

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Name of Policy/ Strategy/ Plan /Service	Chronic Homelessness Action Plan
Department	Homelessness Strategy
Responsible Officer	Helen Hicks

Stage 1: Define the Activity

1a: State the nature of the document for which this RNIA is required e.g. policy, strategy, plan or procedure.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan covers a three year period from April 2019 to March 2022. It will align with the Homelessness Strategy's actions relevant to chronic homelessness. The actions incorporated include

- review and implement Belfast and Derry/Londonderry Rough Sleepers Strategy
- Identify chronic homeless need outside Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and devise an appropriate action plan to tackle any issues.

1b: Briefly describe the nature of the policy, strategy, plan or service etc.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will align with the Homelessness Strategy and covers a three year period from April 2019 to March 2022. The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan has been developed in response to feedback from the homelessness sector in the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2017-22. The Housing Executive made a commitment to the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) (an inter-departmental, multi-agency group tasked with ensuring the strategic delivery of the Homelessness Strategy) to develop an action plan that specifically addressed chronic homelessness.

In delivering an action plan, the Housing Executive requires input and support from a range of stakeholders across the voluntary and community sector. The action plan shows the Housing Executive's commitment to introduce new ways of working internally as well as support for a range of cross-government initiatives which will see us working jointly on these new approaches to deal with chronic homelessness in rural and urban areas. The Housing Executive has used its engagement with the sector, through the Homelessness Local Area groups, specifically South Antrim/Mid & East Antrim, South West and Mid-Ulster to identify the need for the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan and identifies appropriate actions in rural and urban environments.

The action plan seeks to explore the extent and nature of chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland, the impact of this experience on their lives and how the Housing Executive can play its part in effectively addressing the issues surrounding chronic homelessness. The document has been prepared for formal consultation and is subject to change as a result of consultation and while we will link with relevant commissioning structures this will be subject to budget availability/constraints. The plan will take into account location and local support networks where individuals are presenting from a rural area as well as other rural specific issues such as access to services etc.

1c: State the aims / objectives /intended outcomes of the policy, strategy, plan or service etc.

We want to produce a Chronic Homelessness Action Plan which shows our commitment to leading on addressing the issues of those individuals who are defined as chronically homeless in Northern Ireland.

This plan focuses on the need to:

- Improve the measurement and understanding of the scale of the problem of chronic homelessness and establish a baseline
- Promote early intervention and prevention of chronic homelessness
- Provide a rapid response to chronic homelessness to ensure interventions are effective and well targeted
- Promote a cross departmental and interagency approach to addressing the problem of chronic homelessness.

The action plan supports the Homelessness Strategy in the early intervention and prevention of homelessness and local joint working. Subject to identified need the action plan will link to relevant commission structures to provide more statutory homelessness and support services that are specifically relevant to the needs of those within the chronic homelessness category.

The objectives of the action plan are:

1. Design Specific criteria for chronic homelessness and implement data collection arrangements.
2. Mechanisms to monitor and report on chronic homelessness trends.
3. Interpretation of data to identify existing and emerging needs to address chronic homelessness in the context of both policy and service provision.
4. To develop mechanisms across agencies for early identification of those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness.
5. To implement a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment.
6. Implement arrangements to ensure services engage with people at risk of chronic homelessness as quickly as possible.
7. Make the stay in temporary accommodation as short as possible
8. Consider a range of housing options for the chronic homeless including housing led model and ensure they are supported into permanent accommodation as soon as possible
9. Promotion of interagency issues and actions required to address chronic homelessness.
10. Mechanisms in place to implement and oversee the implementation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan

It is important to ensure that this Action Plan is inclusive of our colleagues across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and that our visions, aims and objectives are reflective of this, within the context and acceptance that chronic homelessness is not a problem that housing alone can address.

The needs of individuals who are chronic homeless are wide ranging. It is therefore imperative that housing provision and support services are tailored to meet the needs of each individual appropriately. A person centred approach is central to the plan. The objectives cover actions to prevent rough sleeping, empower frontline services improve access to suitable housing; strengthen interdepartmental co-operation (legislation) and develop a measurement framework based on outcomes

Stage 2: Identify Rural Needs

2a: Indicate which methods or information sources were used to analyse the current situation in rural areas and identify rural needs.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Surveys/ Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Rural and Regeneration Unit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (please detail below)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

2b: Provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the needs of people in rural areas including dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken.

As part of the development of this Chronic Homelessness Action Plan the Housing Executive has completed a consultation exercise with the sector. Consultation to date has included:

- Three Local Area Groups which focused specifically on chronic homelessness. These groups were in South Antrim/Mid & East Antrim, South West and Mid-Ulster. (May 2018)
- Following these meetings 140 practitioners across the statutory and voluntary sector were invited to submit written feedback on the issues raised during these meetings.
- Individual meetings have been held with staff from the Housing Executive and a wide range of stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sectors (key service providers). These include Extern, The Welcome Organisation, Simon Community, Depaul, First Housing Aid and Support Services, Action for Children, Queens Quarter, Salvation Army and the Research Advisory Group, Central Homelessness Forum as well as internal NIHE staff from Supporting People, Belfast Housing Solutions and Area Offices. (May 2018- Dec2018)
- A document has been compiled detailing the concerns/ issues raised by the sector under 2 headings, accommodation and non-accommodation based issues. This is with a view to considering how accommodation and non-accommodation based issues can be addressed as part of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan or through some other format. The sector was very clear on the need to deal with accommodation and non-accommodation based issues as part of the solution to dealing with those that are experiencing chronic homelessness.
- A further one to one consultation process was completed on the latest document around accommodation and non-accommodation based issues to ensure that the document fully reflects the views/concerns of the sector ascertained through previous consultation. (Oct –Dec 2018)
- Workshops on Chronic Homelessness Action Plan at the Homelessness Strategy Annual Report launch on 26th October 2018

2c: Provide details of the current situation in rural areas as it relates to the policy, strategy or service in question.

To date, the Housing Executive has not developed indicators or triggers to define individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness. We are taking action to put in place key indicators to identify and record the number of individuals who experience chronic homelessness in rural and urban areas in Northern Ireland. We want to understand the issues and complexities surrounding chronic homelessness in rural areas as well as urban areas. As part of this process the Homelessness Local Area Groups were consulted on the definition of chronic homelessness and broadly agreed that it required an enhanced interpretation through the development of a range of indicators/triggers which would flag the person as chronic homeless. After indicators/triggers were determined other service providers were consulted and there was broad acceptance of the criteria, including chronic homelessness individuals in rural areas, whilst recognising that it was difficult to deliver a definition that was adequate to cover all statutory and voluntary organisations that provide services to individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness. As a result of the development of the criteria, each Housing Executive Area office was asked to quantify the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness within their Area in order to enable an evidence baseline to be established. This resulted in 473 individuals being identified.

In Northern Ireland the Housing (NI) Order 1988 as amended by the Housing (NI) Order 2003 ('the 2003 Order'), and the Housing (Amendment) Act (NI) 2010 ('the 2010 Act') places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to assess and investigate homelessness applicants and where appropriate provide temporary and/or permanent accommodation. This applies to all homelessness applicants in urban and rural locations.

This action plan intends to address the needs of chronic homeless individuals. Engagement with the sector has identified a methodology to identify chronic homelessness numbers which will allow us to examine the provision of appropriate housing models including housing led models to meet the needs of those that are experiencing chronic homelessness in the locations where they require accommodation. They want to see a range of joined up outreach and drop in services, and accommodation based services being targeted and delivered to those in need of appropriate service provision.

2d: Provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the policy, strategy, plan or service.

This action plan intends to identify and address the needs of individuals who are affected by chronic homelessness. This is determined based on the number of times an individual has presented as homeless to the Housing Executive and indicators that the individual is having difficulty in sustaining a tenancy e.g. recurring need for temporary accommodation, mental health/addiction problems, history of violence.

Stage 3: Understand the Impact

3a: Is the policy, strategy, plan or service likely to impact differentially on people in rural areas?

Yes No - if no go to question 3d.

3b: Explain how the policy, strategy, plan or service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The needs of individuals who are chronic homeless are wide ranging and the experiences of those in rural areas can vary. It is therefore imperative that housing provision and support services are tailored to meet the needs of each individual appropriately. It is also important to ensure that the Action Plan is inclusive of colleagues across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and that our visions, aims and objectives are reflective of this, within the context and acceptance that chronic homelessness is not a problem that housing alone can address.

The objectives of the action plan which incorporates rural areas, cover actions to prevent rough sleeping, empower frontline services improve access to suitable housing; strengthen interdepartmental co-operation and develop a measurement framework based on outcomes for those living in Northern Ireland. The action plan aims to measure and establish a baseline of chronic homelessness and use this data to help understand the problem including in rural areas. It will promote early intervention and prevent homelessness in rural areas and support a rapid response to chronic homelessness to ensure interventions are effective and well-targeted in rural areas. The action plan aims to promote a cross departmental and inter agency approach to addressing the problem of chronic homelessness, which is effective in rural areas.

3c: Indicate which of the following rural policy areas the policy, strategy, plan or service is likely to primarily impact on

Rural Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Crime and Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please state)	<input type="text"/>		

3d: If you answered NO to 3a explain why the policy, strategy, plan or service is not likely to impact differentially on people in rural areas.

If you answered 3d proceed to Section 7

Stage 4: Considering Rural Needs

4a: Identify any barriers to the delivery of a fair and equitable outcome for people in rural areas, as it relates to the policy, strategy, plan or service in question. If there are no barriers go to 5a.

Although the needs of individuals who are chronic homeless are wide ranging and that housing provision and support services should be tailored to meet the needs of each individual appropriately, some potential differential rural impacts were highlighted around the availability of solutions within rural areas.

1. Availability of services and development of procedures across agencies for early identification and prevention work for those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness may vary from one rural location to another. This includes implementation of a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support. Identification of existing and emerging needs, to address chronic homelessness in the context of both policy and service provision, could be affected by funding and SP commissioning.
2. Lack of permanent housing options e.g. range of housing options including housing led, private rented sector and security of tenure
3. lack of emergency housing arrangements including provision of appropriate safe temporary accommodation and outreach services.

4b: Explain how these barriers could be overcome or mitigated.

Barrier

1. Availability of services and development of procedures across agencies for early identification and prevention work for those who are at risk of homelessness or chronic homelessness may vary from one rural location to another. This includes implementation of a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support. Identification of existing and emerging needs, to address chronic homelessness in the context of both policy and service provision, could be affected by funding and SP commissioning.

How it can be overcome?

Innovative approaches to preventing homelessness will be encouraged and explored, including awareness campaigns and engagement activities which would include effectively targeted campaigns to identify households at risk of homelessness and ensure appropriate tailored advice, assistance and support is available. All interventions will be rigorously evaluated so that successful approaches can be extended. Implementation of a range of support services to help people sustain their accommodation including floating support and tenancy sustainment which is dependent on identification of service gaps and prioritisation of service development through SP Commissioning arrangements. Service delivery models can be reviewed and appropriate changes made to facilitate better service delivery, thus ensuring that support is the right type in the right location for vulnerable individuals who are experiencing chronic homelessness

Barrier

2. Lack of permanent housing options eg require a range of housing options including housing led, private rented sector and security of tenure

How it can be overcome?

A focus on prevention work will seek to keep people in their current accommodation. This action plan seeks to continue the work of Housing Solution Teams and Patch Managers through identification of support solutions which will ensure

households do not become homeless in the first place. Relevant floating support, the provision of debt advice, mediation services and better cooperation between agencies will assist this.

We will continue to support the provision of adequate levels of housing across Northern Ireland by improving data gathering and providing a robust evidence base for housing need.

The action plan will seek to widen the choices available to clients by looking at all tenures of accommodation including private rented sector, owner occupation, etc. and the possibility of new approaches, for example, shared solutions. Outcomes will be measured on an urban/rural basis to inform future actions

Barrier

3. lack of emergency housing arrangements including provision of appropriate safe temporary accommodation and outreach services.

How it can be overcome?

The action plan aims to continue to support and extend outreach services in L'Derry and explore possibility of outreach services in other areas in order to identify those who require emergency accommodation. The action plan supports a person centred approach which includes improving emergency accommodation provision for those that need it in appropriate locations (near family support or strong connections). This can be achieved through:

- Review of Single Let Provision and Strategic Review of Temporary Accommodation . The Housing Executive has procured an independent review of temporary accommodation provision to identify service gaps and service effectiveness. This will look at the provision of temporary accommodation on an urban and rural basis. The aim of the review is to ensure cost effective and adequate provision of temporary accommodation across Northern Ireland. It will examine new, innovative ways to ensure adequate provision.
- Implement recommendations Common Assessment Framework project and Central Access Point project to ensure temporary accommodation is being fully utilised in the most appropriate manner.

Stage 5: Influencing the Outcome

5a: Has the policy, strategy, plan or service been influenced by consideration of the rural needs identified?

Yes No (if no go to 5c)

5b: Explain how the policy, strategy, plan or service has been influenced by consideration of the rural needs identified, including any specific amendments or mitigating actions that have been introduced.

Consultation with the NIHE Rural Unit has taken place during the development of this Action Plan. The plan has been completed with due consideration for the Rural Needs Act 2016.

The action plan supports the Homelessness Strategy in the early intervention and prevention of homelessness and local joint working. Subject to identified need the action plan will link to relevant commission structures to provide more statutory homelessness and support services that are specifically relevant to the needs of those within the chronic homelessness category. This approach will take into account location and support networks where clients are presenting from a rural area as well as other rural specific issues such as access to services etc.

The action plan has been developed collaboratively using the Central Homelessness Forum as a consultative forum as well as Local Homelessness Area Groups at NIHE Local Office level and practitioners across the statutory and voluntary sector to ensure rural issues within each locality have been taken into account throughout its development.

Rural service user input was also sought via consultation with the Rural Community Network and Rural Residents Group to ensure that local issues were fully considered.

This action plan is inclusive of the views of our colleagues across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors, from various locations, and our aims and objectives are reflective of this, within the context and acceptance that chronic homelessness is not just a housing problem and can manifest itself in many formats.

Consultation with the sector has identified the need to develop a range of services in rural areas. This includes outreach services, drop-in and accommodation-based services being delivered by housing, healthcare and support service providers. These need to be bespoke services which are widely available, easily accessible and provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of those that are chronically homeless. The rural issues raised are reflected in this Housing Executive led action plan which will be a 3 year plan, reviewed annually in conjunction with the Homelessness Strategy.

This Action Plan has identified the need to see the development of improved systems for monitoring and measuring the extent of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland.

Sc: If you answered NO to 5a explain why the policy, strategy, plan or service has not been influenced by consideration of the rural needs identified.

N/A

Stage 6: Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

6a: Explain how the outcomes for rural people will be monitored during the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service.

The Chronic Homelessness Action Plan will align to the Homelessness Strategy and support the Programme for Government outcomes. It will be overseen by a Department for Communities led Interdepartmental Homelessness Strategic Steering Group (HSSG) and supported by the Central Homelessness Forum and 9 Homelessness Local Area Groups. All actions will be monitored on an urban/rural basis where appropriate

The Action Plan has identified the need to see the development of improved systems for monitoring and measuring the extent of chronic homelessness in rural and urban areas. The criteria used for the measurement of chronic homelessness will be validated and the results used to understand the scale of chronic homelessness in rural areas. An analysis of trends will be carried out to inform service review, funding and commissioning.

6b: Explain how rural outcomes will be evaluated as part of the wider evaluation framework for the policy, strategy, plan or service and how lessons learnt will be used to inform future policy making/ service design.

The rural aspect will be considered in context with the holistic evaluation of the Chronic Homelessness Action Plan which will align to the Homelessness Strategy and support the Programme for Government outcomes. It will be overseen by a Department for Communities led Interdepartmental Homelessness Strategic Steering Group (HSSG) and supported by the Central Homelessness Forum and 9 Homelessness Local Area Groups. All actions will be monitored on an urban/rural basis where appropriate

The Homelessness Strategy Annual Progress Report provides information relating to outcomes and indicators which the Housing Executive will publish going forward. The outcomes and indicators for rural areas will be published as part of the wider monitoring framework of chronic homelessness and a holistic review taken of the actions implemented and their effectiveness.

This Action Plan has identified the need to see the development of improved systems for monitoring and measuring the extent of chronic homelessness in urban and rural areas. The criteria used for the measurement of chronic homelessness will be validated and the results used to understand the scale of chronic homelessness across Northern Ireland. An analysis of trends across all areas will be carried out to inform service review, funding and commissioning.

Stage 7: Documenting and Recording

7a: I confirm that the RNIA and any relevant information compiled during its preparation will be retained in line with the Housing Executive records management policy

Rural Needs Impact Assessment Undertaken by:	HELEN HICKS
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Signature	Helen Hicks
Date Completed	21.01.2019
Rural Needs Impact Assessment Approved by:	SINEAD COLLINS
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Date Approved	21-01-2019