Craigavon, Newry, Magherafelt and Strabane via NIHE Place Shapers division.
- The outcomes of the fourth Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment will determine the need for this type of accommodation in any future accommodation programme.

# **Adaptations and Accessible Housing 2018**

## **Inter-Departmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services (IDR)**

The Inter-Departmental Review Final Report and Action Plan were submitted for Executive agreement in January 2017 following Ministerial approval we are awaiting its agreement by an incoming administration. The DfC/DoH have approved the implementation of several recommendations in the Final Report and Action Plan as interim measures.

## **Wheelchair Standard Social Housing**

DfC ministerial approval for improved design standards was granted in April 2016 and the design standards became mandatory in the Housing Association Guide in

April 2017. Formal targets for the provision of wheelchair standard housing have been established. For 2018/19 7% of new build properties should be built as wheelchair standard properties. This target will increase incrementally, to the point where (from 2020/21 onwards) there will be an annual requirement for at least 10% of all new build units to be designed to Wheelchair Standard. Additional work will be required in 2017/18 to evaluate emerging housing plans and completed schemes.

## **DfC/DoH Memorandum of Understanding**

A memorandum of understanding setting out the legislative and strategic responsibilities of stakeholder organisations responsible for the provision of housing adaptations service in Northern Ireland has been agreed by the DfC and DoH. Following agreement from NIHE this was published in summer 2017.

## **Accessible Housing Register**

One of the key outcomes from the Inter-departmental review above was the development of an Accessible Housing Register (AHR). It has three discreet functions as a planning, information and allocation tool.

The AHR will identify where accessible stock with available accessibility features i.e. fully wheelchair accessible/mobility standard/life-time homes standards etc. are located to enable these properties to be appropriately classified.

Work is ongoing to develop an in-house AHR system. This will include both NIHE/HA accessible stock information. Work on the development of a Private Sector Interface will commence in the Autumn 2018.

## **Financial Inclusion Strategy**

The Housing Executive's Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2016-2019 recognises that financial hardship can strike anyone at any time and that challenging economic times and proposals for changes to welfare benefits will only increase money worries for those affected. It also aims to address the barriers to financial inclusion experienced by many, including a disproportionate number of social housing tenants.

Implementation of the strategy will help to identify those customers who are most at risk of financial exclusion and support them to overcome the barriers they face.

There are 5 key aims:

- Increase access to the right financial help to assist customers to maintain and sustain their tenancy.
- Help customers to maximise their money.
- Help customers to save on utility bills.
- Reduce fuel poverty.

- Focus on communities.

Strategy implementation is overseen by a Steering Group made up of key stakeholders. In recognition of the significance of equality in the delivery of the strategy, 'good relations and equality issues' are a standing item on the Steering Group's agenda.

The key activity that has taken place most recently is the implementation of a "Supporting Tenants Project". The objective is to evaluate the impact of the various financial inclusion initiatives that are available to tenants via implementation of the Strategy. Nominated staff from relevant operational units have identified a number of tenants who have agreed to participate in the project. The nominated staff will work closely with the selected tenants over a twelve month period to establish the impact the various initiatives have had on their financial circumstances. This information will be used to identify financial inclusion priorities.

The Supporting Tenants Initiative is now drawing to a conclusion and its findings will be analysed and reported to the Rental Income Maximization Strategy Steering Group.

## **Social Housing Enterprise Strategy**

The Housing Executive launched its Social Housing Enterprise Programme in September 2015, since then we have released 3 tranches of funding to the value of £1.4m into our communities. The strategy promotes a tiered financing programme from £1000 - £50,000 for individuals (maximum £1000) and organisations from our communities embarking or already involved in the social enterprise sector. The programme also looks to utilising Housing Executive stock such as void commercial premises, garages and land where applicable, for the promotion of social enterprise within our communities.

The programme has had some noticeable achievements to date including;

- **27** new Social economies created or progressed
- **27** existing social economies developed
- **51** new-part time jobs were created as a direct result of the intervention
- **61**-part time jobs were sustained as a direct result of the intervention
- **19** full time jobs were created as a direct result of the intervention
- **76** full time jobs were sustained as a direct result of the intervention
- **429** Volunteer opportunities created or sustained as a direct result of the intervention
- **2066** additional Volunteer hours were undertaken equivalent to £15,495 based on adult min wage)
- **774** training opportunities created or sustained because of the intervention

**\*The above figures relates to outcomes form tranches 1 and 2 only**

### **Return on investment**

Based on the investment made on tranche 1 and 2, we established a financial return as follows;

- **Impact to the individual:** The immediate return for every £1 invested was established as **£2.31** rising to **£4.46** by year five
- **Maximum Impact to the public purse:** The immediate return for every **£1** invested was established as **£2.46** rising to **£4.46** by year five

The Social Housing Enterprise programme is also in the process of establishing social clauses within our maintenance contract, in respect of which discussions are taking place across the province between contractors and officials.

More information can be found on [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) (under communities section)

## **Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2017-22**

The Housing Executive launched the Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland in April 2017 following an extensive consultation with Statutory and Voluntary Agencies. The Strategy was subject to a full equality screening assessment.

### **Strategic Objectives**

The vision of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 is 'Ending Homelessness Together' and this is reflective of the desire for statutory and voluntary organisations to work together to tackle homelessness in all its forms.

There are five strategic objectives within the Strategy which are:

- To prioritise homelessness prevention;
- To secure sustainable accommodation and appropriate support solutions for homeless households;
- To further understand and address the complexities of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland;
- To ensure the right mechanisms are in place to oversee and deliver this strategy;
- To measure and monitor existing and emerging need to inform the ongoing development of appropriate services.

Key achievements in the implementation of Year 1 of the Strategy include:

- The creation of 9 inter-agency Homelessness Local Area Groups which ensure this strategy is effective at a local as well as regional level. These

- groups have equality issues as a standing item on the agenda;
- The development of a communications strategy which focuses on ensuring those who are threatened with homelessness are aware of the assistance available at the earliest possible stage;
- The development of a training package which identifies pre-crisis 'homeless indicators'.

The Housing Executive has committed to publishing an Annual Progress Report on our Homelessness Strategy and the report for 2017/18 will be launched at an event in September 2018. The Strategy contains 18 actions, 16 of which are led by the Housing Executive with a further 2 led by the DfC. Action has commenced on all 18 actions and 15 of the 18 have been completed to the milestones associated with Year 1 of the Action Plan within the Homelessness Strategy. The Annual Progress Report summarises the work carried out in 2017/18 to achieve the 18 actions in the Strategy.

## Homelessness Statistics 2013 – 2018

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number presenting as homeless.	18,862	19,621	18,628	18,573	18,180
Number accepted as homeless i.e. Full Duty Applicants (FDA).	9,649	11,016	11,202	11,889	11,877
Number of new placements in temporary accommodation in year.	2,878	2,817	2,890	2,746	3,024
Types of Household presenting as homeless.	Singles 10,156 (53%)  Families 6,484 (34%)  Elderly 1,968 (10%)	Singles 10,376 (53%)  Families 6,178 (32%)  Elderly 2,135 (11%)	Singles 9,713 (52%)  Families 6,681 (36%)  Elderly 2,234 (12%)	Singles 9,518 (51%)  Families 6,663 (36%)  Elderly 2,336 (12%)	Singles 9,100 (50%)  Families 6,632 (36%)  Elderly 2,445 (13%)
Households presenting	668	590	544	634	558

due to intimidation.					
Average Length of stay in temp accommodation, reflecting the existence of “hot spots” where demand for housing is high.	38 weeks	36 weeks	37.2 weeks	40.7 weeks	40.3 weeks

**3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2017-18 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes                       No (go to Q.4)                       Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

The process of embedding Section 75 duties into the planning and decision making processes of the Housing Executive over the past number of years ensures that any changes or analysis of policy includes consideration of equality issues.

This is more than an assessment of equality impacts as the policy team will often look at how housing inequalities can be addressed through the policy development process. This is an important issue given the recent focus on housing inequalities and the role housing can play in addressing, often along with others, societal endemic or key inequalities. Section 1: Part 1 gives a number of examples of this.

To ensure that Housing Executive policies are sensitive to change and flexible in their approach many Policy Managers have agreed with the Equality Unit to maintain “Equality Issues” as a standing agenda item in their performance Management meetings.

This allows new, emerging, or poorly performing areas within the equality function to be brought to the table. Areas where equality issues have impacted on policy during the year include Supporting People, Recruitment policy, Customer Services, Traveller Accommodation and Asset Management.

The Equality Unit has also been working closely with the Transformation Team who are developing and redesigning the core services the Housing Executive provides to its customers. The Transformation team recognised from early in the process that the equality characteristics of households such as religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or other aspects, were often central to the housing choices they have and the type of housing solution that they need. These policy areas are reported on separately within this report as detailed above.

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

While the Housing Executive's Corporate Strategy and Business Planning approach is fundamentally centred on targeting social need it is also focused on reducing inequalities. In this way all policies are subject to equality tests to ensure they remain sensitive to the changing equality environment. This rolling process of equality review is managed through a policy governance process that ensures all key policies are examined within a 3 to 5 year cycle.

In this context policy development and policy amendment improve the service for people. Examples of our work in many policy areas are set out in Section 1. It is important though to highlight the fundamental changes that the transformation of our front line housing services will bring. The new Housing Solutions and Support approach had commenced in all Area Offices by November 17.

The new approach provides a customer focussed holistic service starting with a comprehensive analysis of a household's housing and support needs. Conversations upfront with the customer support consideration of all the equality aspects of the household i.e. religion, community background, ethnicity, gender, race, disability, household size, sexual orientation etc. before providing a range of options or solutions for the customer. The customer is provided with tailored information to allow them to make informed choices to address their housing and support need based on the real options available to them.

Section 1 also sets out in detail the benefits for individuals and households within each of the Section 75 groups e.g. our Community Cohesion policy directly impacts on people with different political and/or religious backgrounds; our Supporting People programme targets households with a range of support needs associated with disability, age, racial background and sexual orientation; our Homelessness policies often consider issues of gender (including domestic violence); our Community Safety policies deal with issues including race and religion; and our Community Involvement and Participation policies often engage those groups which can be more difficult to reach including children & young people and carers.

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? (*tick all that apply*)

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy (*please give details*):



PART A

- As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details)*:
  
- As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details)*:
  
- As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details)*:

- Other *(please specify and give details)*:

The Housing Executive has established a number of checks and balances to ensure due regard is paid to equality and good relations issues in policy development, amendment and implementation. Policy managers engage with the Housing Executive's Equality Unit when reviewing or developing a policy. The process of screening is often the end result of this engagement and often simply reflects the outcome of a process of discussions which have ensured that equality and good relations issues have been given the necessary regard within the policy area. This is an iterative process and can involve a degree of informal consultation with members of the Consultative Forum on Equality and/or other specific fora (e.g. the Disability Forum), and /or customers directly, to ensure a full understanding and accommodation of any potential equality impacts. As mentioned previously Policy Managers have included Equality and Diversity as a standing item on performance management meetings to ensure a continuous consideration of the equality duties as policies are implemented.

## Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

### Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

- 4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2017-18 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)
- Yes, organisation wide
  - Yes, some departments/jobs
  - No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
  - No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
  - Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Fairness is one of the foundations of the Housing Executive and is one of the key values which were re-established when the values were reviewed as part of our “journey to excellence” programme. This approach, reinforced by the commitment of resources to a dedicated Equality department, staff training and clear processes ensures that equality is mainstreamed in the organisation across all functions.

In addition new staff are required to complete online Induction training, where reference is made to our Equal Opportunities Policy. This is further supported by a one day Corporate Induction Course with a section on Equality and Good Relations.

Managers receive a New starts checklist highlighting the need to draw to the attention of any new staff members the principles of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Staff who engage in the Performance Management Process (formerly Appraisal) are also expected to demonstrate behaviours which support our Core Values of Fairness when dealing with customers and colleagues. This removes the necessity for explicit equality duties in each job description other than those roles directly concerned with the equality, good relations and human rights functions of the Housing Executive.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2017-18 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Section 1 of this report sets out in some detail the range and breadth of activities within the Housing Executive that challenge inequalities experienced by people in terms of housing, and demonstrates that, in the context of targeting housing need, we also target housing inequalities.

This process is achieved by ensuring that information on housing inequalities (including the recent “Key Inequalities in Housing” report issued by the Equality Commission) informs the development of the Housing Executive Corporate Plan.

It is supported by the establishment of an Equality department with responsibility for implementation of the Section 75 duties, and a Community Cohesion department charged with implementing the good relations duty.

The Consultative Forum on Equality also reinforces the process by reviewing the performance of our business plan with regard to those objectives that specifically target inequalities. It is also of note that the Asst. Director Corporate Strategy and Planning acts as joint chair of the Consultative Forum alongside a representative from the Voluntary and Community Sector. Minutes of the Consultative Forum on Equality and the Consultative Forum Steering Group are circulated to key staff for information and action.

In the 2017-18 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? (*tick all that apply*)

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation’s ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation’s planning cycle does not coincide with this 2017-18 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

As is set out in Parts 4 and 5 above, targeting housing needs and addressing housing inequalities are, fundamentally, the mainstream work of the Housing Executive. The main functions of the Housing Executive are set out in performance measures within the Corporate Plans and/or Business Plans with many of these targeting need and eroding inequalities. This is set out in more detail in Section 1 of this report. Our work in relation to new social housing, improvement and maintenance of housing stock, supported housing, homelessness, private sector grants, adaptations to stock, Traveller Accommodation etc. all address key business needs but also are designed in a way that targets housing inequalities. This is supported by key strategies or projects covering Financial Inclusion, Digital Inclusion, Community Cohesion, Community Safety, BME families and Migrant Workers, Travellers, Sexual Orientation, Children & Young People, Older People, and Disabled People, amongst others.

**Equality action plans/measures**

7 Within the 2017-18 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:	N/A	Actions ongoing:	N/A	Actions to commence:	N/A
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Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

The Housing Executive's Equality Action Plan is embedded within the Corporate and Business Planning process and is delivered at either corporate level, where performance is monitored against the Business Plan, or at business unit level where the performance is monitored and reported on at Divisional level.

The main actions that impact on equality at corporate level are as follows: (N.B. These actions are in addition to mainstream equality actions relating to training staff, consultation standards, access to information and services, screening and EQIA, and communication support).

**People**

**Outcome 1 – Helping people find housing support and solutions**

**Homelessness Services** - People can become homeless for a variety of reasons, including family disputes, debt, addiction, mental health issues, and a breakdown in living arrangements. In such circumstances it is crucial to find a suitable home, with follow up support, but we also believe that it is just as important to work with people at an early stage in order to avoid them becoming homeless.

**RS KPI 4.3** - Reduce the number of homeless presenters from the end of March 2017 outturn figure.

The number of presenters had decreased at the end of March 2018 by 2.4% from 18,573 to 18,131.

**RS KPI 4.4** - Reduce the average length of time in temporary accommodation from the end of March 2017 outturn figure.

The length of time in temporary accommodation decreased marginally against target at the end of March 2018, from 40.7 weeks to 40.3 weeks.

**RS KPI 4.6** – Publish the new Homelessness Strategy 2017 – 2022.

The new homelessness strategy was launched in April 2017 and is published on our website.

**RS KPI 4.8** – Develop the Housing Executive’s Homelessness Action Plan and implement year 1 actions by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

The Action Plan was developed and we were responsible for 16 of the 18 actions. Good progress was made implementing the action plan however, slippage was reported on two actions and these have been carried forward into year 2 Action Plan.

**LL KPI 6.1** – Roll-in the Housing Options service (Housing Support and Solutions) aimed at preventing homelessness by 31 March 2018.

The Housing Solutions training programme was completed with the Housing Support and Solutions Service now operating in all offices.

Supporting People (SP) funds housing related support services to a wide range of clients, many of whom have significant vulnerabilities. The SP budget remained at around £73m and mainly invested to support the work of voluntary and community organisations in providing the SP Programme.

**RS KPI 4.5** - Implement those parts of the Departmental Supporting People Review implementation plan (Year 2) which fall to the Housing Executive by March 2018.

A number of actions were completed in-year however, three actions have been carried into the 2018/19 business year for completion.

**RS KPI 4.10** – By the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, ensure a minimum spend of SP Programme funding delivered through Floating Support at 15% or spend of £10m, whichever is the greater value. During the financial year to March 2018, 15.5% of Supporting People expenditure was for Floating Support schemes.

## **Adaptations**

People with a disability sometimes need adapted/bespoke properties to enable them to live safely and independently. Our high level action over the four years of the plan is to streamline the adaptations and disabled grants processes to reduce waiting times for housing adaptations and increase the provision of accessible homes.

**RSKPI 3.9** - Review the process for Disabled Facilities Grants.

The process has been reviewed and implementation of new processes will be progressed and rolled-out throughout 2018 -19.

**LLAM KPI 4.1** – Carry out a major adaptations process and baseline the process.

A project was initiated for this work and a baseline has been set. Improvements will be measured across the term of the plan: the aim is to reduce the time taken to complete Major Adaptations.

**LLAM KPI 4.2** – Start 175 adaptations to Housing Executive homes for people with a disability.

At the end of March 2018 178 adaptations had commenced.

**RS KPI 3.2** - Approve 900 Disabled Facilities Grants.

At the end of March 2018 there were 1,098 approvals issued.

In addition to the above KPIs a project was initiated to develop an Accessible Housing Register to help promote independent living and social inclusion for people with a disability. This project work will continue in the 2018/19 business year.

### **Sustaining tenancies**

**LLHS KPI 1.3.2** - Set the baseline and report on the number of tenancies sustained over a 12 month period. At the end March 2018 the percentage of new tenancies sustained for 12 months or more was 89%.

### **Outcome 4 – Delivering quality public services.**

Our aim is to:

- Provide an efficient and effective social Landlord Service;
- Ensure that our financial resources are effectively managed;
- Deliver an efficient Housing Benefit service and manage the transition to universal credit project timescales;
- Carry out research to facilitate programmes and plans; and
- Provide opportunities for customers to engage with us in a number of ways.

Relevant KPIs are set out below.

**LLKP 1.3.1** – Reduce relet times from an average of 23 days to an average of within 21 days. This target was achieved at the year-end with properties being relet within an average of 17 days.

**LLHS KPI 1.1** – Maximise income collection – Collect 99.6% of rent due.

This target was met at the year-end with 99.8% of rent due collected.

**LLHS KPI 1.1**- To achieve Customer Service Excellence (CSE) re-accreditation by August 2017 (Housing Services).

Re-accreditation was achieved with 20 plus compliances, our best result to date.

**LLHS KPI 3.5** – Deliver the Financial Inclusion Strategy 2016 – 2019.

There are a number of activities contained within this strategy. A key activity that has taken place most recently is the implementation of a 'Supporting Tenants Project' to evaluate the impact of the various financial inclusion initiatives. The main services tenants were interested in were referral to Citizens Advice; 'Make the Call'; and checking Housing Benefit entitlement.

**LLHS KPI 2.9** - Customer Service target – Maintain Tenant's satisfaction with our overall service at 88% or above.

Data from the third quarter showed that the target had been met with customer satisfaction at 89% (This is a calendar year performance indicator).

### **RSKPI 1.1; 1.2; & 1.4 –Research**

The client-led research programme was on target at the year end. We held two Housing Market Intelligence Exchange events, allowing senior staff from across the housing sector to engage in discussion and debate and provide feedback on their views about the critical and emerging issues facing the housing sector in Northern Ireland. The House Condition Survey full report was published just outside the business year. Details for all of the above can be found on our website.

### **RSKPI 3.10** Carry out a Grants & Energy Efficiency customer satisfaction survey by March 2018.

Customer satisfaction surveys were completed for both Grants and Energy Efficiency and reports are available on our website.

In addition to the above KPIs, we published our Customer Excellence Strategy 2017/18 - 2019/20 which sets out how we aim to improve the way we deliver services to all of our customers.

## **Theme 2 – Property**

**To ensure everyone has access to a quality home which is safe, affordable, warm and appropriate to their needs.**

### **Outcome 2 – Delivering Better Homes**

#### **Housing Executive Homes**

We have a number of contract KPIs which we monitor for our response and planned maintenance contracts. In addition, we carry out compliance inspections.

#### **New Homes**

**RS KPI 2.1 & 2.2** - Start 1,750 new social homes and complete 1,200 new social homes. During the year there were 1,759 new social homes were started and 1,507 new homes completed.

**RS KPI 2.5** – 6% of new build starts are to be to wheelchair standard.

At the year- end there were 69 wheelchair units started (out of 1,417 new build units) which equates to 5%. Although the final out-turn was below target, it equates to the highest number of wheelchair starts delivered through the Social Housing Development programme in the last five years.

#### **Energy efficiency**

**RS KPI 3.5** - Affordable Warmth Scheme (completions).

Approximately 4,148 homes were improved which was above the target of 3,800 (with 8,232 intervention measures against a target of 5,700).

**RS KPI 3.6** - Complete 2,250 boiler replacements. The target was exceeded with 3,061 boilers replaced.

A review of the Affordable Warmth scheme was carried out by the Department for Communities and the public consultation ended on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2018. We will take forward any recommendations from this review which is within the Housing Executive's remit.

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation.**

**RS KPI 3.3** - Register 120 new Houses in Multiple Occupation.  
There were 161 registrations during the year.

**RS KPI 3.4** - Inspect 1,000 Houses in Multiple Occupation living standards.  
There were 1,208 HMOs inspected.

**Outcome 4– Delivering quality public services. RS KPI 3.15** - Energy advice – provide 7,000 pieces of advice on energy efficiency. During the year 7,008 pieces of energy advice were given.

## **Theme 3 – Places**

**To work with others to develop, maintain and sustain attractive, connected, healthy and economically active places.**

### **Outcome 3 – Fostering vibrant sustainable communities**

Under this theme we aim to invest and use our public assets, networks and expertise to help develop sustainable, vibrant neighbourhoods that provide people in both urban and rural areas with a sense of belonging. Our KPI's help to stimulate demand, address housing need and foster more cohesive communities through the creation of mixed use/mixed tenure developments, also to assist in town and city regeneration, and through our Rural Strategy we aim to help build and revitalise rural areas.

**LLHS KPI 3.1** – Continue to provide a responsive, effective, professional Community Safety service.

Although our Community Safety Strategy expired in December 2017, as stated previously, the main themes of prevention, intervention and enforcement were carried forward into 2018. The Hate Incident Practical Action scheme (HIPA) continues to be available to support victims of hate harassment where there is damage to property, by providing additional security measures to homes which allow victims to feel safer.

**LLHS KPI 3.2** – Implement the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015 – 2020.

Phase 1 and 2 of the BRIC2 programme was implemented and Good Relations Officers continued to work across the 26 areas. The Good Relations Officers signed up the groups to Phase 3. Terms of reference were agreed and the Good Relations Officers supported the groups to develop bespoke good relations plans. We continued to make significant progress at our interface sites in partnership with the Department of Justice, local councils and the IFI Peace Walls Groups. The cohesion team continued their work with staff in our 13 area offices to support the delivery of the cohesion strategy across the five themes.



**LLHS KPI 3.3** – Develop and implement the 2017- 23 Community Involvement Strategy and Action Plan,

The Strategy was completed just outside the 2017/18 financial year and as mentioned previously is currently out for consultation, which ends in October 2018. Initial consultation was carried out with communities and staff to help to shape the draft strategy. The annual Community Conference, attended by over 300 representatives, focused on digital inclusion, the impact of Welfare Reform and how our tenants interact with us as a Landlord.

**LLHS KPI 3.4** – Implement the Social Enterprise Strategy 2015 – 2018.

The third tranche of awards were assessed and a phased release of monies implemented during the year. An independent evaluation of Tranches 1 and 2 was completed.

**RS KPI 1.3** - Develop 11 updated Housing Investment Plans and present them to councils. All Plans were presented to councils during the year.

**RSKPI 5.6** – TBUC - Complete and allocate two of the remaining five shared neighbourhoods.

Although progress was made on two schemes, they did not complete within the timescales and have been carried forward into the 2018/19 business year.

**RSKPI 5.3** – Implement NIHE actions form the Building Successful Communities Action Plan. There are six areas where work progressed during the year with each forum having developed an Action Plan and a Masterplan for their area.

**RSKPI 5.4** – Implement the Heritage in Housing (LOTs) scheme.

At the end of the financial year 14 of the targeted 15 properties had been brought back into use. The scheme will deliver an addition three properties with an overall total of 34 units of accommodation.

**SSKPI 3.2** – Get as many of our customers as possible online and digitally included by 2020. A review of the Digital for Communities pilot project for key lessons learned has been completed for phase 1 and phase 2 commenced implementation.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2017-18 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

No changes were made to the Action Plan.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2017-18 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality  
All continuing actions are set out in Section 2.

Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way

- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

**Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)**

**10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- All the time                       Sometimes                       Never

**11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2017-18 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

The Housing Executive has a long history of consulting customers and views the process of consultation as an important and essential part of its business. Effective engagement, participation and consultation are essential to modern quality public services. The Housing Executive recognises this and understands the relationship between quality and equality in policy development and service provision. We therefore continue to maintain and build on the good relationships we have developed with our customers and their representatives to ensure we are responsive to changing environments and demands.

Two main consultation mechanisms, the Housing Community Network, and the Consultative Forum on Equality, have been developed to provide an in-built customer voice, giving clear feedback on both the quality, and equality, of our goods, facilities and services. These are supplemented by more specialist forums in the areas of Good Relations, Race issues, Rural issues and Disability.

**Housing Community Network**

Over the last 45 years the Housing Executive has played a significant role in the physical and social development of our local communities. There has always been the recognition that housing strategies and policies are more than bricks and mortar; tenant involvement has been described as “one of the jewels in the Housing Executive’s crown” by the Customer Service Excellence Assessor in 2013. This is complemented by the Organisation’s ability to rise to new challenges and adapt to political, social and economic changes to deliver a top class service that will make a positive difference in people’s lives.

Community Involvement is a cornerstone of the NI Housing Executive’s service and we commit over £4 million annually to ensure its success; this is a considerable investment and it is important that maximum benefit is delivered to the local communities.

The Housing Community Network was established to ensure that local communities are more involved, better informed and can contribute to better decision-making in relation to housing policy and how it affects them. It equips them with the capacity and skills to challenge and

lobby us as an organisation.

The Housing Executive Community Involvement Strategy 2014-2017 has provided a plan of action and commitment for the Housing Executive and our communities to work together towards shared goals, including:

- The development of comprehensive and focused Resident Involvement Structures.
- Delivery of Community Support and training.
- Tenant feedback will be sought and acted upon.
- Development of Social Investment.

As mentioned earlier in this report the Housing Executive is currently drafting its Community Involvement Strategy for 2018 – 2023 through consultation with our community partners to assess what has worked well and what we can fine tune or improve as we move forward. The consultation is due to end on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

## **Tenant Scrutiny Panels**

Tenant Scrutiny Panels have been established in all 13 Areas and have received training from Supporting Communities. The Scrutiny Panels help develop the Area Business Plans and hold the Area Manager to account in delivery of the key areas of service delivery. They play an integral role in the business improvement process. As we move forward with the 2018-2023 strategy the role of scrutiny may be delivered on a regional basis, through consensus with our community partners.

## **Central Housing Forum**

A representative from each of the 13 Area Scrutiny Panels sits on the Central Housing Forum, as well as a representative from the Disability Forum, the Rural Forum, Youth Forum and the Strategic Cohesion Forum. The Central Housing Forum is chaired by a Chair and Vice Chair elected by its constituent members. The Forum meets with the Chairman, Chief Executive and representatives from the Housing Executives Board twice each year. All major policy changes are consulted on with the Central Forum before they are progressed to Chief Executive's Business Committee and the Housing Executive's Board. The Forum has also developed a Manifesto to provide the Forum with a lobbying and challenge function, particularly in lobbying local government on issues such as reinstating the Housing Executive's new build function.

## **Tenant Involvement Register**

The Housing Executive recognises that not everyone can commit to working within a community group for various reasons. In order to maximise involvement, a database of tenants willing to participate in community involvement, in a manner that best suits them, has been established and is maintained by Supporting Communities.

## **Resident and Interagency Partnerships**

Resident and Interagency working groups have been established in all Areas and strive to make our estates better places in which to live. These groups involve other statutory partners, Housing Associations and residents on Housing Executive estates who live in privately rented or owner occupied properties, formally owned by the Housing Executive. Activities such as

Estate Inspections involving Statutory Partners and Community Representatives carry out 'walkabouts' to identify issues within their area which results in a toolkit to Statutory Partners identifying action required.

Interagency meetings give Statutory Agencies the opportunity to update community representatives on any action they may have taken as a result of the inspections, and to raise any further issues. They provide an opportunity for Housing Executive staff to meet, listen to and foster relations with community representatives and address outstanding issues within the estates. These meetings have proved both positive and successful in bringing about meaningful changes within estates.

## Hard to Reach Groups

The Housing Executive currently facilitates three "Difficult to Reach" groups through Service Level Agreements. The objective is to ensure that their voices are heard and that all major policies are consulted on with them:

- **The Disability Forum** is facilitated by Disability Action. The Forum has produced an advice leaflet for people with disabilities on finding a home and has carried out accessibility audits of Housing Executive offices. The Forum has organised and filmed a seminar for University of Ulster Housing Students and individual members have been involved in the production of inspirational short films highlighting the difficulties faced by people with disabilities.
- **The Rural Forum** is facilitated by the Rural Community Network and works towards challenging and lobbying for social housing need in rural areas, including the development of a latent demand toolkit.
- **Youth** are represented by the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. Having previously produced a series of films around various housing and homeless scenarios, the Youth Forum is currently working towards developing a shadow Central Housing Forum comprising young people. This group will be known as YC4C (Young Champions for Change).
- **Strategic Cohesion Forum:** Working together in partnership the forum will influence, shape and inform the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Strategy. The forum will help communities transition in the journey towards good relations and assist communities move forward.
- **Leaseholder Forum** has recently been established to represent Leaseholders in their local areas and to act as a Sounding Board for NIHE in relation to Leasehold matters. Panel Members will participate in any training and development and this will be coordinated by the Housing Executive and Supporting Communities, as well as other agencies.

## Community Conference

The Community Conference is organised annually and is the second largest event in the Housing Executive's calendar. The Conference on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 based around the theme of #FITForFuture held 4 breakout workshops aimed at preparing communities to become more digitally aware and in turn more digitally interactive.

1. Amanda Ashe & Aidan Kearney (NIHE & Supporting Communities) - D4C Pilot Project - 'Connecting Tenants'

2. Kevin Hipsley (The Hive Centre) – ‘First Steps to Social Media Success’
3. Joel Sampson (We Are Resource) - ‘Building your Social Media Brand’
4. Helen Reynolds (Social for the People) - 'How to be heard and make change happen'

This conference featured interactive sessions in which communities had the chance to have their say on Digital Services including those offered by the Housing Executive, such as paying your rent online or reporting a repair online. The Conference Working Group, comprising Central Housing Forum, Housing Executive and Supporting Communities representatives are currently planning this year’s *Make an Impact* conference, which will focus on community led projects which have made an impact whether that be within their own communities or to the lives of the wider community.

## **Community Support and Training**

Community Development delivery and support is provided by Supporting Communities (SC) on behalf of the Housing Executive. At this point in time there are 500+ Community Groups supported through a variety of accredited and non-accredited training packages.

## **Community Lettings**

The Housing Executive has currently allocated approximately 300 properties to Community Groups within their estates. These provide a backbone for delivery of community services in their areas including crèche facilities, allotments, digital inclusion and cookery classes, afterschool homework clubs and social events, as well as providing a sound base for community-led Social Enterprises.

## **Digital Inclusion**

The Housing Executive’s Housing Services and IT staff have been working with DfC and DfP/Digital Transformation Service representatives on the delivery of a joint Digital Inclusion pilot, “**D4c**” carried out in a number of phases over a 2 year period. The project was initially aimed at Housing Executive tenants living within the Belfast Upper Springfield, Blackmountain, New lodge and Tigers Bay areas on a cross community level. The programme has also been extended to include tenancies in Newtownards and also in Enniskillen to encourage tenants in rural areas to increase networking and reduce social isolation.

During 2018 the D4C project was further extended to include community groups in Monkstown, Whiteabbey, Omagh, Ardoyne and Queens Quarter. The project has included supply of broadband connection for the urban areas and mifi where required in rural areas, together with tablets for use in the project.

The project has also been extended to the provision of tablets and training to the Central Housing Forum in a bid to promote paperless business. This will also be extended to the Rural and Disability Forums.

Supporting Communities has worked in partnership to deliver the appropriate training and support for participants and has conducted baseline surveys to assess participants

capabilities before and during the pilot to assess the extent of digital 'take up' in terms of types/complexity of online activity undertaken during the pilot period. Initial introduction and training sessions have been carried out in all areas, which has coincided with broadband installation arranged through DfP. The 2nd phase of training commenced in May 2017.

Housing Executive Officers in the relevant offices have been nominated to be point of contact and carry the project forward in their areas.

Area Officers have been added to the Facebook group for D4C to allow communication and updates to be published.

## **Consultative Forum on Equality**

The Consultative Forum on Equality provides a framework for consultation on matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties. It is constituted with representation from all the Section 75 categories and a Steering Group works between the annual meetings of the full Forum.

The sixteenth annual meeting of the full Forum was held on 11th October 2017 and in addition to the Equality Commission, a wide range of representatives from voluntary groups, community groups, trade union groups and public bodies attended.

The annual meeting of the full Consultative Forum serves to address the progress of the Housing Executive in matters of equality during the year allowing participants to question performance issues in areas like new Social Housing, Homelessness or Supporting People. It also provides a platform on which to provide a view on Housing Executive policies in development or issues impacting on housing policy. The meeting also elects a chair (or joint chairs) of the Forum and establishes a Steering Group to meet during the year and monitor progress.

In 2017/18 the Steering Group, which is representative of Section 75 groups comprised of representatives from Supporting Communities; Housing Rights Service; Community Relations Council; Disability Action; NIPSA; NICEM; The Rainbow Project; Save the Children; Carers NI; Council for the Homeless; National Children's Bureau; Children's Law Centre; Co-Operation Ireland; NIFHA; STEP; Women into Politics; Women's Aid Federation; MENCAP; Mindwise; Committee on the Administration of Justice; Helm; Women's Support Network; UNITE; NICRAS; Clanmill, MS Society N.I.; Mindwise; Nandi J Project and the Rural Community Network.

The Forum provides a direct link for the Housing Executive with representative groups, forms relationships and puts policy and service managers in direct contact with those representing customers. This can often pre-empt problems by ensuring early input from affected groups.

The full 2017 Forum was opened by joint chairs Janet Thomas (NIHE) and Murray Watt (SC). The Housing Executive's Director of Finance, Catherine McFarland, welcomed everyone and set out the importance of challenging inequalities at a strategic level and working with others in the process. The Forum discussed the following issues:

- 'Key Inequalities in Housing and Draft Recommendations' (Equality Commission)
- 'Intimidation and the Recording of Statistics' (Committee for the Administration of

- Justice)
- 'Progress in Redesigning Housing Services' (Housing Executive)
  - 'Progress In the Homelessness Strategy' (Housing Executive)
  - 'Progress in Community Cohesion' (Housing Executive)
  - 'The Five Year Review of the Equality Scheme' (Housing Executive Equality Unit)
  - 'Google Alexa in the Home' (Housing Executive IT Department)

The Forum provides a unique access to the voluntary and community sector for the Housing Executive. This is achieved by working together through the Steering Group to discuss and consult on new or changing policy areas, rather than the necessity for meetings with individual representative groups on every occasion.

## Consultation Toolkit

The purpose of the Consultation Toolkit is to fine tune the process of consultation by the Housing Executive, and to streamline external consultation, as many consultees have highlighted the pressures of consultation or consultation 'fatigue'.

The toolkit is based on email distribution lists, and promotes a consistent approach to consultation to ensure both compliance and effective consultation.

- 12** In the 2017-18 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

Email invitations had been used by the Equality Unit to offer the consultees an opportunity to participate in Full meetings or Steering Group meetings of the Consultative Forum on Equality that had run in the 2017-18 period.

Additionally, the Housing Executive's quarterly reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme 2017 – 2018 were also circulated among the consultee list via email notifications and posted to postal consultees. The opportunity to receive a hard copy or an

accessible/alternative format of the document was also provided.

**13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2017-18 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Housing Executive’s Consultative Forum Steering Group met on 2 occasions during 2017/2018 and the full meeting of the forum was held in October 2017.

**14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2017-18 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes                       No                       Not applicable – no commitment to review

**Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

[https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications\\_links.htm](https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications_links.htm)

**15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

13
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Title of policy subject to screening
Annual leave Revised
Environment Policy revised
Joint Appeals Board constitution and procedures
Gift and Hospitality
Investigation and Disciplinary revised
Recruitment policy revised
Travel and Subsistence policy
Additional Payments policy
Transfer procedure



Customer Excellence Strategy
Asset Management Strategy
Travel and Subsistence revised
Grievance Procedures
Digital Inclusion

In addition a number of minor policies and procedures were submitted to the Policy Governance/ Financial Control Committee which includes the Equality Unit Manager and considers equality and other compliance issues.

<b>Policies considered and cleared during 2017/18 included:</b>
Accounts Receivable
Asylum Seekers
Callpay receipting
Cash and cheque handling
Cycle to work
Fixed Assets
Grant Recoupment
Mobile devices
Treasury Management

**16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2017-18:

1	Policy consultations conducted with <b>screening</b> assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted <b>with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)</b> presented.
0	Consultations for an <b>EQIA</b> alone.

PART A

- 17** Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

The Housing Executive applies a best practice toolkit to consultations (Section 3). When consulting on the introduction of Digital Inclusion during 2017/2018 a presentation and consultation took place with the Consultative Forum on Equality.

- 18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No concerns were raised                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2017-18 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

**Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)**

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2017-18 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No, already taken place  
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date                       Not applicable

Please provide any details:

The Housing Executive's Equality Monitoring policy is reviewed on a regular basis and is scheduled to be reviewed again at the end of 2018.

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

Yes                       No                       Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2017-18 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

During 2017/18 monitoring data continued to be gathered from the Housing Executive's Housing Management System (HMS). Information available includes religion, nationality, age, ethnic origin, gender, dependents and marital status and can be provided up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

Equality monitoring data is used to provide information for the following:

- To support Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs).
- Answer Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
- Answer Parliamentary Questions (PQs).
- Answer Assembly Questions (AQs).
- Is made available internally for planning and management purposes.

The Equality Unit also utilises other sources such as the Housing Executive's Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) to monitor equality issues relating to tenants. For example health and disability questions are incorporated into the CTOS.

## **Internal Promotion of Equality Monitoring**

During 2017/18 the Equality Unit continued to highlight the importance of equality monitoring within the organisation. Actions taken included the ongoing promotion of the in-house leaflet entitled 'Equality Monitoring – What is it about?' and advising staff on how equality monitoring data should be presented. The Equality Monitoring leaflet is also incorporated into the training packs for staff using the HMS system since 2013 and is referenced in Equality Awareness training.

## **BME and Migrant Worker Population**

After the Housing Executive completed its 11<sup>th</sup> annual mapping report on BME and Migrant Worker communities in Northern Ireland in 2016/17 it was decided rather than complete the report annually we would provide a report on a three year basis. The next BME and Migrant Worker Update will be completed in 2020. The 11<sup>th</sup> annual mapping report is available on the Housing Executive's website at the link below:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality.htm>

## **Private Sector Grants**

The Grants department is currently redesigning its services and the Equality Unit is liaising closely with Grants to ensure that reports after the redesign are fit for purpose.

## **In-House Research**

Over the years a number of research projects and surveys conducted by the Housing Executive have provided valuable information in relation to equality monitoring. These include:

- The House Condition Survey.
- The Public Attitudes Survey.
- Staff Attitudes Survey.
- The Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey.
- Grants Customer Surveys.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Surveys.
- Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment Report.
- Black and Minority Ethnic and Migrant Worker Mapping Updates.
- Disability Mapping Report.
- Housing and Support Needs.

## **External Sources**

Monitoring of equality of opportunity and good relations includes reference to a wide range of external sources of information.

Sources accessed include:

- The Census.
- The Labour Force Survey.
- The Continuous Household Survey.
- The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey.
- Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.
- Research conducted by OFMDFM Research Division.
- Research conducted by the voluntary and community sector.
- British Social Attitudes Survey.
- Equality Commission for N. Ireland.
- Irish Human Rights & Equality Authority.
- National Disability Authority.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- NI Civil Service Departments.
- Home Office.
- Local Government Association Research Bulletin.
- Health Agencies.
- Community Relations Council.
- ARK Northern Ireland.
- Centre for Housing Policy, York University.
- Cabinet Office.
- N. Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA)
- Employers' Forum on Disability N.I.

## **Use of Equality Monitoring Information**

During 2017/18 the equality monitoring systems were used extensively for replies to FOIs, requests from government departments, members of the public, councillors, media outlets and internal information requests. A total of 25 separate requests were completed.

## External Requests

External requests were received from various organisations including:

- Belfast Telegraph
- Whatdotheyknow.com
- Department for Communities
- N. Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA)
- MLAs
- Councillors
- Members of the Public
- Students
- NGOs
- Equality Commission for N. Ireland
- Political Parties

## Internal Requests

Internal requests were received from various Housing Executive departments including:

- Homelessness Housing Policy
- Corporate Strategy & Planning
- Landlord Services
- Housing Analytics

### Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2017-18, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.
- 25** Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

## Staff Training

In accordance with Equality Scheme requirements the Housing Executive developed an integrated strategy for the training required to support the implementation of our equality duties. Two types of training were identified: Equality Awareness training, including Induction Training, and skills-based training, which covers processes like Consultation, Screening and Equality Impact Assessment.

A programme for the delivery of Equality Awareness training, skills based training, and Induction Training throughout the organisation was established, alongside targeted training for Policy writers, Board members and Directors.

## **Equality Awareness Training**

In developing general Awareness training on the Section 75 duties the Housing Executive worked closely with the Local Government Staff Commission, local councils, and the Equality Commission, as well as Disability Action and the North West Forum of People with Disabilities with regard to disability training, and the Multi-Cultural Resource Centre with regard to Race Relations training.

The comprehensive training programme includes awareness of the Equality Scheme, Human Rights, Disability, Race Relations and discrimination generally and has been ongoing ( subject to several reviews and updates) since 2002.

It has been adapted over time to take account of legislative and other changes which have been introduced to the equality agenda and a major review of the content and format took place in 2015/2016, when the course was updated to reflect changes in focus and emphasis. This included an emphasis on bullying and harassment. The Human Rights content of the Awareness training was also enhanced in response to liaison with the NI Human Rights Commission.

Equality Awareness training continued to be developed during 2017/2018 to reflect the new Equality Scheme, housing inequalities and the organisational ethos. To March 2018 a total of 183 courses, involving over 3,250 staff, have been completed. Staff training is also supplemented with Equality Bulletins which highlight any new changes in legislation or policy and their impact on housing in Northern Ireland.

The main content of the training is as follows.

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and equality and good relations legal obligations
- The Housing Executive's equality ethos and norms
- Anti-discrimination laws and principles including aspects of Race relations, Sexual discrimination, Fair employment and treatment, Sexual Orientation and age.
- Bullying and harassment
- Disability discrimination and delivering services to disabled people.
- Human Rights and relevance to housing.

## **Equality Training for Board & Directors**

Specially tailored Equality Awareness briefing sessions have been provided to Board Members, Directors and Senior Managers and this is updated as new Board members/Directors are appointed. In the past year a dedicated training session was held with the Interim Chair and a new Board member who have been appointed as Equality Champions for the organisation.

## **Skills Based Training**

The programme for skills based training is more complex and is aimed at training key staff. Five training courses on Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) have been completed to date and a wide programme of Policy Development training has been completed for senior staff.

## **Other Training**

### **Good Relations Training**

The BRIC programme was completed in December 2014 with around 1,870 staff trained over the life of the programme. A very positive evaluation of the project was carried out from the training, reflective practice days and business planning days, putting good relations at the heart of social housing.

### **Communication Support Awareness Training**

Communication Support Awareness training is available to all officers on a request basis.

### **Safeguarding Training**

#### **Child Protection**

The Housing Executive's Child Protection / Safeguarding Policy & Procedures were approved by the Board in April 2010 and included a commitment to provide suitable training in child protection/safeguarding to staff working with or coming into regular contact with children.

In general, child protection/safeguarding training was provided at three levels -general awareness training for all staff, staff with substantial contact with children e.g. Local Offices, Grants, Hostel and Technical staff, and comprehensive training designed for Safeguarding Officers and Key Managers.

Two intensive Child Protection training courses, followed by two successful pilot courses were held in 2010. The formal programme of Level 2 training commenced in February 2011 providing sessions in all Regions and Headquarters, completing in December 2012. Subsequent sessions were demand-led and a further short programme took place in 2013/14.

117 sessions of child protection training were held with over 2100 staff attending before the course was combined with adult safeguarding training in 2016.

#### **Adult Safeguarding Training**

The Housing Executive's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy was approved by the Board in October 2012. Included in the policy was a commitment that the Housing Executive would provide suitable training in safeguarding adults to staff working with or coming into regular contact with adults at risk of abuse.

In general Adult Safeguarding training was provided at three levels - general awareness training for all staff, staff with substantial contact with adults who may be at risk e.g. Local Offices, Grants, Hostel and Technical staff, and comprehensive training designed for

Safeguarding Officers and Key Managers.

One Level 3 intensive Adult Safeguarding training course was held in May 2013, facilitated by 'VolunteerNow', and attended by Safeguarding/Deputy Officers and key managers.

Around 130 sessions of Adult Safeguarding training were held with almost 2,500 staff attending before the course was combined with child protection training in 2016.

### **Combined Safeguarding Training**

As mentioned above as the formal programmes of Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding training are now completed a combined Safeguarding Training course has been developed and commenced in April 2016 with around 200 staff trained.

### **Contractors**

The Equality Unit has conducted ten Safeguarding Information sessions to date for Housing Executive contractors; further sessions will be made available on request.

## **Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)**

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2017-18, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Communication of equality issues is central to their promotion and mainstreaming throughout the Housing Executive.

The organisation deals with, and provides services to, a broad range of stakeholders, customers, and staff, all of whom are geographically dispersed. It is therefore essential to disseminate information to staff and provide support where necessary to ensure that they are aware of their obligations and best practice.

It is also important that customers are aware of the way in which the Housing Executive promotes equality of opportunity and good relations via the services and activities it provides.

During 2017/18 the organisation's commitment to equality was communicated internally and externally in a number of ways.

## **Internal Communication**

One Equality Bulletin for staff was issued during the year and also posted on the Housing Executive website at:

[www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications\\_links.htm](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications_links.htm)

- No. 45 – Guidelines for Using Communication Support Services for People Needing Language Support & Alternative Formats for People with Disabilities (issued annually to increase awareness of services available).

Other information provided included:



- Quarterly Reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme distributed to key staff and statutory consultees. Quarterly Reports for 2017/18 can be accessed at the link above.  
[https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications\\_links.htm](https://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/corporate/strategies/equality/publications_links.htm)
- Monthly update on government consultations circulated to key members of staff.
- The Equality Unit provides advice to staff on consultation exercises using the Consultation Toolkit.
- Annual and quarterly updates on Communication Support usage are available to relevant staff.
- The Equality Unit continually liaised with Learning & Development to ensure that deaf staff could access e-learning courses.
- Minutes of the Consultative Forum on Equality and the Consultative Forum Steering Group are circulated to key staff for information and action.
- Equality Awareness training continues across the organisation.
- Communication Support Awareness training is conducted on request or where required.

## External Communication

A commitment to equality has been a primary value of the Housing Executive and this is evident in its external communications, for example:

- The commitment to equality is reflected in the Housing Executive's Annual Report.
- The Corporate and Business Plan has equality at its foundation and as a principle underpinning the business function of the organisation.
- The Housing Executive's Publications Policy & Guidance mainstreamed our commitment to making clear and direct communication with all our customers and ensures information can be made accessible in a variety of alternative formats on request. In 2017/18 we provided information to customers in audio CD, Braille, and large print, as well as translations into various languages.
- The Housing Management computer system prints rent statements in large print format.
- The Equality Unit has worked closely with Housing Benefit Policy to ensure visually impaired customers receive correspondence in appropriate formats e.g. large print, Braille and correspondence via email rather than letter.
- Staff continued to utilise all available communication support services including telephone interpreting, face to face interpreting, translations, Sign Language interpreting, and alternative formats (see Section 7a).
- An interpreter continues to work in conjunction with the Housing Executive to provide face to face interpretation on a regular basis for Chinese residents in the Annadale Flats area of Belfast. This service has been in place since 2009.
- In 2017/18 the Equality Unit provided funding for a bi – lingual Housing Clinic to continue in the NIHE office in Newry.
- We continue to make good use of our extensive consultation network of tenants, residents groups and representatives of equality and voluntary groups in conjunction with the Consultation Toolkit.
- 'Streets Ahead' (tenant magazine) sent out annually to all tenants can be made available in alternative formats. It also includes information for tenants

on how they can access free communication support services. In the magazine details of how to access free communication support services is translated into Chinese (Simplified & Traditional), Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Russian and Slovak. It also includes information on accessing alternative formats and Sign Language interpreters.

- A 'Communicating with the Housing Executive' poster is on display in Housing Executive buildings accessed by the public.
- The Housing Executive's website has a help page which provides information for people who do not have English as their first language and for people with disabilities at: <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/help.htm>
- The Housing Executive is also on Twitter @nihcommunity and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/housingexecutive](http://www.facebook.com/housingexecutive).

Communication continues to be a regular feature of the Equality Unit's internal team briefings and is a key element of the business planning cycle.

As the Housing Executive continues to review its services and customers become more diverse the issue of access to information and services remains high on the agenda. To ensure a responsive service and to anticipate the needs of customers the following arrangements have been put in place:

## Access to Services

- During 2017/18 telephone interpreting and translation continued to be provided by 'thebigword' in all service outlets, including Housing Executive Homeless Hostels.
- 'thebigword' telephone interpreting service is also available to Voluntary Sector Hostels.
- During 2017/18 face to face interpreting was provided by local organisations including STEP, CWA (Chinese Welfare Association) and the Inter-Ethnic Forum (Mid & East Antrim).
- Sign Language interpretation is provided on a regular basis from a network of self-employed Sign Language interpreters.
- Hearing induction loops in all outlets.
- Portable one to one (crystal) loop systems in all outlets.
- Comprehensive user-friendly 'Next Generation Text (NGT)' service available. NGT replaced text relay.
- The Housing Executive website has a help page which provides information for people who do not have English as a first language. It also provides information regarding alternative formats and other services to enhance accessibility: <http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/help.htm>
- The Housing Executive is also on Twitter @nihcommunity and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/housingexecutive](http://www.facebook.com/housingexecutive).
- The Housing Executive uses '03' telephone numbers as a cost saving measure for our customers.

## Access to Information

- Wide ranging and accessible Publications policy.

- A range of leaflets have been translated into different languages and made available to Housing Executive customers. These include:
  - Tips to Make Your Home More Energy Efficient.
  - Guide to Renting in the Private Sector.
  - Condensation in Your Home leaflet.
  - Wall Hung Gas Boiler Service leaflet.
  - Housing Homelessness Info Pack.
  - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) leaflet.
  - 'Money Worries: Behind with Rent' leaflet.
  - 'Money Worries: Budget' leaflet.
  - Housing Selection Scheme Booklet.
  - Warm Homes leaflet.
- A range of material in different languages has been developed for Asylum Seekers including an induction pack, 'Housing for Refugees in Belfast' leaflet, advice leaflet on support agencies and networks, a leaflet detailing information on schooling in the Belfast area and advice on energy efficiency.
- All main leaflets can be made available in large print format.
- The Housing Management Computer System can print rent statements in large print format.
- Main application forms contain advisory statements in a range of minority languages.
- Information is provided in various formats on request including large print, audio, DVD, Braille, and DAISY, as well as other languages. A statement is placed in all publications advising of the alternative formats available. In 2017/18 we provided information to customers in audio CD, Braille and large print.
- A 'Communicating with the Housing Executive' poster is displayed in Housing Executive buildings accessed by the public. The poster highlights in different languages the number of ways customers can communicate with the Housing Executive.
- From 2009/10 an interpreter has worked in conjunction with the Housing Executive on a regular basis providing face to face interpretation for Chinese residents in the Annadale Flats area of Belfast.
- In 2017/18 the Equality Unit continued to fund the bi – lingual Housing Clinic in the NIHE office in Newry.
- The Equality Unit continues to promote the use of communication support through Communication Support Awareness training, Equality Bulletins and by providing advice directly to staff.
- The Housing Executive in partnership with the NI Youth Forum produced two DVDs aimed at the under-25 age group. These focus on the housing process and the issue of homelessness and under 18's, and on helping young people to avoid getting into unnecessary debt. These short films can be viewed on the N.I. Youth Forum website <https://www.niyf.org/nihe/>

## **Communication Support Services**

The use of telephone interpreting remained consistent in 2017/18, as did the use of face to face interpreting and translations. Service outlets are aware of the benefits of all the communication support services. Use of communication support services from 2015 - 2018 is detailed below.

## Telephone Interpreting Service 2015-2018

NIHE Overall Usage Summary	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
Total No. of Calls:	2,885	2,847	3,145

Voluntary Sector Hostels & Asylum Seekers Unit	2017/2018	2016/17	2015/16
Total No. of Calls:	1,174	1,361	1,777

### Languages Requested in 2017/18: All Users = 37

Language	No. Times Requested	Language	No. Times Requested
Polish	780	French	<10
Slovak	364	Amharic	<10
Arabic	293	Albanian	<10
Romanian	253	Tigrinya	<10
Somali	194	Afar	<10
Mandarin	178	Armenian	<10
Portuguese	174	German	<10
Hungarian	150	Hindi	<10
Lithuanian	125	Kurdish (Sorani)	<10
Czech	76	Lingala	<10
Farsi (Persian)	68	Oromo	<10
Russian	41	Pashto	<10
Bulgarian	37	Punjabi	<10
Latvian	30	Sinhala	<10

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Cantonese	29	Tetum	<10
Spanish	20	Tibetan	<10
Bengali	18	Vietnamese	<10
Italian	14	Yiddish	<10
Farsi (Afghan)	<10		

**Translations (NIHE Only) 2015 -2018**

Translations	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
Total No. of Translations:	203	227	225

**Languages Translated in 2015/18= 21**

Language	Total	Language	Total	Language	Total
Polish	60	Hungarian	<10	Cantonese	<10
Lithuanian	20	Latvian	<10	Somali	<10
Romanian	17	Audio Conversion	<10	Russian	<10
Arabic (Syrian)	17	Large Print	<10	Persian (Iran)	<10
Slovak	11	Braille	<10	Kurdish (Kurmanji)	<10
Portuguese	11	Czech	<10		
Mandarin	<10	Tetum	<10		
English	<10	Arabic (Egypt)	<10		

**Face to Face Interpreting (NIHE Only) 2015 - 2018**

Face to Face Interpreting	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
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Total No. of Interpreter Sessions:	78	66	102
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### Languages Interpreted in 2017/18 = 13

Language	Total	Language	Total
Chinese	23	Tetum	<10
Arabic (Syrian)	21	Irish Sign Language	<10
Sign Language	13	Latvian	<10
Polish	<10	Lithuanian	<10
Romanian	<10	Slovak	<10
Mandarin	<10	Hungarian	<10
Portuguese	<10		

<10 are requests where numbers are less than 10.

### Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

**27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2017-18?

Insert number here:

0
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Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Chapter 8 of the Equality Scheme for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive sets out the procedure for investigating any complaints regarding the discharge of its Section 75 duties.

There were no complaints relating to the statutory duties during 2017/2018.

The Housing Executive has comprehensive complaints systems for all its operational services.

It is the practice of the Housing Executive to manage complaints efficiently and when appropriate to adapt and change its policy, practices and procedures where deficiencies have been identified through these processes.

### Section 3: Looking Forward

**28** Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

The NIHE Equality Scheme is due for review in 2023.

- 29** Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

The Housing Executive will continue to place the Equality Commission's Statement of Key Inequalities in Housing at the centre of its corporate planning. We will use the Consultative Forum on Equality to monitor performance in addressing those inequalities evidenced in the commission's report. In addition we are making progress in addressing the recommendations from the N. Ireland Human Rights Commission's report on Traveller Accommodation in N. Ireland.

- 30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next (2017-18) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

- The Equality Commission's Statement on Key Inequalities in Housing will provide a focus to ensure the Housing Executive's Corporate and Business strategy is adequately targeting housing inequalities.
- Goods, facilities and services: there are potential issues with forthcoming age discrimination legislation, the emerging issue of refugees generally and the Syrian refugee programme.
- Organisational changes / new functions/ Welfare Reform: the Community Planning relationship may be an issue that requires advice.
- General Employment advice in the context of Brexit, migration and organisational change.
- Monitoring is becoming a priority within Programme for Government and advice on monitoring service delivery in traditional fields such as religion and race but also new areas like sexual orientation, transgender issues and age will be required.
- Children & Young People issues and the responsibilities emerging from the Children's Services Cooperation Act (N. Ireland) 2015.