

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2023 -24

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	https://www.Housing Executive.gov.uk/About-Us/Equality/Our-approach Click or tap here to enter text.
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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 2023 and March 2024

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 2023-24, 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.

Equality and Good relations are fundamental to how the Housing Executive develops and delivers its services. Our vision is:

“Everyone is able to live in an affordable, sustainable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe, attractive, and climate-resilient place.”

The need to incorporate equality of opportunity and good relations in all our planning, decision making and service delivery elements of our work is central to realising that vision and to ensuring that challenging housing inequalities is aligned fully with our business objectives.

We remain proud of a record of consistent fairness in providing housing and housing services for over 50 years. As stated our policies are developed with equality considerations incorporated from the outset and we have developed approaches with our Board and Executive Team which are designed to take account of the needs of all the Section 75 groups as we bring forward new or revised policies and strategies.

We are helped in this through regular contact and consultation with our partners in the Consultative Forum on Equality, the Disability Forum, the Housing Community Network (HCN) and our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group.

We make clear commitments to challenging housing inequalities and to fostering good relations where we have influence. This is set out in our Corporate Strategy and the section below sets out our commitments for the next few years.

It should be noted also that the section below sets out performance indicators and results for 2023/24. These indicators and results, in addition to Equality Scheme commitments, Communication Support services and Disability Action Plan measures, combine to make the Housing Executive’s comprehensive Equalities Action Plan (this section also serves as a response to Question 7 of this report.)

Housing Executive’s Corporate Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25

In 2022/23, the Housing Executive published a Three Year Corporate Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25 and we also produced an accompanying One Year Business Plan for each year of the strategy. These provide strategic housing policy and strategic business objectives across the social housing sector in our role as the strategic housing authority. The strategy was published in 2022/23 following an extensive consultation and engagement process including a 12 week public consultation.

Our Corporate Strategy outlines six high level strategic objectives. Each outcome is also supported by a specific number of priorities. Our six high level objectives are:

1. We will work with our partners to **increase social housing supply** to help meet identified need and we will build our capacity to borrow, invest in our stock and add to new supply,
2. We will help Northern Ireland meet its emissions targets, address the impact of climate change and help **sustain and protect our environment** for future generations,
3. We will invest an estimated £1,700m (over the next 3 years) into our **local economy**, through our housing services, construction activity, employment opportunities and through our support for the health, voluntary and community sectors. In the same period we will process circa £1,148m in Housing Benefit payments across public and private housing tenures,
4. We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help **reduce poverty and improve Health & Well-being**,
5. We will **involve our customers** to ensure that they are at the heart of service improvements and our business delivery model and
6. We will be an **employer of choice** and deliver high quality services for all in Northern Ireland's increasingly diverse community.

Many of our objectives within the Corporate Strategy are aimed, fundamentally, at promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. In setting the organisation's priorities we were 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 help inform our planning and processes. We conduct regular policy reviews including those relating to employment and service delivery issues, and we review Equality Screening as part of this process. In addition, we work alongside our partners in the Consultative Forum on Equality, Disability Forum and Housing Community Network (HCN) on all matters relating to housing inequalities and service delivery.

Over time a framework for communication with tenants at Estate, Area, Regional, and Central levels has been developed through the HCN consisting of around 300 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 over 100 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 and a representative from the voluntary sector.

Key policy and service delivery developments made by the Housing Executive to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations, and the outcomes and improvements achieved, are summarised over the following pages under each of the six key objectives. In 2023/24 we reported on 90 **Key Performance**

Indicators (KPIs), Performance Indicators (PIs) and Sub Objectives (SOs), and where appropriate, these are also referenced.

Objective 1: We will work with our partners to increase social housing supply to help meet identified need and we will build our capacity to borrow, invest in our stock and add to new supply.

Social Housing Development Programme

The Housing Executive's Development Programme Group (DPG) manages the delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) on behalf of DfC. The majority of all new social housing is developed and delivered by Housing Associations. For the 2023/24 year, a final budget of £161.844 million was in place to deliver on key targets. The starting SHDP Budget Position was £159.544m with an additional £2.3 million transferred from the Housing Executive at year end.

As well as managing the delivery of new social housing across Northern Ireland, DPG also provides grant assistance to housing associations to carry out vital adaptation work to their properties for tenants with disabilities. In 2023/24, a total of 913 adaptation claims were assessed, resulting in total expenditure of £5.157 million to facilitate these works (including 12 major adaptations).

Related KPIs and achievements:

- Social Housing Development Programme Starts and Completions targets have been exceeded. We had a KPI to Start 1,500 units, and the Starts out-turn for the year was 1,508 units. The KPI set the targeted number of completions at 1,400 units, and the out-turn for the 2023/24 year was 1,403 units. These new social homes will address a range of housing needs across Northern Ireland for client groups including singles, families, older people and Applicants with Complex Needs;
- We had a PI to ensure 10% of New Build units were built to Wheelchair Design Standards which we did not achieve in 2023/24. Of the 1,508 Starts confirmed in 2023/24, a total of 1,385 were New Build units, 113 of which have been designed to Wheelchair Design Standards (representing 8% against the 10% target). Whilst the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes has generally increased since the target was first included in 2017/18 (with 5% achieved in 2017/18) the targets have never been achieved. Following analysis by our Development Programme Group (DPG), it was identified that of the 1,385 'new build' homes started during 2023/24 there were 1,206 units (36 schemes) that were 'eligible' for wheelchair accessible homes (this represents 9.4% of starts). Going forward, in 2024/25 we intend to measure performance based on the number of New Build units and schemes which are started, and which are eligible for wheelchair accessible homes. In 2024/25, when designing our new Corporate Strategy, we will work with DfC to ensure that any targets set in relation to wheelchair accessible homes are challenging and achievable to support independent living in the social housing sector.

Housing for All

In February 2024 we achieved the SO to formally transfer the 'Housing for All' shared housing programme from DfC to the Housing Executive. As part of this transfer, significant activity took place during the year, including fully populating the 'Housing for All' team structure (recruitment was completed for all five posts and a full team have been in post since February 2024). Initial guidance with a full training plan was delivered to the new team and all Housing Association staff at the end of February 2024. Job shadowing with DfC commenced in January 2024 and successfully completed at the end March 2024.

The Programme now supports 12 Housing Associations working across 77 developments with a total of 2,490 units. 44 developments have completed & are now celebrated as Shared, with another 33 under development or programmed to start. The benefits of shared housing however extend far beyond those 2,490 units as the Housing Associations work with 32 Local Advisory Groups across the shared housing communities. The Advisory Groups support the development and delivery of Good Relations Plans which benefit many communities and individuals who live within a five mile radius of the new development.

In the coming year the team will implement an ambitious business plan, initially focused on raising awareness of the programme and strengthening links with our Community Planning partners, Advisory Groups and others across the shared housing communities and beyond, to deliver investment and innovation which supports safe, confident, shared communities. We will continue to work in partnership with DfC and 12 Housing Associations, to deliver the programme.

Shaping and Informing Government Policy

As a statutory partner in the Community Planning process we have an important role in promoting the general well-being of our community and its citizens. Our Place Shaping Teams represent the Housing Executive's interest across all 11 Community Planning Partnerships and lead on the delivery of a number of key actions within the Community Plans.

In line with DfC ambitions to increase housing supply, the Housing Executive is utilising its role in these partnerships to highlight gaps in housing supply and to identify and support sites for development in areas of acute housing need. As a community planning partner in each Council area, the Housing Executive continues to seek 20% affordable housing on larger development sites through Council Local Development Plans.

Our Strategic Regeneration team works with internal and external partners to manage and deliver programmes to meet the housing needs and aspirations of our population and to support the creation of balanced and sustainable communities. Our activities include facilitating housing growth, increasing the provision of social housing, and shaping places through planning and regeneration. These activities make an important contribution to improving the quality of life for all.

As a statutory consultee in the Local Development Plan process, the Housing Executive has assisted all Councils in preparing draft Plan Strategies which

include affordable housing policies. During 2023/24, our work has resulted in the adoption of three Plan Strategies (Belfast City Council; Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council; and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council) all of which included the Housing Executive's preferred policy approach to securing land, facilitating the delivery of affordable housing, and the provision of mixed tenure developments. We continue to assist these Councils to implement these policies by contributing to the production of Supplementary Planning Guidance and by providing consultation responses to planning applications which trigger an action in response to a policy. This is helping to meet SHDP targets, which in turn helps to support those whose housing needs cannot be met by the market.

Affordable housing policies within Local Development Plans will be a principle way to meet the housing needs of the whole community, encourage mixed tenure housing development as a way to strengthen community cohesion, and are central in the promotion of sustainable development, sustainable communities and place making.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- We successfully achieved a PI to ensure the Land Asset Management Strategy (LAMS) was approved by the Housing Executive Board, and work has commenced on the development of Year 1 of the LAMS Action Plan; and
- In relation to progression of the Housing Executive Land Acquisition (HELA) Programme, DfC approved a business case on in October 2023 and work is underway to formalise project management and governance structures. This work will be taken forward in 2024/25 through the delivery of the LAMS.

Housing Executive Homes

We deliver a response and planned maintenance service and carry out cyclical health and safety compliance work to our stock. This includes a PI to deliver our Tower Block Strategy Action Plan, a long-term programme that will see many of our towers replaced by modern housing more suited to tenants', applicants' and communities' needs.

We also have a SO to ensure that we meet our Health and Safety requirements for our stock.

Research and customer feedback

Providing services to meet our customers' needs is important to us and we carry out research on an annual basis along with targeted housing service research such as the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) to help shape our services. Details of our research findings are published on our website at the following link:

<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/working-with-us/research/attitudes-to-landlord-services>

Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy

The Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-2026 aims to address the range of accommodation needs of Irish Travellers; and ensure the provision of adequate and suitable accommodation for Irish Travellers that meets their needs, promotes their equality of opportunity and promotes good relations among Irish Traveller households and between Irish Travellers and other members of the community.

Year 2 of the Strategy was completed in 2023/24 with progress made across all achievable actions. A proposed Irish Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment methodology was completed; and a new site to address need in Mid Ulster was identified. The Irish Travellers Policy Unit (ITPU), along with the South Placeshaping team began the planning process for approval to build at Tamnadeese Road, Magherafelt.

A Good Relations project has also been initiated in Mid Ulster. ITPU, Community Cohesion and Mid Ulster Local Office staff met to discuss funding and delivery for a pilot Good Relations Scheme in the area.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- We achieved our SO for the ITPU to carry out a review of Ballyarnett, Derry/Londonderry, which concluded the site should be redeveloped as a six pitch serviced site for the resident family. The review was approved by Irish Travellers Interdivisional Group and scheme design is in progress.
- ITPU carried out a review of the site at Legahory, Craigavon, which concluded the site should be redeveloped as a five pitch serviced site. The review was approved by Irish Travellers Interdivisional Group and the Housing Executive will develop a Business Case in 2024/25.
- ITPU have identified potential new sites to address future Irish Traveller serviced need in Belfast and Mid Ulster, and planning applications have been brought forward.

Rural Strategy and Action Plan

We have long recognised the important role that our housing and housing services play in supporting and sustaining rural communities. The 'Reaching Rural: Rural Strategy 2021- 2025' sets out our commitment to tailor our programmes and services to ensure that we meet the needs of people living in rural areas in an equitable way.

The Year 3 Rural Action Plan was agreed by the Rural Inter-Divisional Advisory Group in August 2023.

During 2023/24, the Year 3 Rural Action Plan was successfully delivered, with progress being made against all the actions. An annual report detailing progress during Year 3 of the Rural Action Plan will be published in 2024/25.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- Linked to a corresponding SO, a draft research report into the barriers to social housing development in rural areas and opportunities was completed in March 2024;
- Rural Matters was published during Rural Housing Week in August 2023, and showcased projects successfully delivered as a result of the Rural Strategy;
- The Year two annual update on the rural strategy progress was published on the Housing Executive's website in March 2024, and shared with partners and stakeholders; and
- The 2023/24 latent demand test programme was delivered, and community engagement was completed at nine settlements. Full analysis of the results will take place in 2024/25.

Objective 2: We will help NI meet its emissions targets, address the impact of climate change and help sustain and protect our environment for future generations.

Sustainability, Energy Advice and Assistance

The Sustainable Development Unit is the focal point for climate change and energy transition across the Housing Executive in its role as Strategic Housing Authority, with the Unit representing the Housing Executive in all major climate change initiatives across central government. In 2022 the Housing Executive launched its Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027) which sets out the strategic approach to balancing the provision of quality, affordable housing and improving on our social and environmental impact. The strategy provides a framework for tackling environmental and social challenges by 2027 and responding to the climate emergency. Ultimately, the long-term goal of the Strategy is to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 across all of our activities, mirroring the UK Government's 'net zero' target. Transformation of the Housing Executive's organisational model is therefore essential to ensure delivery against these mitigation targets, while also protecting our customers and their homes from the effects of climate change.

Housing accounts for 14% of Green House Gases (GHGs), and as both the Strategic Housing Authority, and Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) for Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive is a key delivery partner for the Northern Ireland Executive's strategies in this area, including the Department of the Environment's Energy Strategy. We will also play a key role working with local councils to help deliver their carbon reduction strategies at a place based level. As the HECA for Northern Ireland, part of the Housing Executive's Development strategy is to deliver its statutory responsibilities and to promote energy efficiency and advice to all NI households. Since its launch in 2020, the refreshed Northern Ireland Energy Advice Service (NIEAS) has helped our community responding to over 25,500 unique queries. This advice offers vital help via energy cost saving information to vulnerable householders, older people and those on low incomes. The NIEAS team annually signposts almost 50% of their calls to available energy grants and helped over 11,230 customers in 2023.

The Rural-Led Energy Transition (RULET) is a pilot initiative which takes a whole house approach to retrofit with ten similar social houses. It is led by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Ulster University. The pilot's overarching aim was to reduce the risk of low-income households being left behind in the transition to clean, smart, integrated energy systems. In March 2024, RULET won the 'Net Zero in Housing' award at the Chartered Institute of Housing All-Ireland Housing Awards ceremony in Dublin.

In addition to this we administer and support a range of other schemes to address fuel poverty including the Affordable Warmth and Boiler Replacement Schemes and provide energy efficiency advice measures across all tenures.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- We achieved an SO to work with DfC in the delivery of their Residential Climate Action Plan 2023 – 2027. Linked to this we continued to deliver Affordable Warmth Scheme measures, issuing 2,675 approvals with a total value of £14.37 million. 2,746 homes had work completed which encompassed 4,930 efficiency measures;
- Our PI to deliver fuel poverty measures ensured 340 new high efficiency boilers were installed by owner occupiers via the Boiler Replacement Scheme, with a total spend of £139k;
- In April 2024 we published the [Home Energy Conservation Authority 2023 Annual Progress Report](#);
- We achieved the PI to deliver Carbon Literacy Training, and over 1,800 staff have now completed the training programme;
- In March 2024 our Annual Energy Symposium took place in Belfast;
- We invested over £400,000 in 10 electric vehicles (EVs) as part of our plan to reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality. Initial findings on the usage of these EVs will help inform the Housing Executive's vehicle strategy and the future use of EVs;
- We delivered a KPI to complete the first year of a 300-unit low carbon retrofit programme, with phase one (100 dwellings) of this whole house retrofit on site in January 2024;
- We commenced our first home construction scheme in more than 24 years and delivered the linked KPI. The scheme will see the construction of six semi-detached dwellings at Sunningdale Gardens, North Belfast. Part of a new build pilot, the six homes will be built using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and ultra-low energy building techniques, to Passive House standards. It is anticipated that the houses will be completed and occupied by August 2024;
- The Oil Savings Network is now an integral part of the NI Energy Advice Service. Oil Savings Network members receive updates regarding grant availability, energy efficiency advice with Energy Advice contact details, and an offer to call the Service to go over their home energy efficiency and information on how to save on costs and reduce their carbon footprint. In 2023, members requested 13,887 orders, and by the end of 2023 average savings were £20.49 on 200 litres, with combined savings of £400,879 during the year; and

- We achieved a PI to deliver a programme of Nature Positive Solutions. During the year the Grounds Maintenance team ensured 7,557 trees and whips were planted across our green spaces, exceeding the PI target of 5,500.

Objective 3: *We will invest an estimated £1,700m (over the next 3 years) into our local economy, through our housing services, construction activity, employment opportunities and through our support for the health, voluntary and community sectors. In the same period we will process circa £1,148m in Housing Benefit payments across public and private housing tenures.*

While it has undoubtedly been a year of significant challenge for the housing and public sector, during 2023/24 approximately £979 million was invested through the Housing Executive into housing programmes and services across Northern Ireland, in line with our KPI to invest in the local economy. This included supporting health, voluntary and community sectors as well as working to maintain and improve our tenant's homes across rural and urban locations. We also invested to enable and support our most vulnerable customers through a variety of initiatives including investment in Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and adaptations. We also administered the Supporting People Programme on behalf of the DfC that focuses on 4 key thematic areas including: Younger People, Older People, Disability and Mental Health, and Homelessness.

Housing Benefit

An effective and efficient Housing Benefit service assists people to sustain their tenancies. During the 2023/24 financial year we delivered our PI to ensure over £470m was paid out in Housing Benefit and Discretionary Housing Payments, helping over 93,000 customers to meet their housing costs, support them in their tenancies and prevent homelessness.

Planned and Response Maintenance

Our key objective through the planned maintenance programme is to maintain and improve the quality of tenant's homes. Maintaining homes has a number of benefits both for the organisation and our tenants. It helps maintain the value of our assets, but more importantly provides a safe, modern, warm and comfortable home for our tenants to enjoy. Further to this, in line with our PI, during 2023/24 we completed nearly 254,000 maintenance repair jobs.

Supporting People

The Programme awards grant-funding to provider organisations to enable them to deliver services that provide housing-related support and assistance to service users, thus enabling them to live more independently. Housing-related support enables vulnerable people to develop and maintain the skills necessary to live as independently as possible in their own home.

In 2023/24, there were 80 providers providing over 800 services to almost 20,000 Service Users within 15 Primary Client Groups and across four key thematic areas:

- Young People;
- Older People;
- Disability and Mental Health; and
- Homelessness.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- In total, approximately £979m was invested through the Housing Executive into housing programmes and services across Northern Ireland;
- We ensured that 17.8% of Supporting People spend was on floating support, exceeding the target of 17.5% set-out in the PI; and
- We exceeded our KPI target for elemental improvements (including bathrooms, kitchens, loft insulation) with 24,680 achieved, improving living conditions for many of our tenants and their families.

Objective 4: *We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help reduce poverty and improve Health & Well-being.*

Homelessness

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 prevent them becoming homeless.

Whilst we are the organisation with the statutory responsibility for addressing homelessness in Northern Ireland, we can only achieve this goal by harnessing support and working in partnership and collaboration with a wide range of organisations both within and beyond the homelessness sector.

During 2023/24, there were 16,943 households that presented to the Housing Executive, representing an increase of 6.13% from 15,965 presentations during the previous year. Of those presenting, 11,537 were accepted as Full Duty Applicants and owed a full housing duty, increasing from 10,349 (11.48%) from 2022/23. Accommodation not reasonable; Loss of private rented accommodation and sharing breakdown/family dispute, remained the top three reasons for homelessness presentations, with approximately 63% of presenters being in these categories in 2023/24.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- The Housing Executive was unable to deliver a Homelessness Prevention Fund as there was insufficient funding during 2023/24, and we did not achieve the corresponding KPI. Whilst funding specifically for homelessness prevention projects was not realised, there has been significant and ongoing work between the Homeless Unit and colleagues in Finance to make the case for funding for homelessness and in particular prevention throughout 2023/24. During the year the Housing Executive led on a range of actions relevant to homelessness prevention including;

- Supporting the delivery of Homelessness Awareness Week;
 - Engaging with partners in the education sector; and
 - Seeking to develop an awareness campaign in the community sector.
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- We achieved a KPI to increase the amount stock available for use as temporary accommodation. Through the acquisition of additional single lets we achieved a net increase of 167 active single lets on the portfolio since the beginning of June 2023;
 - Continued engagement and consultation took place with DfC and, subject to Board approval, it is anticipated the pilot for Housing First allocations will be initiated early in 2024/25. We did not achieve the KPI to increase the amount of stock from a baseline of 46 properties in the 2023/24 year, due to funding constraints;
 - Our KPI to 'end the use of bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation [excluding self-contained units] as temporary housing for children for more than two weeks', was not met as placements into temporary accommodation increased by 10.9% from 10,253 placements during 2022/23 to 11,368 placements during 2023/24; and
 - The Housing Executive continues to work with Homeless Connect in the delivery of Lived Experience Groups and the linked KPI. Through the Lived Experience Groups we collected feedback regarding the Fundamental Review of Allocations proposals 4 and 9. In addition, there was significant effort to develop an outline for a Lived Experience Programme in the absence of funding during 2023/24. Work focused on engagement with key partners, including Housing Rights, Homeless Connect and Homewards, to explore ways for a collaborative approach to participative work via a Lived Experience Programme Working Group.

Adaptations and Grants

In both areas of our work, adaptations to our own stock and for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for work to be carried out in the private sector, we have sought to improve service delivery times, whilst also continuing to deliver these adaptations for tenants who require these.

For those vulnerable people, both in the private sector and our own tenants, who prefer to remain in their homes, we administer a variety of grants and adaptations to support them. For our tenants, where an occupational therapist from the appropriate Health & Social Care Trust makes a recommendation, and depending on its feasibility, we undertake bespoke adaptations to our own stock. These are often complex adaptations and extensions (external and internal) and may include bedroom or bathroom extensions, provision of ground floor WC and/or ground floor showers, level access showers, access ramps and specialist baths and toilets. We have reviewed our major adaptations process and are aiming to reduce the time to deliver these. Minor adaptations, such as handrails and widening of footpaths and alterations to lighting, can be installed without the need for a referral to the Health and Social Care Trust.

DFGs are managed by the Housing Executive. The design of accommodation and the availability of financial support to adapt the home to meet occupants' changing needs enables people, including older citizens, to remain comfortably in their own homes with as much independence as possible. (DFGs, like most grants, are subject to annual funding and means testing of applicants).

Related KPIs and achievements:

- For 2023/24, we had a PI to improve service delivery times for DFGs that were inside the Housing Executive's control. We looked at our performance in 2021/22 over four key stages of the DFG process that we control and agreed a baseline of 318 calendar days for those four stages. A target to decrease that baseline by 7.5% gave us a benchmark of 294 days. By end 2023/24 we exceeded this target with the teams achieving a processing time of 227 calendar days;
- During 2023/24 we approved 805 DFGs, monitored as part of a PI, with a commitment value of £14.98 million and 687 projects completed at a value of £12.1 million;
- The other mandatory grant we administer is for Repair Grants, which follow the issue of statutory notices by local councils. We paid out £474k resulting in vital improvements to 270 properties in the private rented sector;
- Linked to a PI we started 3,894 minor adaptations for people with a disability in Housing Executive stock;
- We started 27 major adaptations to Housing Executive stock, missing the target of 110 set-out in the PI. Failure to achieve this target is attributed to numerous challenges faced throughout 2023/24, with the most predominant being the inability to award the relevant contract, as it did not represent value for money; and

We continued to work on improving service delivery times for major adaptations. This involved close partnership working with project delivery staff, our housing and health colleagues and other statutory agencies.

Delivering the Supporting People Programme

The Supporting People Programme funds housing related support services to a wide range of clients, many of whom have significant vulnerabilities. The Supporting People budget is invested mainly to support the work of voluntary and community organisations in providing the Programme. This work allows people to avail of supported living, helps people to remain in their own homes through the provision of floating support.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- The target for the 2023/24 PI was to increase the number of Supporting People units by 300 (subject to funding). However, DfC requested the Housing Executive do not enter into any new financial commitments, due to budget uncertainty, and this was adhered to.

Older People

The Older People's Housing Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26 was published in March 2021 and is accompanied by annual Action Plans. There are four themes within this strategy:

- Planning for the future – exploring housing options for older people and supporting independent living;
- Promoting and maintaining people's dignity;
- Housing Advice for older people; and
- Promoting participation.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- Significant work was undertaken to further reduce timescales for major adaptations to our stock, and we participated in an Interdepartmental Health and Adaptations Programme Board and an Adaptations Working Group, part of the HCN, to identify ways to streamline and improve the customer experience;
- In partnership with Housing Associations, we continued to progress four Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI ¹) schemes;
- Since 2020 the Northern Ireland Energy Advice Service (NIEAS) has helped our community with over 25,500 unique queries and annually signposts almost 50% of their calls to available energy grants. This advice offers vital help via energy cost saving information to vulnerable householders, older people and those on low incomes;
- During 2023/34, we successfully achieved a PI to improve our tenant's financial circumstances through the delivery of our 'Making Your Money Work' and Financial Inclusion services. Through this service we provided advice and assistance with household budgets and benefits entitlement, using a Benefit and Budgeting calculator, while frontline staff carried out over 250 benefit calculations themselves. We also made referrals for floating support services for tenants with perceived vulnerabilities - nearly 250 tenants were referred for extra help;
- During the year we achieved an SO to support DfC to deliver their Residential Climate Action Plan 2023-2027 and started on site with the first schemes in a Low Carbon Retrofit Programme of 300 properties (including 29 bungalows) that will further test various low carbon heating options. In turn this will ultimately inform the review of our Heating Policy; and
- We continued to tackle fear of crime issues for those elderly groups within our communities. In 2023/24 almost £600K was awarded to a range of voluntary and community groups to partner with councils in order to address community safety issues in our estates.

¹ HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) principles are based on 10 key design criteria, primarily linked to good design principles - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage. HAPPI principles also have particular relevance to older persons' housing, which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home, and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

Communities

In addition to our core functions as a landlord including allocating homes, collecting rent and maintaining properties, we also invest heavily in the communities we serve to help create vibrant, safe and sustainable communities. We aim to achieve this through the work of our Community Safety, Community Involvement, Community Cohesion, Estate Services, Social Enterprise and Customer Excellence Teams.

We have been working closely with communities since our inception and this remains a priority for us. We have developed a number of policies set out below to improve our services and the enjoyment of the homes and estates we manage.

Community Safety

We continue to implement the annual Action Plans for our Community Safety Strategy. We aim to improve community safety and we will work with our communities to tackle and prevent Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The Strategy's 3 key aims are:

- Building community confidence;
- Ensuring local solutions; and
- Working together.

Addressing ASB requires a multi-agency approach and we continue to build on relationships, partnership solutions and multi-agency forums. During 2023/24 we responded to 1,534 reports of alleged ASB. We continued to use an incremental and proportionate approach in responding to reports of ASB and the majority of reports are resolved through the use of interventions such as warning letters and follow-up visits by local office staff.

Where appropriate, we used legal powers to end unacceptable behaviour and during 2023/24, two properties were returned to us following relevant action.

During 2023/24, our procured mediation service provider worked on 43 neighbour disputes. With funding from the Housing Executive and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), our community based restorative partners, Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) and Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), provided mediation and community support in 628 cases of neighbour disputes.

On an annual basis, funding is made available from the Community Safety budget to a range of community based groups and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) to enable the development of local solutions to address ASB in Housing Executive estates. Almost £600K was awarded to voluntary and community groups to partner with councils to address community safety issues.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- We successfully published and implemented Year 4 actions for our Community Safety Strategy 'Working Together for Safer Communities 2020 – 2023', achieving an SO. The strategy is supported by annual Action Plans and we continued to work with a range of partners across statutory,

voluntary and community sectors. Following Tenant and Customer Services Committee approval, the Community Safety Strategy 'Working Together for Safer Communities 2020-2023' and the associated Action Plan has been extended until the end of 2024. This was to allow the Housing Executive to take account of a review of ASB legislation, Hate Crime legislation and other potential legislative changes. Work on the new Strategy has commenced including pre-consultation. It is anticipated the new Strategy will be in place at the end of 2024.

Community Involvement

The Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023 was developed to help foster vibrant communities, and it provides a framework for the Housing Executive, tenants, residents and leaseholders to work together towards mutually agreed outcomes.

Related KPIs and achievements:

During 2023/24 we successfully delivered a PI to implement Year 6 of the strategy. Key achievements included:

- Conducting research to establish a baseline of current participation levels and participant's views across our communities;
- Progressing on all our current Service Level Agreements to support our hard to reach groups;
- Continuing to support the Central Housing Forum to challenge and lobby our services;
- Continuing our work with the Working Groups to ensure the Housing Executive increases tenant, resident and leaseholder engagement; and
- We awarded Community Grants totalling £268K to groups across all 13 areas.

Community Cohesion

The Housing Executive invested over £700K into our communities through Cohesion funding during 2023/24. Our Good Relations Officers, Race Relations Officer and Interface Officer work in partnership with communities to implement our Community Cohesion Strategy, producing practical and tangible actions that benefits those communities. During the year we successfully implemented the 2023/24 Action plan, including the following key achievements:

- We funded and administered 132 estate based good relations projects, and 20 race relations projects;
- We supported 10 projects in Whitewell and a funded worker in Glenbank via the Areas at Risk Programme in North Belfast, on behalf of DfC;
- We supported the development and implementation of 15 reimagining projects via a community-led approach, addressing the physical manifestations of segregation within and between our estates;
- We worked in partnership with DfC and 12 Housing Associations, to deliver the Housing for All Programme;

- By the end of 2023/24 we had completed work at 16 interface locations and have invested funding into our communities;
- Delivered 23 Positive expressions of culture projects; and
- We have continued to work in partnership with DfC to support the delivery of 77 shared new build schemes on the Shared Housing Programme.

In addition to this, work with Housing Associations will continue throughout 2024/25 to develop Good Relations Plans through the establishment of Advisory Groups.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- The KPI to implement our Community Cohesion Strategy and develop a new Community Cohesion Strategy was met. A new Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy was developed in year, and when a 12 week public consultation is complete we plan to launch the new Strategy in October 2024.

Objective 5: *We will involve our customers to ensure that they are at the heart of service improvements and our business delivery model.*

Related KPIs and achievements:

- In-line with the PI, discussions were held with Senior Management in September 2023 on proposed approaches to further measure tenant satisfaction. Subsequently, an initial scoping report was provided to management, with assessment of the next steps to be provided prior to further exploration, based on management approvals of selected options;
- The CTOS data for Quarter 4 of the 2023 calendar year shows the number of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home was 83%, exceeding the target of 80%. 69% of our tenants were satisfied with the way the Housing Executive deals with repairs, which is below the target of 71% in the linked PI. The likely contributors to the reduction in tenant satisfaction with repairs include ongoing issues including delays as the result of gaps and transitions in contract delivery, contractor backlogs, ongoing impacts of industrial action, resource and supply chain issues and delays in planned maintenance works placing greater pressure upon response maintenance;
- We completed a benchmarking exercise for the 2022/23 year with '[Housemark](#)' (in-line with a corresponding KPI), which assessed our performance in 26 key performance indicators with other Housing Associations of a similar size and scale. The results show the Housing Executive was in the first or second quartile in 18 out of 26 areas (69%);
- We received Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation in November 2023, achieving the associated PI;
- We successfully achieved an SO to implement the final year of the Community Involvement Strategy, and developed a new strategy for implementation in 2024/25. We awarded funding of £268k via our Community Grants programme and continued to support both the Housing Community Network and Central Housing Forum; and
- We progressed the Delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 Year 2 Action Plan via a Lived Experience Programme Working Group, which met

for the first time January 2024. It's membership consisted of Housing Rights; Homeless Connect; and Homewards, the Royal Foundation.

Objective 6: *We will be an employer of choice and deliver high quality services for all in Northern Ireland's increasingly diverse community.*

Attracting, retaining and developing a talented workforce

As a large and inclusive organisation with over 3,400 people working throughout Northern Ireland in a challenging labour market we want to be an employer of choice, reflective of our diverse community and known for developing and nurturing our people.

- We continue to offer great career pathways and we will further develop our graduate, apprenticeship and entry level opportunities to ensure that we attract, develop, retain and enable our people to reach their full potential;
- Through our new Learning Academy we will ensure that we develop the required skills and competencies and that we develop our leaders of the future; and
- We will work with partners to consider how we can develop talent for the wider sector and continue to support the development of Apprenticeship programmes through our contracts.

We will be ambitious and uncompromising in our pledge to ensure our workforce reflects the communities we serve. We will deliver an Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) across the organisation to attract and retain diverse talent.

Related KPIs and achievements:

- During the year we achieved the SO to implement our APP. The plan covers the period 2021-2026 and details a number of objectives and actions to address areas where staff with protected characteristics are underrepresented. We set this out under three broad areas: advertising and outreach; culture and working environment; and specific actions for protected characteristics;
- During the year we were successful in our submission for the Silver level Diversity Charter Mark which endorses our hard work in seeking to create an inclusive and diverse workplace where all employees can feel valued, safe and respected;
- In 2023/24 our EDI Steering Group, comprised of senior managers from across the organisation, met formally three times and continued to provide strategic oversight on the delivery of the AAP. The EDI Steering Group has received regular reports on activities to meet AAP objectives, including statistical reports on recruitment activities, the review of advertising strategy, partnership working and other outreach activities (detailed below). In 2023/24 the EDI Steering Group also oversaw the delivery of an innovative new Autism Awareness Training programme in partnership with the Department of Health and the Cedar Foundation. Over 600 colleagues attended these sessions;
- The EDI Steering Group continued to support the development of our new EDI workstreams to provide colleagues with the opportunity to support the

delivery of our EDI objectives and identify actions to identify actions to create a more inclusive culture. The work streams cover the following protected groups: Community Background, Disability, Gender/Sex, Race and Sexual Orientation (LGBTQ+). The work streams have outlined key priority areas for their respected groups and have been involved in shaping the annual EDI awareness calendar and in delivering activities to raise awareness of our EDI commitments. This has included networking events as part of International Women's Day, Belfast Pride, Belfast Mela, Disability Pride Month and Baby Loss Awareness Month. Employers for Disability also continued to deliver awareness sessions as part of our 'Learn at Lunch' programme, with sessions on sight loss, hidden disabilities, physical disabilities and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995)/ Disability Discrimination (NI) Order (2006). Work streams have also been consulted on key policy reviews, including flexible working arrangements, and our feedback to statutory consultations, such as the Autism Strategy and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy;

- We have taken proactive steps to increase our visibility as an employer and to promote the wide range of career opportunities here at the Housing Executive. This Outreach programme included working more closely with the DfC's Employment Team to promote vacancies through the JobApply NI website, and to help us access more job and careers fair events. We attended fairs across the country in 2023/24, targeting our presence in areas to help us address under-representation of applicants from Protestant community backgrounds. We have also been taking action to promote our careers to young people, including through the launch of a new Work Inspiration Programme in partnership with Business in the Community, and in June 2023 we also took part in Catalyst's Generation Innovation Initiative to engage with young people through design thinking projects. Further to that, we continued to deliver our Apprenticeship and Graduate programmes, providing opportunities work and learn with the Housing Executive. We also worked closely with Women's Tec to raise awareness of our trades and technical roles, to help promote careers in traditionally male dominated roles;
- We achieved the SO to ensure compliance with the legislative framework governing employment and we ensured we fully discharged our responsibilities under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. This included:
 - ✓ Screening 14 Policies;
 - ✓ Holding 11 Equality Awareness Training Sessions and 10 Corporate Induction sessions, with 384 staff attending;
 - ✓ Holding two full meetings of the Consultative Forum on Equality;
 - ✓ Completing four Quarterly Reports on the Implementation of the Equality Scheme;
 - ✓ Developing two Equality Monitoring Reports;
 - ✓ Providing consultation guidance and support to the Perceptions Survey and the Community Cohesion Strategy;
 - ✓ Responding to 62 Information Requests, including Freedom of Information requests; and

- ✓ Providing a range of Communication Support Services including:
11,403 Telephone language Interpreting Calls (compared to 6,571 last year); 386 Requests for Document Translations; 29 Requests for Alternative Formats including large print; 71 Face to Face Interpreting Requests; 55 Sign Language Interpreting Requests; and 378 Video Relay Service (VRS sign language) Calls.
- We achieved the SO to roll-out an Employee Engagement Survey in May 2023 with an added 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Demographics' section (to explore diversity representation within the Housing Executive).

Housing Community Network (HCN)

For over 50 years the Housing Executive has played a leading role in the physical, environmental and social development of our local communities. There has always been the recognition that housing strategies and policies are more than bricks and mortar, community involvement has been described as "The jewel in the Housing Executive's crown" by the Customer Service Excellence Assessor.

This is complemented by the organisation's ability to rise to new challenges and adapt to political, social and economic changes to deliver a first-class service that makes a positive difference in people's lives. Community Involvement is a cornerstone of the Housing Executive's service, and we commit approximately £1.6 million annually to ensure its success, this is a considerable investment, and it is important that maximum benefit is delivered to local communities.

The HCN was established by the Housing Executive 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, training, information and skills to challenge and lobby us as an organisation.

Community Involvement and Community Cohesion strategies, review/evaluations

In developing our new strategy, we have been given the opportunity to review the key achievements of the outgoing strategies, reflecting not only upon our strengths but on areas for development. Many significant outcomes have been delivered as part of the Community Involvement and Community Cohesion strategies.

Feedback obtained through the tenant participation survey and HCN survey has been vital in assessing our performance, satisfaction with current structures, and identifying improvements in how we work and shape our policies and services. Both strategies are now merged in to one and at this stage the combined policy is

out for public consultation. It is planned to launch the new strategy at the Community conference on the 23rd October 2024.

Central Housing Forum (CHF)

Representatives from each of the 13 Area HCNs, the Disability Forum, the Rural Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum sit on the Central Housing Forum.

The CHF is chaired by a Chair and Vice Chair who are elected by Forum members. The Forum meets with the Chair, Chief Executive and representatives from the Housing Executive's Board twice each year.

All major policy changes are consulted on with the CHF before they are progressed to the Executive Team and the Housing Executive's Board. The Forum has also developed a refreshed Manifesto to provide it with a lobbying and challenge function, particularly in lobbying local government on issues such as reinstating the Housing Executive's new build function.

- 12 CHF meetings held in 2023/24.
- 30 Working group meetings held in 2023/24

Resident and Interagency meetings

Resident and Interagency partnerships have been established in all areas and strive to make our estates better places in which to live. These meetings involve other statutory partners, Housing Associations, tenants, residents and leaseholders. Partnership working can include estate inspections which involve 'walkabouts' around estates to identify issues.

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 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.

- 108 Inter-Agency Panels/ Housing Forums
- 125 Estate Inspections across all 13 Areas
- 197 meetings across Central, Regional, and Area levels

Underrepresented Forums

The Housing Executive currently engages with underrepresented groups through funding agreements. The objective is to ensure that their voices are heard and that all major policies are consulted on with them. These Forums include Youth, Disability and Rural.

Housing Executive's Youth Forum

This is facilitated by Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

- 2023/24 cohort completed the development phase of the project,
- Progressed to shadow phase of the programme, that has seen them shadow Good Relations Officers (GRO's) and Community Development Officers (CDO's) meeting community groups and local HCN's.
- Continued representation on working groups / helped facilitate CI & Cohesion strategy public consultation.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHJK3izPeZY>

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.

- Presentations/Consultations that took place in 2023/24: -Community Involvement and Community Cohesion Strategy; Equality Diversity, Inclusion and Safeguarding (EDIS) Team – Recruitment; Adaptation Leaflet; Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) Materials
- Upcoming events in 2024/25: - Inclusive Design – Housing and Health Team; Homelessness Presentation; Review Housing Executive Office Audit; Review of Tenant Manual

Rural Residents Forum is facilitated by the Rural Community Network (RCN). It is a regional voluntary membership-based organisation supporting rural communities across Northern Ireland. RCN works with rural communities to address issues relating to poverty, inequality, community and good relations and strives to develop the capacity and skills of groups to articulate their voice at a policy influence level.

- Researching and highlighting barriers and opportunities for rural new build development.
- Helping to address poverty in rural areas.

- Working with Housing Executive's Rural Unit to identify hidden need, strengthen & support the delivery of housing needs tests in rural communities.
- Strategy & Policy.
- Focus on Tradesmen workmanship.

Adaptations Working Group

- Updated on Housing & Health Assurance Framework
- Review Private Sector Disabled Facilities Grant Introductory Leaflet
- Review of Adaptations Leaflet
- Home Improvement Agency Services to be reviewed.
- Occupational Therapists joining meetings.

Digital Inclusion Working Group

- HCN Members Forum spent time with the Tenant Portal developer addressing issues raised at the feedback review. This resulted in new processes being put in place to help alleviate the issues. For instance, the inclusion of a calendar.
- Training session for CHF members held on 24th April 2023. Over 34 registration and Learning Sessions held with 249 attendees.
- Tenant Portal, Customer portal now has 23,536 registered users which is 28% of our tenants. Future plans include adding/uploading a photo to repair requests, adding tenancy documentation to the portal and area specific broadcast messaging. Additionally, the portal tiles can be used to keep tenants updated of any new or beneficial information.
- Succession Planning is a priority within the working group due to decline in membership. NIYF members have been identified.

Welfare Reform & Financial Inclusion Working Group

- The group discussed Universal Credit, New Claims, Active Caseload and Rent increase process.
- Financial Inclusion Managers provided updates on Make Your Money Work Services, referrals at local HCN meetings.
- The group was also advised about managed migration, migration timetable, migration notices to legacy benefit claimants and the next phase of Move, Rollout dates and what tenant support is available.

Sustainable Development Working Group

- Met with Head of Sustainable Development and Project Managers to discuss carrying out site visits on the 300 Low Carbon Programme. The programme is a whole house approach including retrofitting, renewable power generation, time use of electric tariffs, low carbon heating and householder education and empowerment.
- To receive an update on the data monitoring kits used in the programme.

Fundamental Review of Allocations Advisory Panel

- The reassessment of the social housing waiting list due to commence in March 2024 and will last for 9 months. Everyone on the list will be assessed and it will be rolled out on an area-by-area basis.
- Points changes will only take effect after everyone has been assessed in 2025. The list will be kept up to date if there are any changes.
- STAGE TWO PLAN – GROUP 2 CHANGES
 - Proposal 12-14 Changes to multiple Offers for Difficult-to-let properties – Draft Multi Offer Letter (Review)
 - Proposals 17 & 18 - Withholding Consent for a Policy Succession or Policy Assignment in specific circumstances – Comms Literature
 - Proposal 6 Greater use of Mutual Exchange
- Members reviewed communication going to tenants relating to Fundamental Review of Allocations.
- There were constraints due to lack of Minister sign off.

Cost of Living

- Updated on the Tenancy Sustainability Action plan.
- Group have discussed the Sustaining Tenancy Fund and successful projects.
- Discussions around Tenancy starter packs and their contents
- Information given on what services Listening Ear provides.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Panel

- Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Subgroup held its first meeting on 2nd February 2024.
- Meeting to be held with members from Strategic Cohesion Forum to consider how the group can align with EDI group or if they wish to be a separate entity. Members will also be asked to review the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy.

- The EDI Subgroup will continue when a decision has been made to include Forum members or not.

Community Investment Advisory Panel

- Initial meeting held in February 2024.
- Individual group applications will not be discussed at this group. It was suggested that 'Conflict of Interest' be added to future agendas as a standing item.
- Overview of Housing Executive administered funding provided.
- Members can provide suggestions for the funding processes and eligibility. Further discussions took place around sharing good practice and successful projects.

DLO Materials

- Members updated on materials being used by DLO.
- Pilot Home information day where a video of the property was shown of the property recently finished with DLO products.
- Site visit to be setup to visit the pilot properties in South Area and/or Belfast.

Other groups in development

- **Maintenance** - To help provide focus on planned maintenance schemes, response maintenance and apprentices. Maintenance to properties affects all tenants at some stage in their tenancy and HCN/CHF wanted to acknowledge this.
- **Community Safety** - To assist with development of the new Community Safety Strategy

- 2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

The response to this question builds on the previous question which shows how the main work of the Housing Executive, providing housing services and supporting families in their homes, is directly related to promoting equality. Our policies and services are developed to target housing need which is directly aligned with targeting housing inequality. The outputs listed in the previous section demonstrate this in terms of new housing provision, Supporting People, Homelessness, Community safety and cohesion and Grants amongst other outputs. Other sections in this report set out the supporting elements that enhance mainstreaming including policy screening, training, consultation, and access to information and services.

In this section we set out additional impacts and outputs that contribute to enhancing equality. The Housing Executive's EDIS Team works closely with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Teams, business planners, place shapers and policy makers to ensure due regard to equality is paid in the development and implementation of policy, making sure that equality is at the heart of all policy.

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.

The previous question is centred on the services we provide to our customers however there has also been a wide range of equality initiatives being driven internally by a new People Strategy. Key activities in 2024/25 include:

Human Resources Advisory

Our Human Resources Advisory Team is based within the Corporate Services Directorate and provides people orientated services for employees across the Housing Executive. During the year the work of the Human Resources Advisory team concentrated on the delivery of our People Strategy.

The key priorities and achievements of the team were:

- The total number of recruitment exercises increased to 256 (a 10.8% increase compared to last year) with 250 appointments to date from these exercises. 4,205 applications were received across these recruitment exercises which included large scale campaigns for Housing Advisors and Patch Managers, Finance Apprentices, Housing Graduates and a number

of administrative roles; Where appropriate we promoted these vacancies through our outreach work under the Affirmative Action Plan.

- There are a number of correlations between promoting equality and Health and Wellbeing and in 2023/24 we achieved three accreditations. In October 2023 we were one of the first employers to be awarded the highest level of 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' and this will enable us to embed a culture of wellbeing and inclusion in line with our People Strategy. In November 2023 we received the 'Work Well, Live Well Award', which recognises organisations that commit to improving the health and wellbeing of their employees. In March 2024 we were the first large public sector employer to be awarded the Silver 'We Invest in Wellbeing' accreditation by 'Investors in People'. The recommendations will help us to focus our action plan for 2024-2026 and will assist us to improve attendance;
- We launched a number of new equality based policies this year. In June 2023 we launched a new Reasonable Adjustments Policy to set out a consistent approach to considering and implementing reasonable adjustments for people who have a disability. In September 2023 we launched a new innovative Flexible Working policy to improve the working lives of our people while enabling us to continue to meet customer needs. In October 2023 a new Health & Wellbeing Policy was launched along with other guidance to support managers and employees in a range of areas including Wellbeing Action Planning, Stress and Menopause; and
- We delivered a range of People Management masterclasses across the organisation to further embed our core policies and equip managers to implement these in their areas of responsibility. The sessions have been well attended and received excellent feedback from both managers and trade union colleagues.

During 2024/25 we will focus on implementing an updated People Strategy Action Plan which was recently approved by the Housing Executive's Executive Team and will continue to implement our Health & Wellbeing Strategy. This will include seeking to implement a new pay and grading structure across the Housing Executive (subject to trade union consultation), and further embedding our new Flexible Working Practices policy and culture. We will implement a comprehensive workforce plan to continue to populate our structures and further embed our core people policies.

Learning and Organisational Development (L&OD)

The L&OD function was established in September 2021 and comprises four departments: L&OD, Programme Management Office (PMO), Business Planning and Performance (BP&P) and EDIS.

The L&OD team ensures the development of our people to reach their goals and the objectives of the organisation now and in the future. In addition to our key equality work which is the principal content of this document, the focus for 2023/24 was on leadership development and developing behaviours (including inclusive behaviours) that support our values, enabling a high performing team culture and clear expectations around our leadership standards. We continue to develop our employer brand to ensure we attract people who are aligned to the work we do and the people we serve. Additionally (and in line with our Affirmative Action Plan) we support the recruitment of a significant number of apprenticeships and graduates.

In this year we rolled out our engagement survey, 'The Big Listen', across all areas of the organisation, to better understand how we can improve the experience of our people and develop engagement plans across the organisation. We also trialled a new performance management process called GROW Conversations, which fully embedded our new Competency Framework and Leadership Charter. Initial feedback and positive results have enabled roll-out of this process on an organisation wide basis. Below are further details on some of the work carried out by the team during 2023/24:

GROW Conversation

During the year the L&OD team finalised our pilot GROW Conversation, which replaces our traditional Performance Management Programme (PMD). Further to feedback from the pilot, improvements were made to both the process and the online plan. The strength building GROW Conversation, which takes a coaching approach, has become a holistic process which incorporates Goal Setting, Health & Wellbeing, Values and Behaviours, Flexible Working, Career and Personal development conversations. It is supported by our newly developed 'Leadership Charter and Competency Framework' which provides clear standards for behaviour, skills and knowledge and opportunities to provide constructive feedback and conduct a gap analysis. This framework includes a quartile centred on equality and inclusion. Linking performance management to our talent management and succession planning initiatives will ensure we are well placed to develop our people to their full potential and ensure future talent needs are considered. Plans are in place to pilot the GROW Conversation corporately in 2024/25 which will enable further feedback and full consultation on this important process.

Leadership Charter and Competency Framework

At our Annual Conference in September 2023, we introduced our new 'Leadership Charter and Competency Framework', which were developed 'by our people, for our people'. The Leadership Charter reflects our Leaders commitment to a set of value statements that defines the characteristics of good leadership within our

Organisation. Our Competency Framework clarifies the knowledge, skills and behaviours that support our core values, and which drive successful performance within the Housing Executive. The Leadership Charter and Competency Framework will be integrated with many people-management processes going forward and has already been woven into the new GROW Conversation to structure and strengthen conversations regarding Leadership, Core Values and Behaviours.

Team Facilitation

Throughout the year the L&OD Team have worked with our business partners across the Housing Executive to grow and develop teams within various departments. Team facilitation has become a central focus for many managers, as its success strengthens and builds on team cohesiveness and provides action plans to create high performing teams.

Housing Executive Coaching Hub

As a development and support initiative we launched our Housing Executive Coaching Hub Pilot Programme, offering 3-6 coaching sessions per person, with one of three accredited internal Coaches. The Coaching Hub has proved very successful and feedback to date has been positive.

Learning Loop

In 2023/24 The L&OD team launched their first edition of 'The Learning Loop' online magazine. This magazine creates an opportunity for the organisation to find out about all the development programmes and courses available and how they can get involved. The first edition of 'The Learning Loop' created a high level of engagement, generating a number of requests to take part in leadership programmes and increased usage of E-Learning offerings within the Learning Zone. The L&OD Team continue to work with the communications team to ensure this becomes a regular online magazine to support with the GROW Conversations.

Engagement: The Big Listen

With a view to ensuring the Housing Executive is a great place to work and one that attracts and retains great people, an Employee Engagement Survey called 'The Big Listen' was launched to all staff in May 2023. This provided an opportunity for everyone in the organisation to share their views on what is going well, what is important to retain, and what needs to change within the Housing Executive.

'The Big Listen', issued by People Insights on behalf of the Housing Executive, enabled benchmarking against other similar organisations, to give the Housing Executive an additional set of feedback to measure ourselves against. The Senior Leadership Team strive to ensure the culture of our organisation creates

opportunities for all to do their work without barriers or blocks, where our people can work in an environment where they feel they belong and where they get to fulfil their potential. In response to the Employee Engagement Survey, and led by our Senior Management Team, plans are being put in place to address areas for improvement.

During 2023/24 the L&OD team successfully achieved a (sub) Objective to implement and embed actions from our Employee Engagement and Reward and Recognition strategies. An updated Reward and Recognition strategy was presented to the Executive Team in March 2024, which has now been accepted as the Housing Executive approach and includes an individual, team and organisational approach to Reward and Recognition. Many of the areas within this strategy have been shaped by ongoing 'Investors In People' work and committed engagement actions. We have communicated the outputs from our engagement survey via a number of 'Big Chats' to Managers and have incorporated key areas in our new GROW conversation framework (i.e. link to new competency framework, leadership charter, key strengths and flexible working check-in).

The Big Chat

The L&OD team continue to deliver a number of informal engagement opportunities through 'The Big Chat'. Staff are invited to take part, providing an opportunity to build networks across the organisation, receive information about upcoming initiatives and give feedback and opinions in relation to same. The 'Big Chat' was an effective way to build momentum for the introduction of the 'GROW Conversation.

Employer Branding

Following a decision to review the overall Housing Executive brand, we decided to gradually integrate our new Employer Brand using key messaging, graphics and placement in the labour market. Our new Employer branding is currently being developed for our careers page and has been used in recent apprenticeship engagement opportunities at local colleges and schools. It has also been used on advertising for our work experience programme in June 2024 and our promotional materials for external circulation in job adverts and at various job fairs, and outreach events such as PRIDE and MELA. The Communication team are redesigning our Careers page to include the new branding, incorporate our chosen colour scheme and incorporate specific wording that demonstrates our Unique Selling Point as an employer (these updates will also be applied to all posts on social media).

Apprenticeships

The L&OD team have continued to support the recruitment, training and mentoring of a number of apprenticeships in the organisation. Since the 2022/23 financial year we have recruited 197 apprentices, traineeships and graduates across the organisation, surpassing our target of 120 apprenticeships. We will continue to liaise with the business to consider where entry level roles could assist with difficult to fill roles, or where new skill sets are required (i.e. green skills, construction skills etc.) and as part of our longer-term succession planning conversations linked to our GROW programme.

Outreach Activity

The Housing Executive continues to deliver on key objectives within its Affirmative Action Plan, including the review of our advertising and outreach activity to ensure that all eligible candidates have the opportunity to apply and that applicant rates are reflective of our diverse communities. Regular meetings have taken place between the EDIS, HR and Communications Teams to review upcoming recruitment activity and ensure opportunities for affirmative action are identified and planned in advance. Outreach activity is regularly monitored and reported through our EDI Steering Group (see page 70).

During the year a new partnership was formed with the Department for Communities (DfC) Employment Team, helping the Housing Executive to enhance its visibility as an inclusive employer and maximise opportunities to promote vacancies through the JobApplyNI website. The partnership also provided access to local job and careers fairs, with the Housing Executive in attendance at over 15 events during the 2023/24 financial year. Attendance at jobs and careers fairs was targeted in areas to help increase applications from under-represented groups, including Protestant Community Background, with events in Antrim, Ballymena and Newtownards. The Housing Executive also launched a new advertising campaign in May 2023. In line with our AAP objectives adverts were placed on billboards and bus stops in areas that would help increase Protestant Community Background applications.

Following the launch of our #notjustforboys partnership in March 2023, the Housing Executive has continued to work alongside Women's Tec in 2023/24 to promote opportunities for women in traditionally male dominated roles. We worked closely with Women's Tec to promote our electrical and plumbing apprenticeship opportunities, advertising through their website and direct emails to their students to raise awareness of our apprenticeship offer. We organised a 'Try a Trade' Event during National Apprenticeship Week to provide taster opportunities to local girl's schools as well as women returners and female colleagues at the Housing Executive. Our partnership also helped to facilitate a work placement opportunity for a female joinery student in our Portadown DLO office. In the next financial year

we will be exploring further opportunities for creating career pathways for women into our DLO and Tech Services teams.

Our partnership with Business in the Community (BITC) continues to support our ambitions to promote careers in housing to young people. In June 2023 we launched a new Work Inspiration Programme, with BITC supporting us to engage with 17 students from 8 different local schools to take part. The two-day programme offered a chance to meet with our Senior Leadership Team, as well as workshops highlighting opportunities within our Asset Management and Housing Services Teams. Students also took part in speed careers sessions, getting an insight into other areas of the business such as our financial inclusion service and our communications department. The programme was well received and will now be delivered annually in partnership with BITC.

In June 2023 the Housing Executive also took part in Generation Innovation – a programme organised by Catalyst and Big Motive and delivered through a design thinking approach. The Housing Executive engaged with students from seven different schools, and tasked them with exploring ideas on how we can attract more diverse talent and promote ourselves as an inclusive employer. At the end of the programme the students presented their ideas as a pitch to our Senior Leadership Team, who were really impressed with their ideas and ensured they were subsequently used to inform our employer branding review. Our annual attendance at the School Summit in the Eikon Centre in Lisburn provided further opportunity to promote our careers to students from schools from across Northern Ireland.

The EDI Outreach Manager has also been engaging throughout the year with a range of customer and stakeholder forums to help promote our careers opportunities in local communities. This included attendance at the Consultative Forum on Equality, Central Housing Forum, Housing Community Network, Rural Residents Forum and the Disability Forum.

External Feedback

The Housing Executive recognises the value and insight that can be gained on its equality performance through external accreditation processes. In 2023/24 we made the decision to aspire to the Silver Diversity Mark to build on our Bronze award, enhancing our commitment beyond gender to other equality areas including race and disability. We have received positive feedback on our submission and are awaiting final confirmation of our silver assessment.

As part of our commitments under the Autism Strategy we will also be exploring accreditation opportunities in 2024/25 to help measure our progress in developing more inclusive practices that support the recruitment and retention of Autistic people.

Supporting People

The Housing Executive, as the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland, has the responsibility for securing the provision of housing-related support services and is responsible for delivering the Supporting People (SP) Programme introduced in April 2003. The Programme is delivered on behalf of the Department for Communities, in partnership with the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Justice (DoJ). The Programme awards grant-funding to provider organisations to enable them to deliver services that provide housing-related support and assistance to service users, thus enabling them to live more independently. Housing-related support enables vulnerable people to develop and maintain the skills necessary to live as independently as possible in their own home.

Supporting People have 3 broad objectives which are 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,
- help to smooth the transition to independent living for those leaving an institutionalised environment.

In 2023/24 the Supporting People Programme supported almost 20,000 vulnerable people across 15 primary client groups. Over 800 housing support services were provided by 80 service providers.

The services are provided by the following sectors:

- Charity/Voluntary Sector (68%)
- Housing Associations (17%)
- HSC Trusts (11%)
- Private Sector & Others (4%)

82.2% of these services are accommodation based and 17.8% are floating support.

The table below shows the different client groups of Supporting People grant funded units including Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA) as at March 2024. The Supporting People Programme has progressively developed over a number of years through close liaison with the Health sector. There are over 200 services that are jointly funded by Health Trusts.

Number of Units			
Primary Client Groups (PCG) March 2024	Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA)	None SNMA	Grand Total
Frail Elderly	147	270	417
Homeless Families with Support Needs		972	972
Offenders or People at risk of Offending		297	297
Older People with Mental Health Problems / Dementia	41	524	565
Older people with support needs	130	9917	10047
People with a Physical or Sensory Disability		430	430
People with Alcohol Problems	13	307	320
People with Drug Problems		30	30
People with Learning Disabilities	107	1412	1519
People with Mental Health Problems		1502	1502
Single Homeless Crisis Accommodation Service		31	31
Single Homeless with Support Needs		1562	1562
Traveller		31	31
Women at Risk of Domestic Violence		1141	1141
Young People		880	880
Grand Total	438	19306	19744

Supporting People Annual Report 2023-2024

The Supporting People Annual Report for 2023/24 gives a detailed account of the work of the Programme for the year ending March 2024. We have continued to

maintain service delivery and effective partnerships with our providers and stakeholders, despite the ongoing challenges.

In 2023/24 a total of £78.748m Supporting People Programme funding was made available to Providers, £14.07m of which was spent on Floating Support.

Supporting People, in collaboration with service providers, has continued to improve the lives of service users by enabling them to live as independently as possible in the community.

The Minister for Communities made additional non-recurring in-year funding for 2023/24 available to Housing Executive to help address cost pressures experienced by Supporting People and Homeless service provider organisations. The amount of funding was £2.725m, approximately 4.25% of 23/24 funding provided and did not extend to SNMA provision or Health Trusts.

Supporting People Outcomes 2023-2024

The principles of the SP Programme are in line with the Draft PfG Outcomes which inform five high level SP Programme Outcomes. The five high-level SP Programme Outcomes are:

1. Improved economic wellbeing for service users
2. Increased number of people living Independently
3. Being healthy
4. Living in safety & security
5. Achieving & making a positive contribution

In the 2023/24 year, the following Outcomes were reported against the 11 SP Outcomes Indicators (at service level) for the four key thematic groups:

- Disability & Mental Health Thematic Group – average 97% overall success rate against the indicators across 32 Providers, delivering 274 services;
- Older People Thematic Group –average 95% overall success rate against the indicators across 28 Providers, delivering 395 services;
- Young People Thematic Group – average 90% overall success rate against the indicators across 13 Providers, delivering 33 Services; and
- Homelessness Thematic Group – average 88% overall success rate against the indicators across 38 Providers, delivering 116 services.

There are a small number of services, known as crisis accommodation services or 'crash services' who work primarily to support vulnerable people who have been rough sleeping. In the 2023/24 year, the crisis accommodation services showed an

overall average success rate of 78% against the Outcomes Indicators across three providers delivering three services.

Supporting People Strategy 2022-2025

The 'Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2022- 2025' was amended to reflect feedback from the Public Consultation and approved by the Housing Executive Board in July 2022.

The Strategic Plan seeks to facilitate the delivery of high-quality housing support and independent living to those most in need, while making best use of the available funding.

The 4 main strategic priorities are:

- Drive Recovery from Covid-19 and prevent lasting adverse impacts from the pandemic by targeting services at those most in need.
- Work with Supporting People Providers to invest in service innovation to achieve greater outcomes.
- Work towards closing the 14% gap between need for services and supply.
- Strengthen relationships across health, criminal justice and housing with the aim of generating greater value from public funds.

The Supporting People Team have been progressing with the delivery of the actions in the 'Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2022- 2025'. 44 actions were designated to 2023/24 and 4 were completed within 2023/24. Two of these actions have been completed in full and two will be carried forward into 2024/25. 28 actions have been partially completed, with a view to being fully completed by the end of 2024/25. 12 actions that require additional budget are not expected to be progressed.

Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Projects 2023/24

The Finance, Audit and Assurance Division administer the Welfare Reform function on behalf of Regional Services. The Housing Benefit Projects Team oversees Welfare Reform changes and brings forward a number of initiatives as follows:

- **Continuation of mitigation payments for those impacted by SSSC and Benefit Cap:** Welfare Supplementary Payments (mitigation) were due to end in 2020. However, the Minister for Communities announced plans to extend the mitigations to the Bedroom Tax beyond 31st March 2020 and payments continued. On 8th February 2022, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed legislation to extend the provision of Welfare Supplementary Payments for those affected by Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax), and closed loopholes in the legislation which meant Social Sector tenants lose entitlement to Welfare Supplementary Payments when they moved without reducing their level of under-occupation. The new legislation also amended current SSSC policy so that those tenants who have previously lost Welfare Supplementary Payments can have had them reinstated (if they remain eligible).

The Department for Communities will be undertaking a review of mitigations, with a view to producing a report setting out its assessment of the operation of each of the ongoing Welfare Supplementary Payment schemes, by 31st March 2025. The Housing Executive have provided information to inform the review.

- **Move to UC:** The natural migration of Housing Benefit customers to Universal Credit (UC) continued throughout the year, and by the end of the 2024/25 financial year the DfC plans to complete the migration to Universal Credit for those people in receipt of:
 - Working Tax Credits/Child Tax Credits (including those on both ESA and Tax Credits),
 - Income Support,
 - Jobseeker's Allowance, and
 - Housing Benefit only.

Following the Chancellors Autumn statement in 2022, it was announced that customers in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (with no Tax Credits), with or without Housing Benefit would not migrate to Universal Credit to 2028/29. However, on 19th April 2024, the Prime Minister made a speech which included the announcement to bring forward the migration of Employment Support Allowance with or without Housing Benefit to Universal Credit. The Department for Communities is working to assess the impact of this announcement and will provide an update on the future plans for the migration of these customers.

- **Housing Benefit (Rates) and Low Income Rate Relief for Owner-Occupiers:** On 1st June 2022, the Housing Executive became responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit (Rates) and Low Income Rate Relief for owner-occupiers. At the end of March 2024 there were 35,827 owner-occupiers claiming Housing Benefit (Rates) and Low-Income Rate Relief (LIRR). Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, we paid out £33.35m in Housing Benefit (Rates) and LIRR, assessing 1,362 new claims for Housing Benefit (Rates) and dealing with 13,168 changes to existing claims notified by claimants and 983,568 changes notified via the Department for Work and Pensions (an information system that informs local authorities of any change to other social security benefits or Tax Credits).
- **The Digital Transformation Programme:** This programme incorporates a number of projects which will increase digital inclusion and improve customer awareness and accessibility to available financial support within Housing Benefit. These projects include:
 - Online access to Housing Benefit services and financial support schemes,
 - Move from surface mail to email for Housing Benefit customers,
 - Greater use of social media to communicate with customers, and
 - Enhancements to the Housing Executive's website.

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 developed a range of partnerships with other agencies and communities in an effort to prevent ASB from arising and 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 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, Community Safety funding has been provided to a range of community-based groups, PCSP's, Councils and voluntary sector groups to enable the development of local solutions to address unacceptable and anti-social behaviour 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

During 2023/24 we successfully implemented Year 3 actions of our community safety strategy 'Working Together for Safer Communities 2020 – 2023' which spans 3 main themes:

- 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.

The strategy is supported by annual action plans, and we will continue to work with a range of partners across statutory, voluntary and community sectors. The success of the strategy is evidenced through the Customer Satisfaction Surveys which indicate that tenant confidence in staff is at a high level in dealing with anti-social behaviour. This year's results show that:

- 86% of our customers felt that it was easy to contact a member of staff to report their complaint.
- 86% felt that staff dealing with their complaint were helpful, courteous, sensitive, responsive and knowledgeable.

- 83% felt that they would be willing to report ASB to the Housing Executive in the future.

The Housing Executive's Tenant & Customer Services Committee (Board Committee) approved an extension to the current Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023 until the end of 2024. This was in order to take cognisance of potential legislative and policy changes in the wider Northern Ireland Executive context of Community Safety, as this would impact the direction of any new Community Safety Strategy going forward some of which include:

- Hate Crime Legislative Review (led by DoJ)
- ASB Legislative Review (led by DoJ)
- Launch and application of new Draft Protocol for Restorative Justice (led by DoJ)

The current Strategy has been reviewed, considering feedback from a number of pre-consultation processes and is currently being finalised for Board approval, in advance of being issued for Public Consultation. The new Strategy has been the result of substantial work including with the CHF and hard to reach groups, statutory stakeholders etc in order to co-deliver the review, and input into the development of the new Strategy itself. We recognise that community safety is a shared responsibility requiring close collaboration between housing authorities, key stakeholders, tenants and communities themselves. It is envisaged that the final approved Strategy will be in place before the end of 2024.

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 2023/24, repairs to 8 properties were undertaken in line with the HIPA scheme (8 in 2022/23). A Service Level Agreement between the Housing Executive, DoJ, PSNI and DfC is in place.

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

Early Intervention

Preventative measures continue to be used widely and reflect our strategic focus on early intervention. During 2023/24, 32% (476) of concluded ASB cases were due to the use of warning letters and interviews with perpetrators.

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 are funded to deliver a Mediation and Community Support (MACS) service as a means of addressing reported incidents of ASB. The MACS projects provide community-based mediation by addressing anti-social activities, neighbourhood disputes, family issues etc.

During 2023/24 these organisations provided mediation and community support in 780 neighbour dispute cases, 152 of these cases addressed issues around hate through projects specifically funded to deal with hate incidents or crimes.

During 2023/24 our procured mediation provider Tides Training & Consultancy, intervened in 43 neighbour disputes between individuals and families.

Operational Performance

In 2023/24 Housing Executive local offices reported a total of 1,534 cases of ASB (1,397 new cases and 137 re-opened cases). Of the 1,397 new cases of ASB:

- 30% (420) related to noise nuisance.
- 15% (207) related harassment & verbal abuse.
- 11% (154) related to problems with pets and animals.

The organisation served 12 Notice Seeking Possessions. One property was repossessed after the services of the Enforcement of Judgements Office (EJO) and 1 terminated after a Notice were served.

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 (CSR) – Volunteering and Fundraising 2023-24

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.

In the 2022 we established a charity committee. In 2023 the committee selected Age NI as the nominated charity from April 2023 to March 2025.

In 2023/24, we saw an increase in charitable giving due to the increased opportunities for fundraising, post Covid-19. However, it hasn't fully returned to

pre-Covid figures. The cost of living, no doubt, continues to have an impact on people's ability to give.

Staff have continued to have limited opportunities to engage in individual volunteering as many charities have reduced or cancelled larger scale (team) volunteering opportunities.

Fundraising

Our staff donated a substantial **£45,214.50** to a range of charities through our payroll giving scheme (sometimes known as 'give as you earn'). This was **up £1,138.50** from 2022/23.

The Payroll Giving scheme enables staff to make a donation to a charity of their choice before their tax is deducted. Of our 3,050 employees 429 contribute to charities via payroll giving.

We also raised money via a wide range of internal events. This makes a total of £10,945.97 raised during the first year of the charity partnership.

Aside from payroll giving and moneys raised for our nominated charity our staff also supported a range of other charities through a variety of fundraisers that they asked us to promote for them. This money was raised through a wide variety of activities including bake and other sales, coffee mornings and sporting activities.

Volunteering

Volunteering is normally a popular activity with many of our staff taking part as a team or on an individual basis. Unfortunately, since the global Covid-19 pandemic the charities and non-profit organisations the number of staff volunteering has remained low. We supported staff to use a total of 39 days volunteering during 2023/24.

Charities Supported

Below are some of the charities that Housing Executive staff members have made a huge difference to through volunteering, raising awareness and fundraising:
Our nominated Charity:

- Age NI

Other Charities:

- Cancer Focus NI
- Hospice UK

- NI Charities together
- Trocaire
- NI Chest Heart and Stroke Association
- Together for Animals
- Tiny life
- Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust
- Action Cancer
- Breast Cancer Now
- Rethink Mental Health

Research

Research carried out by and for the Housing Executive plays an important role in guiding our policies and activities. Under the 1981 Housing Order, we have a statutory responsibility to regularly examine housing conditions and need; and may also conduct or promote research into any matter relating to any of our functions. Our research programme is client-led, which means that it has a strong focus on informing how we deliver key activities by better understanding the needs and views of our various customers.

The Research Unit collects information on age, gender, ethnicity and disability in its surveys and, along with the findings of specific projects on a range of housing-related issues, this helps provide insights into the profile of our tenants and customers, and any differences in views and experiences between different groups.

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.

In line with the 5-yearly frequency of the survey over the last 2 decades, we had planned to carry out House Condition Survey fieldwork across Northern Ireland in 2021. However, in view of Covid-19 related concerns and restrictions and the need for access to dwellings to carry out the full survey, a decision was taken to postpone the fieldwork. After extensive planning and preparation during 2022/23,

including a pilot to gain insights on response rates and methodologies, the fieldwork for the survey was undertaken in summer 2023.

In the interim, based on consultation with users to identify requirements for key statistics that could be modelled using data from the 2016 survey, we published a report on energy consumption in Northern Ireland's housing stock² and estimates of fuel poverty in the region in 2020 and 2021³. In addition, we also commissioned a report which looked at the impact of 2022 fuel prices on fuel poverty in Northern Ireland⁴

Our other research activities continued during 2023/24. The ongoing Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS) was again a key source of insights on the views of tenants and their levels of satisfaction with our services. We use the data gathered from the CTOS and other one-off pieces of research to help ensure that supports are in place for tenants. In recent years, and particularly in light of the onset of the cost of living crisis, there has been a particular focus on support for the digital and financial inclusion of those who due to age, disability or other vulnerability may require additional help to access online services and advice. Services provided in response have included provision of a free of charge Benefit and Budget Calculator, as well as referrals to our Financial Inclusion Managers, who work with customers to help them maximise their income.

In 2020, responses to a number of the questions included in the CTOS revealed a particular challenge in awareness levels and engagement – and lower levels of satisfaction with services – among young people and families. As part of separate research on tenant participation carried out in spring 2022 we asked questions around how people would like to engage. These findings⁵ have been incorporated into the development of our new Community Involvement Strategy.

During 2023/24, work was undertaken to bring forward a number of new strands of research, including a review of the barriers to delivery of new social housing in rural areas, an independent review of the Housing Executive's Community Involvement strategy, and a project that explores the feasibility of delivering Housing First across Northern Ireland. Work on these projects is nearing completion and the reports will be published in the near future. A further planned project which was intended to inform the development of a rent setting policy for Housing Executive Irish Traveller sites was one of a number of research projects placed on hold due to budget constraints, which are also expected to impact on the planned 2024/25 programme.

² The [report](#) is available on the Housing Executive website

³ The [report](#) is available on the Housing Executive website

⁴ The [report](#) is available on the Housing Executive website

⁵ The [report](#) is available on the Housing Executive website.

Irish Traveller Accommodation

The Housing Executive's Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-2026 was approved by the Housing Executive Board in March 2021. The Strategy has 4 objectives and 12 key actions and will guide the Housing Executive's strategic direction on the provision of accommodation for Irish Travellers.

During 2023/24 the Housing Executive has progressed a number of proposals emanating from the strategy, including:

1. Participating and inputting on all regional and sub-regional fora in Northern Ireland,
2. Following a review of 7 of the 8 Housing Executive owned Irish Traveller sites in Northern Ireland, work to implement the proposals for each site continued. The completed Reviews of the Ballyarnett site in Derry/Londonderry and the Legahory site in Craigavon were approved to deliver the redevelopment of both sites. Both redevelopment schemes have been designed with completion anticipated in 2025.
3. Work continues to progress the upgrade of 16 amenity units at An Tearmann, Serviced site, Coalisland. There has been a delay in works commencing on site due to infrastructure issues. The Housing Executive has been working to address the infrastructure issues in order to allow improvement works to commence.
4. Research to identify a proposed new accommodation needs assessment methodology for Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland has been completed. The Housing Executive are working to develop electronic systems to accurately record Irish Traveller applications which will be used in the needs assessment calculation.
5. A new research project to develop a rent scheme for Housing Executive Irish Traveller pitches/sites is anticipated in 2024/25.
6. The Republic of Ireland's (ROI) Department of Housing and Local Government and Heritage 'Housing for All – a New Housing Plan for Ireland (September 2021)' contains an action as follows:
'Explore with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) the feasibility of an all island approach to the provision of a network of Transient Sites across the island of Ireland'. The DfC has agreed for the Housing Executive to work in partnership. The ROI's Housing Agency, on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and Housing Executive, will conduct research to determine the nature and extent of travelling undertaken by Travellers in the context of potential demand for transient halting sites on an all-island basis. Terms of Reference have been agreed. Awaiting budget approval before research can advance.

7. The Housing Executive drafted a housing policy governing the management of its service sites. The policy will go to public consultation before being implemented.
8. The Housing Executive's Supporting People department has carried out a review of its Floating Support service throughout Northern Ireland. A business case is in development to put forward a case to fund proposals from the review.
9. A review of Cultural Awareness Training which took place in 2019 will commence to identify future training requirements for Housing Executive employees.
10. Work has been initiated to promote funding for Community and Good Relations schemes.

Adaptations and Accessible Housing

Interdepartmental Housing and Health Adaptations Assurance Framework

An Interdepartmental Adaptations Assurance Framework is now in place to improve governance arrangements for the provision of services for disabled people across housing tenures. The Framework is overseen by the Interdepartmental Housing and Health Adaptations Programme Board (IHHAPB), which is now fully operational (title of the board to be amended as its work is not exclusive to just adaptations).

The Board is co-chaired by the DoH/DfC and is responsible for overseeing strategy and policy. In doing so it seeks to ensure collaborative working between Departments, Health & Social Care Trusts (HSC Trusts), the Housing Executive and Housing Associations and service users in the delivery of services for disabled people.

Regional Housing and Health Partnership Forums have been established across both the private and social sectors (Housing Executive & Housing Associations). The Private Sector & Housing Association Regional Forums are fully operational with the Housing Executive Regional Forum due to host its first meeting on 27th June 2024. These forums will ensure a joined up and consistent approach to delivery of services for disabled people between HSC Trusts, Housing Executive and Housing Associations.

Internally the Housing Executive have set up an Interdivisional Disability Forum with senior management representation from Asset Management, Corporate Services, Housing and Regional Services.

Escalation Panels

The Escalation Panel process is fully operational and managed by the Housing & Health Team. Housing & Health Team triage referrals and convene relevant parties to discuss/resolve issues across housing & health. A breakdown of cases on 31st May 2024 are detailed below:

The total number of referrals for panel is: 76

Breakdown for 76 referrals:

- Private Sector – 18
- Social Sector Housing Executive – 44
- Social Sector HA – 14

Accessible Housing Register (AHR)

Work is ongoing with both the Housing Executive Landlord Services & Housing Association's to build the pool of accessible stock data.

Inclusive Design Guide – Designing Homes to Support Independent Living

Development of the Inclusive Design Guide to reflect the needs of service users with sensory and cognitive impairments is at an advanced stage. Consultation with a range of stakeholders will commence mid-June 2024 until early August 2024. Following consultation, the final draft will be prepared for formal publication and launch in early 2025.

Service Level Agreements (SLA)

The Housing and Health Team are leading on the development of updated Service Level Agreements between the Executive and HSC Trust Occupational Therapy Services. The agreement will clarify roles, responsibilities, key performance indicators and communication processes in relation to adaptation assessment and provision.

Training

Autism Capacity Building Training Pilot

In collaboration with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team, DoH & Cedar Foundation, Autism Awareness training was successfully delivered to 600 staff. Budget to be confirmed for ongoing training.

Interagency Case Management Training

A joint housing & health “Complex Environment & Housing Design Workshop” training event was successfully delivered in March 2024. The session was developed and delivered in collaboration with HSC Trust Occupational Therapy services with positive feedback regarding the benefits of improving overall understanding of roles and processes in health and housing.

The need to replicate this training for Housing Associations has been identified and a workshop will be hosted on 3rd October 2024 to deliver same.

User Engagement

The Housing & Health Team continue to establish engagement with service user forums in relation to Housing and Health. More formal connections are being agreed with the Housing and Health Team and the Disability Housing Forum chaired by Disability Action. This will involve regular attendance at the forum to brief and update members on Workstreams.

Co-design of an advice leaflet for autistic people on finding a suitable home in collaboration with the Independence, Choice & Control Group (Northern HSC Trust, Housing & Health Team, Council, Autism N.I. and autistic services users & representatives).

The EDI Steering Group established a Disability Workstream in January 2023 to provide colleagues with an opportunity to share their lived experiences. The group is open to colleagues with a disability or long-term health condition, as well as colleagues with an interest in promoting disability equality.

Financial Inclusion Strategy

In June 2023, the Housing Executive Board approved a new Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2023-28. The strategy lays out a plan to address the needs of our most vulnerable, complex, and financially challenged tenants and housing customers. The vision of our new strategy is to see all tenants and customers empowered to become more financially resilient. In so doing this will continue to reduce the volume of void properties, sustain our neighbourhoods, develop more cohesive communities, and reduce/prevent homelessness.

The Financial Inclusion Strategy consolidates the many ways we will deliver this vision, guided by an overarching aim to embed financial inclusion into as many customer-focused services as possible in order to promote both financial resilience and long, happy housing tenure appropriate to the needs of the individual.

The delivery of this aim is supported by a dynamic framework which is underpinned by 4 key objectives: maximise income, promote financial flexibility, open doors to better finances, and provide communication and information. These objectives are further divided into 3 elements (Prevention, Priority, and Potential) which define the way services are planned, designed, and delivered. This framework can adapt to the known, anticipated, and unexpected financial inclusion challenges which lie ahead.

In June 2024, the Executive Team approved the first-year report on the progress of the Financial Inclusion Strategy which is due to be presented to the Board later in the year. The Year Two Action Plan continues to focus on the delivery of objectives, high level outcomes.

Key Achievements from Year One (2023/24)

- Housing Executive staff offered Financial Inclusion advice and assistance to 9,176 tenants—of these, a total of 5,194 (56.6%) tenants accepted the financial inclusion help offered to them.
- Housing Executive tenants accessed **over £2.2 million** in additional benefit entitlement with assistance from the Landlord Services Financial Inclusion team.
- We expanded the Financial Inclusion team to include three Deputy Financial Inclusion Managers meaning the team are able to assist more tenants via referral and proactively reach out to help others.
- The Financial Inclusion team established five regular drop-in clinics and attended 23 other one-off events. These events have been a central part of building localised inter-agency partnerships.
- Improved uptake of Rate Rebate from 73% of UC claimants in March 2023 to 86% in March 2024.

The Financial Inclusion Team

A core component in delivering the Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023-2028 is the Housing Executive's Financial Inclusion Team. The Financial Inclusion Team comprises 7 Financial Inclusion Managers (4 in Landlord Services, and 3 in Housing Solutions), and 3 Deputy Financial Inclusion Managers. The Landlord Services Team assist tenants in a number of ways, including:

1. Performing benefit checks to ensure a tenant's full entitlement is being received,
2. Advising on new benefit claims,
3. Resolving complex benefit problems and advocating for tenants in the claim process where necessary,
4. Liaising with external parties on behalf of the tenants,

5. Providing basic debt advice and referrals to specialist debt services where required,
6. Assisting tenants to access to other forms of support,
7. Providing a holistic, 'one stop', approach to financial inclusion where all services can be accessed in one place,
8. Providing advice and training to frontline staff,
9. Developing overarching strategic initiatives.

Tenants can self-refer to the Financial Inclusion Team via a Patch Manger, or else the service will be suggested to them at either specific trigger points or during a Making Your Money Work assessment. For 2024/25, referrals are also made directly to the Financial Inclusion team from the Move to UC team. Referrals also come from staff engaged with other projects such as the Oil Buying Network, the Energy Advice Line, and the Housing Community Network, or from other departments within the Housing Executive such as the Housing Benefit Team. Financial inclusion services are also available to Housing Executive staff.

Since 2020, the Financial Inclusion Team have handled a combined average of 241 tenant referrals per month across all 3 regions of the Housing Executive. Of these, 75-80% of tenants referred meaningfully engage with the service. This has resulted in the identification of over £5.1 million in extra income for Housing Executive tenants since September 2021, an average of £543 per tenant who engages.

Making Your Money Work Service

Making Your Money Work is designed to improve the financial welfare of tenants through the provision of advice and assistance at multiple contact points of the tenant journey with the Housing Executive.

The Making Your Money work service offers tenants the opportunity to avail of a thorough benefit check, budgeting advice, and tailored signposting. In rent accounts where a financial inclusion intervention took place during 2023/24, a positive impact is evident in 58% of cases 6 months post-intervention.

The Making Your Money Work Service has been further embedded into frontline services over the course of year one of the new strategy and outcomes are being closely monitored. The service is also designed to be built upon as required as we move forward. Further potential additions include Energy Advice provision, advice regarding broadband and TV packages, and employment opportunity signposting where appropriate.

Benefit and Budgeting Calculator

The Benefit and Budgeting Calculator assists frontline staff to empower tenants through the provision of detailed, effective budgeting advice. It also facilitates tenants in maximising their income through greater understanding of their benefit entitlement. The calculator is embedded in the day-to-day role of Patch Managers and Income Collection staff and is a valuable addition to frontline staff toolkits allowing staff to navigate a complex benefit system more easily.

During 2023/24 staff opened over 264 new benefit calculations and in rent accounts where a financial inclusion intervention took place, we have been able to identify a total increase in housing cost benefits of £747,000 six months later.

Under the remit of the new strategy, we are working with the developers to make changes to the calculator, increasingly tailoring it to the needs of Housing Executive staff. We also provide a customer-facing calculator, accessible through the Housing Executive website.

Advice NI & Make the Call

Housing providers are sometimes referred to as anchor organisations as they're often the main point of contact within a community. As such, partnership working, and well-informed signposting are vital in providing effective advice and assistance.

Throughout 2023/24, we continued to strengthen our relationships with Advice NI and Make the Call in order to provide tenants with direct access to specialist debt and independent benefits advice. In total, we referred 301 tenants for debt advice, and 115 tenants to Make the Call. Work undertaken included streamlining referral processes, trialling co-location of services, publicity campaigns, and information sharing. Throughout the new strategy this work to connect our services more closely will continue.

Equality Impacts of Financial Inclusion

Housing Executive Financial Inclusion services are a combination of demand-led, trigger-led, and proactively delivered. Through this approach, we ensure help is available for those who need it, when they need it. Some tenants self-refer to the service, others are referred during the course of standard arrears contact, for example, there are multiple rent account related triggers under the Making Your Money Work policy.

The Financial Inclusion Team also undertake proactive contact with groups identified as vulnerable or disadvantaged (pensioners, for example). Contact is

made through different avenues dependent of what best suits the tenant or housing customer, and includes letters, texts, phone calls, and home visits.

All housing customers who are homeless on the grounds of financial hardship are referred to the Financial Inclusion service, and all others are asked if they would like a referral.

The service is delivered primarily remotely by a team of 7 in Landlord Services, and 3 in Housing Solutions. However, the team are spread across Northern Ireland and as such, provide many opportunities for face-to-face contact either via home visits or at community-based events such as drop-in clinics. Further, the Landlord Services Team work in tandem with their frontline colleagues who are able to perform home visits on their behalf in areas which might be less accessible for the team.

Services are provided on a first come, first serve basis unless there is a specific indicator of urgent need—such as pending eviction or other specific vulnerability. Whilst tenants and customers from every background can expect the same high-quality service, the way in which this is delivered will change to accommodate the needs of the tenant or housing customer involved. A tenant or housing customer who is more financially excluded might need more from the service than someone who is less so, and each case is addressed equitably.

Social Enterprise Plus Report

(1) Social Enterprise Plus Strategy (2020-2024)

The Social Enterprise Plus Strategy (2020 – 2024) continues to invest in existing and create new social enterprises within Housing Executive communities.

The Social Enterprise Plus programme is open to all established for aspiring social enterprise with a strong connection to our estates. The team ensure that there is fair and equitable access to the programme across Northern Ireland, working with a wide range of community and sector partners its delivery.

(2) Social Enterprise Plus Core Objectives

The Social Enterprise Plus Strategy 2020- 2024 originally had 3 key objectives and the mid strategy review gave an opportunity to review progress against these and reevaluate the current worldwide and economic circumstances. The 3 core objectives were:

- To strengthen Housing Executive Communities
- To improve the economic circumstances of our customers

- To work in partnership to benefit of Housing Executive Communities

The mid strategy review took cognisance of the changing operating environment including the introduction of social value legislation since the Strategy was published. It was thought that the priorities of the programme should be extended to include the following;

The ‘Cost of Living Crisis’ – This refers to the fall in ‘real’ incomes (adjusted for inflation and tax) that UK households have experienced particularly since late 2021. According to recent research published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2022), social renters in Northern Ireland have disproportionality lower incomes than other tenure types, meaning that they are also overrepresented within the numbers of households in poverty. It is estimated that 37% of social housing tenants are in poverty, and this percentage will rise as prices and the cost-of-living increase.

Climate Change - Our Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027) details how the Housing Executive will strive to build sustainable homes and communities. This Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan sets our strategic approach to balance our responsibility to provide quality, affordable housing and improve our social and environmental impact. The strategy also outlines our commitment to use our statutory functions to influence our staff, tenants, local communities and supply chains – our community and social enterprises are already playing an active part in this, and we aim to assist them to build and improve on the commitment to reduce energy and our carbon footprint.

Post-Covid-19 Recovery - In the immediate aftermath of government lockdown, costs are rising and the level of mental health difficulties and social isolation, especially among the young, is at a high level. Additionally, the pandemic necessitated growth in digitalisation of services, particularly by statutory agencies. While Community Cohesion Funding has invested in digital training and connectivity, some people, because of capacity to learn or ability to connect, continue to need assistance. Frequently this becomes unmet demand picked up by local community groups and social enterprises.

The Introduction of Social Value in Public Sector Procurement – On 1st June 2022, it became mandatory to score social value within public sector procurement. The Executive spends more than £3 billion per year in public sector contracts, so there is potential to release significant amounts of money for social value activity, much of which will be in alignment with the objectives of the Social Enterprise Plus Strategy. Consequently, the Social Enterprise Plus Action Plan 23/24 will ensure continued exploration of how Housing Executive communities can benefit from the new social value arrangements.

As a result of the mid Strategy review, priorities for social enterprise plus investment were agreed by the Tenant and Customer Service Board Committee:

- Mitigation of the negative effects of the cost-of-living crisis
- Reduction of carbon footprint, promotion of eco-friendly activity
- Building capacity to meet the requirements of social value in public sector procurement.
- Covid-19 recovery activity

The new priorities of Social Enterprise Plus Funding Programme take into account societal and economic changes which have taken place since the inception of the strategy. Their overarching purpose is to improve well-being for all by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth in a sustainable way.

In January 2023, the Tenant and Customer Services Committee approved the next steps to be taken for the revised strategy approach for the remainder of the Strategy (2023 & 2024) including the new investment priorities of Social Enterprise Plus Funding for the remainder of the Strategy.

(3) Current and Future Environment

In order to maximise the benefit of social value in public sector procurement to our communities a Housing Executive social enterprise directory is available on our website for those private sector organisations looking to partner with social enterprises.

The Housing Executive's Central Housing Forum, the Social Value Working Group has recently been re-established. This group which is made up of community representatives and Housing Executive staff, is in place to ensure that social clauses within Housing Executive contracts deliver for those same communities. We look forward to working together with the Social Value group members to help ensure that our communities feel the maximum benefit as a result of our procurement and spend.

In April 2024 we launched the final tranche of funding for the Social Enterprise Plus Programme related to the Strategy 2020-2024. This funding will work with social enterprises that will strive to meet the objectives as detailed earlier.

We are also at the early stage of planning for the next strategy and are in pre-consultation stage. We are engaging with all stakeholders primarily via our central Housing Forum, Social Value Working Group, Statutory and community partners. We have also engaged internally with the Housing Executive Equality and Rural Units to ensure that the new strategy encompasses all sectors of our community.

Asset Management – Social Clauses

It is mandatory for Government departments to allocate a minimum of 10% of the award criteria to social value in services and works contracts.

The Housing Executive have developed their social value delivery plans to facilitate employment opportunities, including the use of apprenticeships across our contractor Supply Chain.

Increasingly social value is also used as a means of providing opportunities in our communities and the development of the Social Enterprise sector.

In 2023/24 there were 188 people who worked on Housing Executive contracts via social clauses. This figure included 132 apprentices, five Professional Trainees, 13 student placements and 16 people on work experience.

Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022-27

The Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 was published on the 23rd March 2022 together with the Year One Action Plan. The 44 actions were developed around the 3 objectives of the Homelessness Strategy:

- To prioritise homelessness prevention,
- Address homeless by providing settled, appropriate accommodation and support, and
- Support customers to transition from homelessness into settled accommodation.

The Homelessness Strategy Team are currently delivering the Homelessness Strategy Year 3 Action Plan. Key actions delivered in 2023/24 included listening to those with lived experience of homelessness through our Lived Experience Groups. These events were organised by our Homelessness Local Area Groups during Homelessness Awareness Week. The aim was to raise awareness of homelessness and the support available in rural and urban areas across Northern Ireland, and research development including Housing First.

In addition, extensive work has taken place with the Education Sector to promote homelessness awareness to young people throughout Northern Ireland. We have also commenced significant work together with Queens University, Belfast and Business Services Organisation on Health and Homelessness Research.

A key project which has been delivered is the Street Needs Audit, which has provided a quantitative analysis and has helped to shape actions and recommendations within our Homelessness Strategy 2022-2027 Year 3 Action Plan. This will be published during Q3 of 2024/25. An Annual Progress Report for Year 2 has been approved and will be published during Q2 of 2024/25. The work delivered by the Homelessness Strategy will be guided by a Year 3 Action Plan which outlines 46 key actions. This has been developed with our key partners.

Youth Homelessness Action Plan

The Homelessness Strategy is the overarching document that the Youth Homelessness Action Plan lies within. The development of the Youth Homelessness Action Plan is the Housing Executive's first action plan with a strong focus exclusively on Young People. The delivery of the Action Plan which contains 18 actions recognises the crucial role the Housing Executive can have in helping young people transition from care settings provided by Health and Social Care Trust to statutory homelessness provision provided by the Housing Executive.

The action plan has been guided by extensive engagement with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies who work directly with young people. Many of the actions have been driven by areas where there are clear gaps, with a renewed focus on early intervention, prevention, provision of safe and secure accommodation, and tailored support to meet the varying needs of our young homeless. The action plan has been somewhat informed by recommendations included in the NICCY Report, A Place to Call Home, (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People) and from the Recommendations of the Review of the Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Projects for Young People. Also recommendations made by Fiona Boyle in research commissioned by the Housing Executive in 2021 in regards to Youth Homelessness and the Independent Review of Childrens Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.

Domestic Abuse Action Plan

The delivery of a Domestic Abuse Action Plan represents an acknowledgement of the impact we as an organisation can have on our customers and staff. The Domestic Abuse Action Plan contains 16 actions that have a primary focus on awareness raising, collaboration and a recognition that recent legislative changes have brought a wider range of factors to domestic abuse such as mental and financial abuse rather than the historical focus on physical abuse.

The development of the Year 3 action plan and both the Youth Homelessness Action Plan and the Domestic Abuse Action plan highlights that the strategy is responding to emerging needs within the homelessness sector and depicts the work undertaken to support specific client groups.

Strategic Action Plan for Temporary Accommodation

The Strategic Action Plan for Temporary Accommodation, has been published on the Housing Executive website. The action plan works back from 4 criteria for success:

- Minimised need for temporary accommodation,
- Customers receive appropriate accommodation and support at the point of need,
- Customers moving on from temporary accommodation sustain their tenancies,
- A sustainable supply of good quality, affordable temporary accommodation which is safe, warm and well-managed.

The actions from the strategic action plan are being progressed and a new steering group has been established to oversee the implementation of these.

Homelessness Statistics 2017/18 – 2023/24

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number presenting as homeless	18,202	16,802	15,991	15,758	15,965	16,943
Number accepted as homeless i.e. Full Duty Applicants (FDA)	12,512	11,323	9,889	10,135	10,349	11,537
Number of new placements in temporary accommodation in year	3,354	4,527	9,752	9,265	10,253	11,368
Types of Household presenting as homeless	Singles 9,063 (50%) Families 6,637 (36%) Elderly 2,502 (13%)	Singles 8,642 (51%) Families 5,844 (35%) Elderly 2,237 (13%)	Singles 8,861 (55%) Families 5,282 (33%) Elderly 1,802 (11%)	Singles 8,181 (52%) Families 5,487 (35%) Elderly 2,090 (13%)	Singles 7,941 (50%) Families 5,824 (36%) Elderly 2,200 (14%)	Singles 8,645 (50%) Families 5,067 (30%) Elderly 2,414 (14%)
Households presenting due to intimidation	481	335	286	180	167	204

PART A

Average Length of stay in temp accommodation, reflecting the existence of “hot spots” where demand for housing is high	40.1 weeks	39.3 weeks	25.0 weeks	30.0 weeks	32.6 weeks	34.4 weeks
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- 3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes

☐ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Mainstreaming Section 75 duties into the planning and decision making processes of the Housing Executive ensures that any changes to or analysis of policy includes consideration of equality issues.

This is more than an assessment of equality impacts as the policy team will consider 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. Questions 1 and 2 gives a number of examples of this.

Policies are reviewed on a 3 to 5 year cycle and equality screening is revisited as part of that process to ensure “due regard” is being paid and that the continuity of the duty is addressed appropriately in line with the “Brown Principles”. To ensure that Housing Executive policies are sensitive to change and flexible in their approach many Policy Managers maintain “Equality Issues” as a standing agenda item in their performance management meetings and will consult the Equality Manager when new or emerging areas within the equality function are brought to the table. Areas where equality issues have impacted on policy during the year include:

Fundamental Review of Adaptations
Financial Inclusion Strategy
Rural Housing Needs Tests
Compensatory Payments Policy
Health and Safety Policies.

- 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:

Housing is a fundamental need and contributes significantly to all parts of society including good health, education and community. The Housing Executive is also a large employer and provides jobs and careers for people from our community. 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 and on making our workforce more representative of our community. In this way all policies are subject to equality tests to ensure they remain relevant 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 and through regular engagement with the Consultative Forum on Equality and the bi-annual production and analysis of equality monitoring reports.

In this context policy development and policy review improve services and employment opportunities for people. Examples of our work in many policy areas are set out in Questions 1 and 2.

Questions 1 and 2 also set out in detail the benefits for individuals and households within each of the Section 75 groups examples include:

- Affirmative Action Plan will address underrepresentation of key groups in our workforce including disabled people, ethnic minorities and people from underrepresented community backgrounds.
- Health and Well-being policies focus on the needs of staff which are often age, gender or disability associated.
- Community Cohesion Policy positively impacts on people and communities with different political and/or religious backgrounds and racial backgrounds.
- Supporting People Programme targets households with a range of support needs associated with disability, age, racial background and gender.
- Homelessness policies often consider issues of race, migration, refugees gender (including domestic violence) and age.
- Community Safety policies deal with issues including race, sexual orientation and religion.
- Community Involvement and Participation policies often engage those groups that are not always as visible as others including children & young people and carers.

- Health and Safety policies are sensitive to the risks associated with equality characteristics e.g. disability, gender and race.
- Customer support and tenancy sustainment takes account of equality characteristics in assessing the support people need e.g. age and family size.
- Irish Traveller strategy is centered on supporting and maintaining Traveller orientated accommodation choices.

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):*

See below

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☒ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

See below

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services *(please specify and give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Risks and controls have been established within the Housing Executive to ensure due regard is paid to equality and good relations issues in policy development, amendment and implementation. Managers in policy areas engage with the Housing Executive's EDIS Team when reviewing or developing a policy and the process of screening is often the end result of this engagement. This often simply reflects the outcome of a process of discussions and evaluation of evidence, that ensures that equality and good relations issues have been given the necessary regard within the policy area. The continuous nature of the duty is also acknowledged within the policy and how performance is monitored. 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. Some 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.

In addition the EDIS Team produces equality monitoring reports on the performance of the housing waiting list and allocations processes. This provides a statistical analysis of the equality dimensions of the key function of the Housing Executive. These reports can help inform policy and strategy and highlight trends in housing inequality.

Changes to internal workplace policies are also informed by engagement and evidence. Regular monitoring of recruitment performance, workforce data and the work of the Equality Steering group work streams ensures that key equality issues maintain a high priority within our people strategy.

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 2023-24 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:

Targeting social needs and challenging inequalities are fundamental aspects of the work of the Housing Executive. However, in some roles these functions are more obvious and articulated in job descriptions. “Fairness” is one of the founding principles of the Housing Executive and is one of our core values. These values are set out in every job description, underpinning the role of each job. This

approach, reinforced by the commitment of resources to a dedicated EDIS Team and a Community Cohesion Department, each with specific job descriptions setting out Section 75 functions, staff in all regions, staff training and clear processes ensures that equality and good relations are mainstreamed in the organisation across all functions.

Staff engage in the Performance Management Process and 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 2023-24 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:

In previous sections we discuss how the Housing Executive's role and function, (as set out in legislation and in practice) is centred on targeting those individual households, groups and geographical areas in greatest housing or associated need. In line with this role recognise the benefits of having a diverse and representative workforce with the skills and knowledge to serve a diverse community and our Affirmative Action Plan and People Strategy aim to achieve this.

In terms of our policies and strategies and the services we provide we work on the principle of addressing those individuals, groups and/or geographical areas that are most in need depending on the function being addressed. However we also acknowledge that there is a very close relationship between need and inequality in housing as so much of our core activities not only address needs but also erode inequalities. In terms of services our Supporting People programme provides a wide range of floating and accommodation support for households who need that

extra help to make their homes adequate to their needs but most of those needs are associated with age or disability. So by directing our Supporting People programme at those most in need we are also directing it at those experiencing housing inequalities because of their age or disability. There are similar relationships with Housing strategy, Housing and Health, the Communities programmes and Homelessness.

Questions 1 and 2 of this report set 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 reinforces that, in the context of targeting housing need, we also target housing inequalities.

This process is supported by ensuring that regular and up to date information on our workforce and on housing inequalities (including the “Key Inequalities in Housing” report issued by the Equality Commission and other publications including the Human Rights Commission’s findings on Irish Traveller Accommodation) informs the development of the Housing Executive’s Corporate Plan. This, in turn, is supported by an objectives based performance management system that ensures all key strategic and operational tasks are assigned to key business units.

In addition the EDIS Team has responsibility for implementation of the Section 75 duties, and our newly formed Housing For All team and the Community Cohesion Team are charged with implementing the good relations duty.

This process is reinforced by the Consultative Forum on Equality and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group reviewing the performance of our business plan with regard to those objectives that specifically target inequalities. It is also of note that the Head of Business Planning and Performance 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 senior staff for information and action.

- 6 In the 2023-24 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 corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Questions 4 and 5 above explain how targeting housing needs and addressing housing inequalities are fundamentally the core 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 workforce underrepresentation, housing and social needs and eroding housing inequalities. The main policies and strategies that drive this performance is set out in more detail in Questions 1 and 2 of this report. Our work in relation to the People Strategy and Affirmative Action plans, Housing for All, new social housing, improvement and maintenance of housing stock, supported housing, homelessness, private sector grants, adaptations to stock, Irish Traveller Accommodation etc. all address key social needs but are also designed in a way that targets housing inequalities Our customer focused work is supported by key strategies or projects covering Rural housing, Financial Inclusion, Digital Inclusion, Community Cohesion, Engagement and Participation, Community Safety, BME families and Migrant Workers, Irish Travellers, Sexual Orientation, Children & Young People, Older People, Disabled People, Safeguarding and Managing Suicide risks, amongst others.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

N/A

Actions ongoing:

N/A

Actions to commence:

N/A

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

This question is addressed in Question 1 of this report. 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 at Divisional level.

(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 and Disability Action Plan commitments).

- 8** Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

All actions to address housing inequalities are embedded in Corporate and Business plans. These are reviewed on a regular basis and in the case of Corporate plans are subject to consultation. The details of our priorities in relation to equality actions are set out in Questions 1 and 2.

- 9** In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- ☒ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☐ 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 2023-24 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:

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 and Disability.

We also recently established an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering group made up of staff from across the organisation. The work of this group has expanded in 2023/24 and we provide a full report on the work of this group at question 2.

Housing Community Network

As highlighted previously, for over 50 years the Housing Executive has played a leading role in the physical, environmental and social development of our local communities. There has always been the recognition that housing strategies and policies are more than bricks and mortar, community involvement has been described as “The jewel in the Housing Executive’s crown” by the Customer Service Excellence Assessor.

This is complemented by the organisation's ability to rise to new challenges and adapt to political, social and economic changes to deliver a first class service that will make a positive difference in people's lives. Community Involvement is a cornerstone of the Housing Executive's service, and we commit approximately £1.6 million annually to ensure its success, this is a considerable investment, and it is important that maximum benefit is delivered to local communities.

The Housing Community Network was established by the Housing Executive 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, training, information and skills to challenge and lobby us as an organisation.

Central Housing Forum (CHF)

As highlighted previously, Representatives from each of the 13 Area HCNs, the Disability Forum, the Rural Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum sit on the Central Housing Forum.

The CHF is chaired by a Chair and Vice Chair who are elected by Forum members. The Forum meets with the Chair, Chief Executive and representatives from the Housing Executive's Board twice each year.

Major organisational policy changes are consulted on with the Central Forum before they are progressed to the Housing Executive's Executive Team and the Housing Executive's Board.

The Forum has also developed a refreshed Manifesto to provide it with a lobbying and challenge function, particularly in lobbying local government on issues such as reinstating the Housing Executive's new build function.

The Central Housing Forum usually meet 10 times per year, however, members met 12 times during the year due to identified need for specific additional meetings. In addition, 30 Working Group meetings have taken place.

Resident and Interagency Partnerships

As previously mentioned, resident and Interagency partnerships have been established in all areas and strive to make our estates better places in which to live. These meetings involve other statutory partners, Housing Associations, tenants, residents and leaseholders.

For further information on our work with underrepresented groups please see page 22.

‘Reaching Rural’ Rural Strategy 2021 - 2025 & Action Plan

The Housing Executive’s ‘Reaching Rural’ Rural Strategy 2021 - 2025 & Action Plan was launched in 2021. The Rural Strategy encapsulates the significant investment that the Housing Executive contributes to support tenants and customers in rural areas, and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to pay due regard to the needs of our rural communities in line with the duty set out in the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016. The Rural Strategy sets out 3 high level outcomes and 12 priorities under the 3 cross cutting themes of:

- a. Supporting rural customers,
- b. Enabling the provision of affordable rural homes, and
- c. Securing the future of our rural communities.

The Year 3 Rural Action Plan contained 27 actions. Progress was made against each action during 2023/24 to deliver a range of positive outcomes for rural customers, including:

- Work commenced on 117 new build social homes in rural areas, helping to address social housing need and regenerate communities;
- The Housing Executive participated in a Rural Housing Steering Group with the DfC, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and Land and Property Services. As part of this work, research progressed to identify the barriers and opportunities of delivering rural social housing;
- We helped rural communities in 9 locations to examine the need for new social and affordable housing in their areas;
- 6 prizes were awarded through our Rural Community Awards, recognising and showcasing the invaluable contribution that volunteers are making in rural areas;
- The Rural Residents’ Forum as part of the Housing Community Network, continued to scrutinise Housing Executive policies and services. The Forum provides a vital link to rural communities which gives us insight and perspective on issues of importance to people in rural areas; and.
- The 2023 edition of our Rural Matters magazine included useful information for rural tenants and customers on homelessness support, saving energy, budgeting, the Oil Savings Network, and dementia support.

Rural Needs Act

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 was introduced for Public Authorities, including the Housing Executive, on 1st June 2018. The Act places a duty on us to have due regard to social and economic needs of people in rural areas when we are

developing, adopting, implementing or revising our policies, strategies and plans and when designing and delivering our public services.

In 2023/24, 22 policies, strategies, plans or services, were considered to ensure that due regard was given to meeting the needs of people in rural areas in a fair and equitable way.

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 meets twice per year to discuss key housing equality matters.

In 2023/24 the forum met in October 2023 and March 2024.

A wide range of representatives from voluntary groups, community groups, trade union groups and public bodies attend the Forum meetings.

The Forum provides a direct link for the Housing Executive with representative groups for service delivery issues, and in the process of policy development, which can pre-empt many problems.

The two meetings of Forum in 2023/24 discussed the following items:

- Fundamental Review of Allocations
- Homelessness Update
- Housing Executive Rebranding
- The Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) function in the Housing Executive
- 5 Year Review of the Equality Scheme
- Review of Community Cohesion

The Forum provides a working link with a wide range of equality and voluntary organisations and as such enables access to the Housing Executive for representative organisations at a high level and at early stages in policy development.

It also gives the Housing Executive unique access to the voluntary and community sector to discuss and consult on new or changing policy areas. The Forum has also endorsed an approach where a special meeting of the Forum can be called by the Housing Executive, or group members if it is deemed necessary

EDI Steering Group and Workstreams

The EDI Steering Group oversees all activities that support the delivery of the Affirmative Action Plan. This year the group provided oversight and challenge on the Outreach Plan, including recruitment trend performance and outreach

activities. Members also took part in strategic discussions around key issues such as the Autism Strategy and the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, as well as receiving regular updates on the activities of the EDI Work Streams.

The EDI work streams have grown in strength since their launch in January 2023, with around 60 colleagues now actively engaged through the groups. There are workstreams supporting our work on Community Background, Gender, Disability, LGBTQ+ and Race equality. The work stream leads have organised regular meetings throughout the year, and colleagues on the groups help us to identify key priority areas for training and awareness raising activities. Colleagues are also invited to share their own lived experiences to help inform and improve our policies and practices. Colleagues on EDI workstreams were involved in the review of our flexible working policy, the employer branding review and in 2024/25 will they be actively engaged in the development of our new Domestic Abuse Policy.

Key highlights in terms of colleague training this year included Autism Training, Deaf Awareness Training and the development of our Learn at Lunch sessions. In April 2023 the Housing Executive launched a new Autism Awareness Training programme in partnership with the Department of Health and the Cedar Foundation. The training aimed to raise awareness about the challenges that autistic people experience and help us ensure that we provide a welcoming, supportive and inclusive environment for all our customers and colleagues. Six sessions were delivered between April- September 2023, 5 online and one in person session as part of leadership training. Around 400 colleagues took part in the sessions with excellent feedback on the course. RNID was also brought in to deliver Deaf Awareness sessions for colleagues in December 2023 and January 2024, aiming to increase awareness and help identify ways to make the working environment and team activities more inclusive to colleagues who are deaf/have hearing loss. Feedback on these sessions was positive, with demand coming from other teams for more sessions in 2024/25. There was also continued delivery of our Learn at lunch sessions for colleagues in 2023/24, providing opportunities for bite size learning on key equality issues. These sessions also provided an opportunity for Employers for Disability to deliver sessions as part of our membership, and sessions delivered this financial year have included areas such as DDA in goods, facilities and services, sight loss, physical disabilities, and hidden/non-visible disabilities.

The EDI Steering Group and EDI Workstreams also organised the Housing Executive's participation in community events to help promote ourselves as inclusive employers, including at Belfast Pride and Belfast Mela festivals. Other events supported included International Women's Day, Baby loss Awareness Month, Disability Pride Month and Men's Health Month. Awareness events have been prioritised by EDI workstream members for the year ahead and the EDIS

Team continues to work closely with the Health & Wellbeing Team to engage with colleagues and promote a respectful, safe and inclusive workplace culture.

Consultation Toolkit

The Consultation Toolkit fine tunes the process of consultation by the Housing Executive and streamlines external consultation, as many consultees have highlighted the pressures of consultation or consultation 'fatigue'.

The toolkit promotes a consistent approach to consultation to ensure both compliance and effective consultation. The toolkit was reviewed in 2021/22 and during 2023/24 the toolkit was used as best practice guidance when consulting on a range of policies including the combined Community Cohesion & Community Involvement Strategy. The toolkit also helped inform the Housing Executive's Perception Survey.

- 12 In the 2023-24 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 by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- ☐ Internet discussions
- ☐ Telephone consultations
- ☒ Other (*please specify*): Click or tap here to enter text.

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:

As mentioned previously the Housing Executive's Full Consultative Forum met during 2023/24 in October 23 and March 24. Topics presented at the meeting included the Fundamental Review of Allocations, Homelessness Update, the

Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) function in the Housing Executive, 5 Year Review of the Equality Scheme and the Review of Community Cohesion. Additionally, the Housing Executive's quarterly reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme 2023/24 were circulated to the consultee list via email. The opportunity to receive an alternative format of the document was also offered. Quarterly reports and completed equality screenings were also made available on the Housing Executive's website.

- 13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

As mentioned previously the Housing Executive held a Full Consultative Forum meetings in October 2023 and March 2024 and circulated quarterly reports on the Implementation of the Housing Executive's Equality Scheme to consultees.

- 14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

The consultation list is reviewed on an ongoing basis as new consultees are added.

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

(<https://www.nihe.gov.uk/about-us/equality/equality-screening-reports>)

Click or tap here to enter text.

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

14

<i>Title of policy subject to screening</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of Vibration at Work Policy • Extinguishment of Public Rights of Way Policy • Energy Performance Certificates for House Sales Policy • Financial Inclusion Strategy 2023 – 2028 • Reducing Needle Stick Injuries Policy • Rural Housing Needs Test • Easements Over Third Party Land Policy • Ground Rent Redemption Policy • Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) Proposal 8 • FRA Proposal 11 • NIE Substations Policy • Revised Compensatory Payments Policy • General Health & Safety Policy • Draft Community Involvement Strategy

- 16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

1 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

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

As highlighted previously the Housing Executive applies a best practice toolkit to consultations. During 2023/24 the principles set out in the toolkit were used when consulting on the following Housing Executive strategies and plans:

- Combined Community Cohesion & Community Involvement Strategy

- 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 2023-24 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 2023-24 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 was reviewed in September 2021 and will be reviewed again in 2024/25.

- 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:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2023-24 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 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:

Use of Equality Monitoring Information

During 2023/24 monitoring data continued to be collected on a quarterly basis from the Housing Executive's Housing Management System (HMS). Available data includes religion, nationality, age, ethnic origin, sex, dependents and marital status and for the 2023/24 can be provided up to 31st March 2024.

Equality monitoring data is used to inform a range of other functions including:

- Equality Screenings,
- Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs),
- Freedom of Information (FOI) requests,
- Parliamentary Questions (PQs),
- Assembly Questions (AQs),
- And internally for planning and management purposes.

The EDIS Team 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 2023/24 the EDIS Team highlighted the importance of equality monitoring within the organisation. 1 Equality Monitoring report was completed and circulated to internal stakeholders. Following on from the circulation of the report meetings were held with the Regional Services Management Team. The importance of equality monitoring is also highlighted during Equality Awareness training and the Equality Monitoring leaflet 'Equality Monitoring – What is it about?' has been incorporated into the training packs for staff using the HMS system since 2013.

Private Sector Grants

After the redesign of the Grants Department's services, the EDIS Team worked with Grants to develop new equality monitoring reports during 2021/22. Equality monitoring data in relation to private sector grants is now being collected and we have started building up data over time to identify trends in Section 75 groups accessing the Grants service. The data is available across three private sector grants (Home Improvement Grants, Boiler Replacement and Affordable Warmth Scheme).

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
- Irish Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment Report
- Ethnic Minorities in N. Ireland (Formerly BME Mapping Update)
- Housing and Support Needs

During 2023/24 the EDIS team also performed analysis of the responses to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Demographics section added to the latest Employee Engagement Survey. The outputs of the analysis complemented employee equality data obtained as part of the onboarding process and were used in Affirmative Action Strategy and Plan preparation.

External Sources

Over the years monitoring of equality of opportunity and good relations has included reference to a wide range of external sources of information.

Sources accessed have included:

- The Census
- The Labour Force Survey
- The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey
- Research conducted by OFMDFM Research Division and other NI Civil Service Departments
- Research conducted by the voluntary and community sector
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland
- Irish Human Rights & Equality Authority
- National Disability Authority
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Home Office
- Local Government Association Research Bulletin
- Health Agencies
- Community Relations Council
- ARK Northern Ireland
- N. Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA)
- Employers' Forum on Disability N.I.

Use of Equality Monitoring Information

During 2023/24 equality monitoring was used extensively for replies to FOI requests, Assembly Questions, requests from government departments, members of the public and internal information requests. A total of 62 separate requests were completed.

External Requests

External requests were received from various organisations and individuals, including:

- DfC
- MLAs
- Equality Commission for N. Ireland
- Housing Rights
- Members of the Public
- Participation & Practice of Rights (PPR)
- Journalists

Internal Requests

Internal requests were received from various Housing Executive departments including:

- Community Cohesion
- Housing Analytics
- Finance
- Housing Services

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 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

See below.

- 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 has an integrated strategy for the training required to support the implementation of our equality duties. The training strategy continues to focus on Equality Awareness training including Induction Training for new staff. This is supplemented by Skills-based training which is usually project focused and delivered on the job with the project, (business or policy) manager. This covers processes like Consultation, Screening and Equality Impact Assessment. We also provide bespoke and

targeted training for Business Units, Policy writers, Board members and Directors on request. In 2023/24 the EDIS Team Manager, working closely with the Human Resources Team and delivered 1 Dignity at Work training session.

Equality Awareness Training

This is a comprehensive training programme, which includes awareness of the Equality Scheme and the core principle of challenging inequalities, Human Rights, Disability, Race Relations and discrimination (including harassment). We offer Dignity at Work training in collaboration with HR and an associated “Dignity at Work in the Northern Ireland Workplace” eLearning course is available for all staff.

Equality Awareness training is mandatory for all staff and continued to be delivered during 2023/24. Our approach is to arrange courses throughout the year across the organisation to provide an opportunity for all new staff (including agency staff) to take the course and to provide the opportunity for staff to refresh their knowledge and understanding of equality. We also arrange bespoke courses where requested and tailor the course to the specific needs identified. In 2023/24 we also added a diversity and inclusion section to the Equality Awareness training, which has been well received by attendees.

In 2023/24 we delivered 21 sessions (including Induction sessions), involving 384 staff. Staff training is also supplemented with equality updates which highlight any new changes in legislation, policy or service delivery 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 Awareness, discrimination and delivering services to disabled people
- Human Rights and relevance to housing
- Diversity & Inclusion.

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.

Other Training

Communication Support Awareness Training

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

Safeguarding and Managing Suicide Risk Awareness Training

In 2023/24 24 sessions (including Induction sessions) were held covering 530 staff.

Contractors

Safeguarding Information sessions are available to contractors/third party organisations on request.

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

- 26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Internal Communication

Information provided included in 2023/24 included:

- Quarterly Reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme distributed to key staff, Consultative Forum consultation list and made available on the Housing Executive website.
- As previously mentioned the EDIS Team provided advice to staff on consultation exercises using the Consultation Toolkit.
- Annual and quarterly updates on Communication Support usage made available to relevant staff.
- Minutes of the Consultative Forum on Equality were circulated to key staff for information and action.
- Equality Awareness training continued to be delivered across the organisation. The EDIS Manager also helped deliver Dignity at Work Training to staff in conjunction with Human Resources.
- Communication Support Awareness training is conducted on request.
- Safeguarding and Managing Suicide Risk Awareness Training sessions were conducted across the organisation.
- EDIS staff also contribute on a regular basis to induction training for new staff providing an overview of the equality duties and safeguarding.

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.
- As already highlighted earlier in this 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 2023/24 staff continued to utilise all available communication support services including telephone interpreting, face to face interpreting, translations, Sign Language interpreting, the Video Relay Service and alternative formats e.g. audio CD, Braille, and large print. Use of Communication Support Services in 2023/24 is highlighted later in the report.
- We continue to make good use of our extensive consultation network of tenants, residents groups and representatives of equality and voluntary groups. Our Consultation Toolkit provides best practice guidance on consultation.
- 'Streets Ahead' (tenant magazine) sent out annually to all tenants can be made available in alternative formats on request and includes information for tenants in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified & Traditional), Polish, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Russian, Somali and Slovak on how tenants can access free communication support services. It also includes information on accessing alternative formats and Sign Language interpreters.
- 'Communicating with the Housing Executive' posters continue to be displayed in Housing Executive buildings accessed by the public.
- The Housing Executive's website uses ReachDeck technology on its website to enhance accessibility for all customers. ReachDeck helps organisations make their online content accessible and usable to everyone. It offers features, including reading and translation support. Further details are available at the following link
<https://www.Housing Executive .gov.uk/Accessibility>
- The Housing Executive is also on X (formerly Twitter) @Housing Executive community and Facebook at www.facebook.com/housingexecutive

As Housing Executive customers become more diverse the issue of access to information and services remains high on our agenda, and is a standing agenda item in the EDIS Team's internal team briefings and business planning cycle. To ensure a responsive service and to anticipate the needs of customers the following

arrangements have been put in place. Please note many of the arrangements below have also been highlighted under internal and external communication.

Access to Services

- During 2023/24 telephone interpreting and translation services were provided by 'thebigword' to all Housing Executive service outlets, including Housing Executive Homeless Hostels.
- 'thebigword' telephone interpreting service is also available to Voluntary Sector Hostels.
- During 2023/24 face to face interpreting was provided by FLEX and Sign Language interpreting was provided by Sign Language Interactions.
- A Video Relay Service is also available for Deaf customers.
- Hearing induction loops in all outlets.
- Portable one to one (crystal) loop systems in all outlets.
- Relay UK (previously Next Generation Text) service available.
- The Housing Executive's website has incorporated ReachDeck technology into the website to enhance accessibility for all customers.
- The Housing Executive is also on X @Housing Executive community and Facebook at www.facebook.com/housingexecutive.
- The Housing Executive uses '03' telephone numbers as a cost saving measure for our customers.

Access to Information

The Housing Executive has an accessible publications policy.

Over the years a range of leaflets have been translated into different languages and some alternative formats, and made available to Housing Executive customers including:

- Acceptable Behaviour Contract
- Belfast Area Rules for Single Let Properties
- Complaint Feedback Form
- Customer Charter
- EEA Nationals Additional Information Form
- Fundamental Review of Allocations
- Gas Wall Hung Boiler Servicing
- HB Further Information Request (Regulation 82 (1)) template
- HB Income Questionnaire
- Homelessness Explanation Leaflet
- Housing Deposit Scheme
- Housing/Homeless Information Pack
- Housing Selection Scheme Booklet

- Housing/Transfer Application Form
 - Notice Seeking Possession (NSP)
 - Notice of Proceedings for Possession of an Introductory Tenancy
 - Photo Consent Form
 - Public Liability (PLIC) Claim Form
 - The Rental Exchange – Tenant Consent Form
 - Rules relating to behaviour in Temporary Accommodation provided by the Housing Executive
 - Housing Benefit Self-Employment Form (SE1)
 - Sheltered Housing Questionnaire
 - Standards of Behaviour in Temporary Accommodation
 - Information about the Supporting People Programme
 - Taking a Stand against Hate Leaflet
 - Tenancy Information including Tenancy Agreement, Your Rights & Responsibilities Booklet
 - Leaflets on the Prevention of Damp & Mould
 - Statutory Obligations for Housing Executive Tenants & the Good Neighbour Agreement
-
- Information can be provided in various formats on request including large print, audio, Braille, and other languages. A statement is placed in all publications advising of the alternative formats available. As highlighted earlier 2023/24 we provided information to customers in audio CD, Braille, large print and a range of other languages.
 - A 'Communicating with the Housing Executive' poster continues to be 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.
 - The EDIS Team continues to promote the use of communication support through Equality Bulletins and providing advice directly to staff. Communication Support Awareness training is also available on request.
 - As mentioned previously in the report the Housing Executive has worked in partnership with the NI Youth Forum (N.I. YF) for a number of years on ways to engage with young people on housing related issues. Most recently the Housing Executive collaborated with N.I. YF on its 'kNowhere to Go?' report (<https://niyf.org/northern-ireland-youth-forum/nowhere-to-go/>) .

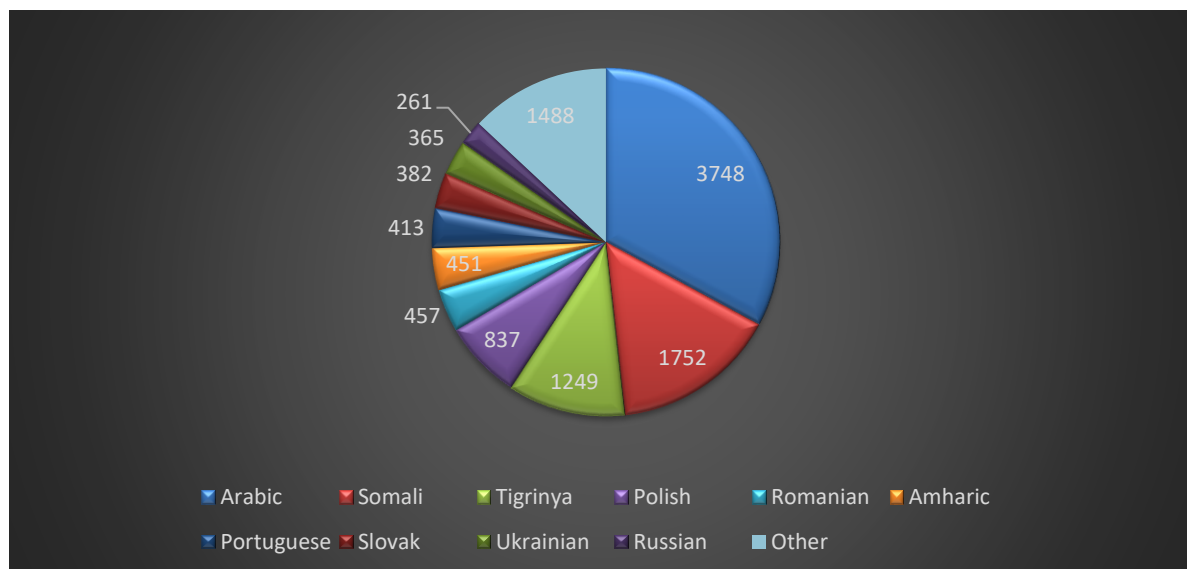
Communication Support Services

The use of telephone interpreting increased in 2023/24, 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 2021 - 2024 is detailed below:

Housing Executive Telephone Interpreting Service 2021-2024

Housing Executive Overall Usage Summary	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2021/22</u>
Total No. of Calls:	11,403	6,571	3,081
Total No. of Outlets:	58	47	39
Total No. of Languages:	42	38	36

Languages Requested for Telephone Interpreting in 2023/24:



The 'Other' category this Chart consists of the following languages:

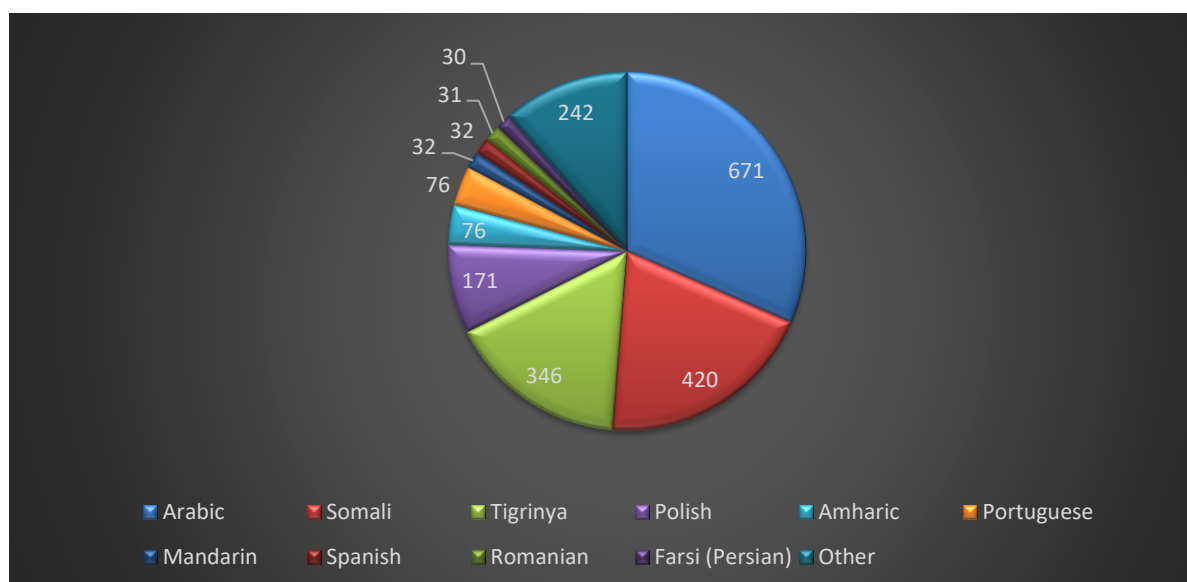
Farsi (Persian) (244), Hungarian (228), Bulgarian (227), Mandarin (205), Lithuanian (148), Czech (123), Spanish (77), Farsi (Afghan) (54), Kurdish (Sorani)

(26), Bengali (22), Latvian (22), Cantonese (15), Turkish (15), Vietnamese (14), French (10), Gujarati (<10), Urdu (<10), Oromo (<10), Pashto (<10), Thai (<10), German (<10), Kurdish (Bahdini) (<10), Swahili (<10), Greek (<10), Kurdish (Kurmanji) (<10), Punjabi (<10), Albanian (<10), Dutch (<10), Hindi (<10), Italian (<10), Tagalog (<10) and Tetum (<10)

Telephone Interpreting Services 2021 - 2024 for Voluntary Sector Hostels

	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2021/22</u>
Total No. of Calls:	2,127	2,281	2,123

Languages Requested for Telephone Interpreting by the Voluntary Sector Hostels in 2023/24:



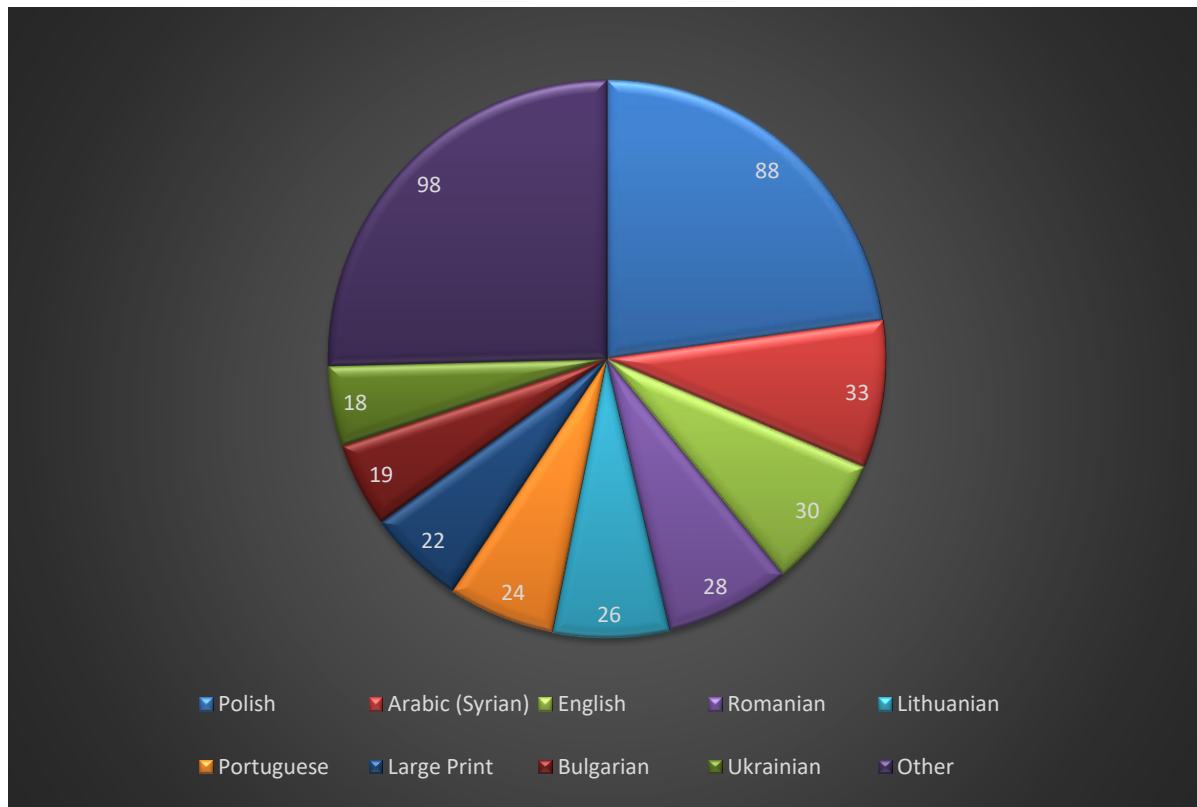
The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Czech (28), Slovak (26), Hungarian (25), Kurdish (Sorani) (23), Russian (22), Ukrainian (20), Lithuanian (18), Pashto (16), Bulgarian (14) Vietnamese (10), Bengali (<10), Czech (<10), Punjabi (<10), Bahasa Indonesia (<10), Farsi (Afghan) (<10), Latvian (<10), Urdu (<10), Turkish (<10), Albanian (<10), Armenian (<10), Greek (<10), Kurdish (Kurmanji) (<10), Oromo (<10), Sudanese (<10) and Tetum (<10)

Translations 2021 -2024

Translations	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Total No. of Translations:	386	279	240

Languages Translated in 2023/24:



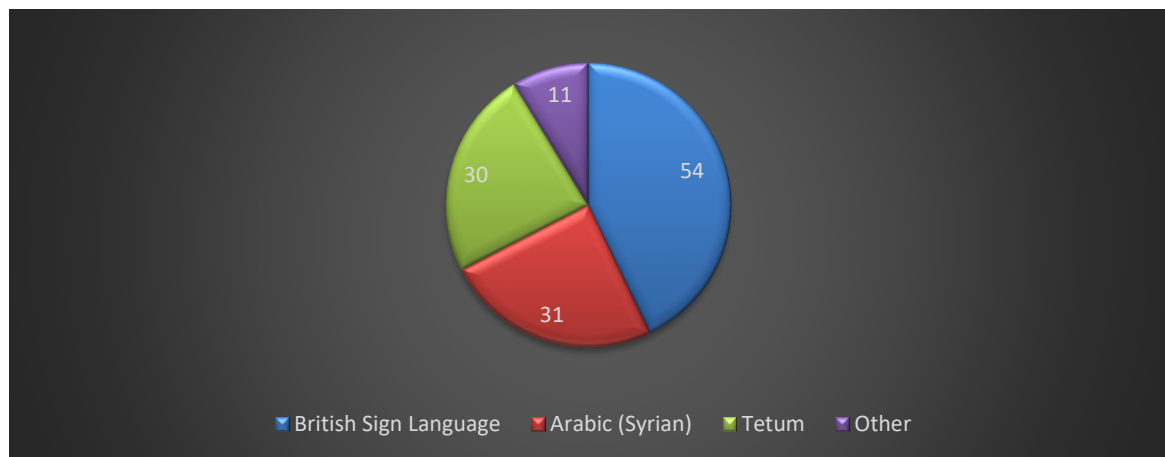
The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Hungarian (15), Russian (13), Slovak (12), Tigrinya (<10), Latvian (<10), Mandarin (<10), Tetum (<10), Braille (<10), Somali (<10), Cantonese (<10), Czech (<10), Arabic (Modern Standard) (<10), Audio (<10), Dari (<10), Farsi (Persian) (<10), Urdu (<10), German (<10), Irish (<10), Italian (<10), Spanish (<10), Swahili (<10) and Turkish (<10)

Face to Face Interpreting 2021 – 2024

<u>Face to Face Interpreting</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2021/22</u>
Total No. of Interpreter Sessions:	126	123	115

Face to Face Interpreting 2023/ 24:

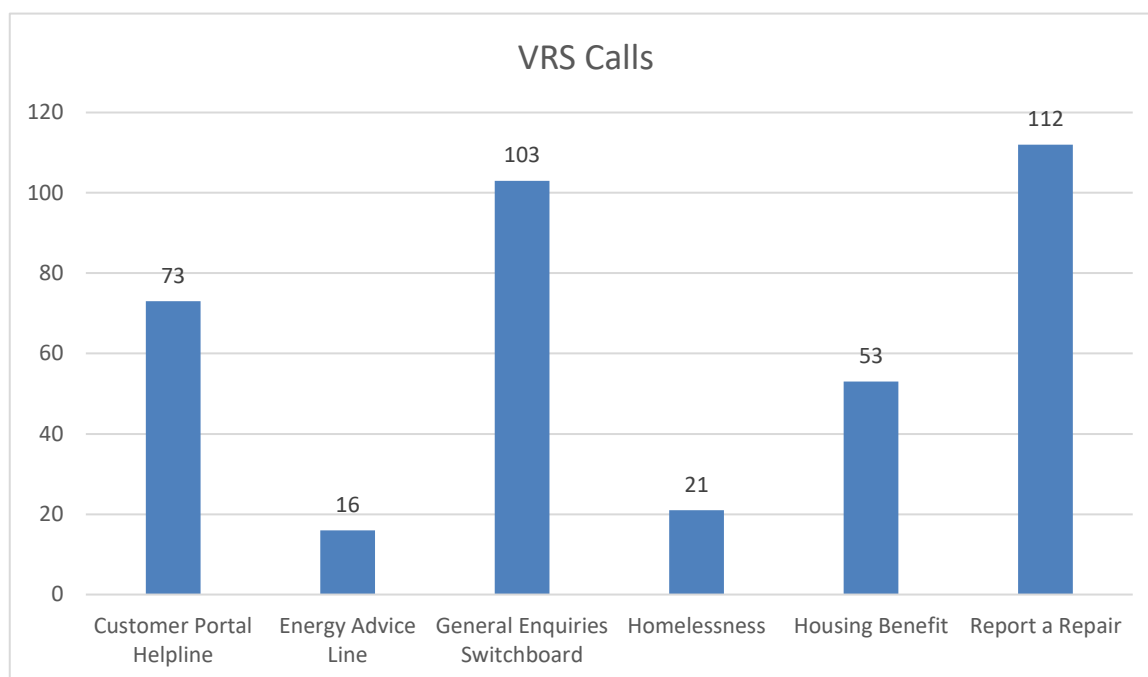


The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Dari (<10), Polish (<10), Hungarian (<10), Irish Sign Language (<10), Lithuanian (<10), Portuguese (<10), and Slovak (<10)

Video Relay Service 2023 – 2024

No. of Video Relay Service Calls in 2023/24



Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?

Insert number here: 0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

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

The Housing Executive also has a comprehensive complaints system for all its operational services. It is the organisation's practice to manage complaints efficiently and when appropriate to adapt and change its policy, practices and procedures if deficiencies are identified through these processes.

Section 3: Looking Forward

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

The Housing Executive Equality Scheme is due for review in 2028/2029.

- 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)*

In 2024/25 the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Safeguarding Team will focus on progressing towards our objective of making the organisation reflective of the community we serve. Our approach centres on our Affirmative Action Plan which is centred on a range of objectives to ensure we reach and are visible within the groups of people who are underrepresented in our organisation, that we remove barriers to accessing our jobs and the workplace environment is safe, friendly and welcoming for everyone.

In terms of our role as a strategic housing authority and in terms of how we serve our customers we will ensure that the Equality Commission's Statement of Key Inequalities and any emerging inequality issues in housing is at the centre of our corporate planning. The vast majority of Housing Executive functions not only target need but also address housing inequalities. The degree of which this can be achieved will be subject to available funding.

- 30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next 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):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:
--

14	1	0
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on <u>all</u> actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Regional ^{iv}	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Local ^v	Produce a Hate Crime Harassment Toolkit.	Toolkit produced and disseminated.	Complete/More informed customers.

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	<p>Training on general Disability Equality Awareness delivered to all Staff including Board members. This will include training on Disability Equality Legislation and on the duties included in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Training on the duties will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting equality of opportunity, • eliminating discrimination, • eliminating harassment, • encouraging participation in public life, and • steps to meet the needs of disabled people. <p>Training will be ongoing, relevant and updated to take into consideration amendments and new inclusions to the DDA as required</p>	<p>During 2023/24 21 Equality Awareness Training courses (including Induction sessions) have been held. Part of the course covers disability discrimination and delivering services to disabled people.</p> <p>In addition to Equality Awareness 1 Dignity at Work Training Course, which highlighted the Disability Discrimination Act was held in conjunction with the EDIS Team and H.R. An e-learning Diversity and Inclusion in the Northern Ireland Workplace course, which again highlights the Disability Discrimination Act is also mandatory for all staff.</p>	<p>Staff are made aware of disability discrimination and delivering services to disabled people</p>

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2	<p>Housing Executive's Health & Well-being Team, which was established in 2021 continues to promote a range on Health & Well-being initiatives and has a dedicated page on the Housing Executive's intranet (Gateway).</p>	<p>Provides guidance for staff on a range of Health & Well-being issues including contact details for Mental Health First Aiders, promoted a range of awareness days & weeks in 2023/24 e.g. Time to Talk day, National Grief Awareness week, World Mental Health week and World Menopause day. The also produced monthly updates on health & wellbeing activities and the organisation achieved 3 accreditations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing • Work Well, Live Well Award <p>Silver We Invest in Wellbeing accreditation by Investors in People</p>	<p>Staff can seek support from Mental Health First Aiders who will be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health illnesses and guide a colleague towards the right support. Staff can also find out information about other initiatives, which overall helps enhance staff well-being.</p>
	<p>Building a Better Understanding of Mental Health for Frontline Staff booklet developed in 2019 by Landlord Services. The next action is to procure and deliver a Mental Health Awareness Training course that is bespoke for social housing professionals in Northern Ireland who are</p>	<p>The business case for bespoke training to be delivered to all frontline Housing Services staff has been fully drafted and is going through the internal sign-off process. A procurement exercise will follow. As part of the provision, the MHA staff handbook will be reviewed by the external training provider and updated according to any recommendations. This will provide</p>	<p>Expected Outcomes will be,</p> <p>Enhanced levels of support for tenants, many of whom are vulnerable and have complex mental health issues. It is anticipated that this will result in higher levels of tenancy sustainment and resilience, and improved customer satisfaction with the service received from the Housing Executive.</p>

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	supporting tenants. Accordingly, the existing Mental Health Awareness staff handbook will be reviewed and updated.	assurance in relation to the quality and expertise of the advice it contains. The Tenancy Sustainment Team are liaising with L&OD on areas of cross over and the potential to embed Trauma Informed approaches within the roll-out of training.	Staff will feel more confident in assisting vulnerable customers with complex housing circumstances. This will result in increased staff satisfaction and lower levels of absence due to stress/anxiety/ burn out.
	15 staff members trained as JAM Champions.		Housing Executive now considered a JAM Friendly Organisation. A refresh of the JAM initiative is planned for 2024/25.

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Disabled people will receive communication in the media they understand.	The Housing Executive has in place a communication support service for meeting customer communication needs as and when required. The EDIS Team in liaison with Housing Benefit Policy and Landlord Services have measures in place to ensure visually impaired customers receive correspondence in appropriate formats e.g. large print,	Customers and staff were provided services in a positive way that removed any communication barriers. Disabled staff have access to all training available to staff generally. Customers receive communications that are accessible to them.

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		<p>Braille, and email correspondence rather than by letter.</p> <p>In 2023/24 29 alternative formats including large print & Braille were facilitated for customers.</p> <p>54 sessions with customers & staff were facilitated by British Sign Language Interpreters.</p> <p>The Housing Executive's website has incorporated ReachDeck technology into the website to enhance accessibility for all customers. ReachDeck helps organisations make their online content accessible and usable to everyone. It offers features, including reading and translation support. Further details are available at the following link https://www.Housing Executive.gov.uk/Accessibility</p> <p>Video Relay Service (VRS) available for Deaf customers and staff. Using this service customers can communicate directly with Housing Executive staff via a Sign Language interpreter who will sign the staff member's words verbatim to the customer and vice versa. In 2022/23</p>	<p>VRS has enhanced communications for Deaf customers.</p>
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		the Housing Executive received 378 call from customers using VRS.	
2	Enhance Awareness of disability issues and promote positive attitudes.	<p>As part of the Housing Executive's Affirmative Action Plan a new Disability Workstream for staff was set up.</p> <p>Several Autism Awareness training sessions were delivered in 2023/24 jointly by the Department of Health and Cedar Foundation. Around 600 colleagues attended the training sessions. Discussions are now taking place on how to include autism awareness within regular, ongoing training for colleagues.</p> <p>In 2023/24 the Learn at Lunch Programme delivered a range of sessions, which included a series of disability awareness sessions by Employers for Disability N.I. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden/Non - Visible Disabilities • Disability Discrimination Act <p>A range of Equality Bulletins about Disability have been issued in the past few years including:</p>	<p>The Disability Workstream brings together a range of staff with and without disabilities to look at how disability can be promoted across the organisation. Staff with lived experiences are helping to identify opportunities to improve the support we offer staff, as well as suggesting how we can make our services more inclusive of the needs of disabled customers.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 42 - Disability Mapping Pilot Report 2013: provided a summary of the Report which includes details on disability from the CTOS. • No. 44 - Summary Equality Scheme. • No. 45 – Guidelines for Using Communication Support Services for People Needing Language Support & Alternative Formats for People with Disabilities (updated and issued annually to staff). • No.45A – gives a list of available translated materials and alternative formats. • No. 46 – Staff Briefing Autism Advice and Information. • No. 46A – Staff Briefing Autism Factsheet • No. 47- Accessibility for Customers. <p>In addition the EDIS Team distributed a guidance note prepared by the Disability Forum to all staff entitled 'Useful Tips for Housing</p>	
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		Executive Staff in Regard to People with Disabilities’.	
3	Review the current system of approval, resources and delivery of housing adaptations.	Better more efficient adaptation services.	<p>An Interdepartmental Adaptations Assurance Framework is now in place to improve governance arrangements for the provision of services for disabled people across housing tenures. The Framework is overseen by the Interdepartmental Housing and Health Adaptations Programme Board (IHHAPB), which is now fully operational (title of the board to be amended as its work is not exclusive to just adaptations).</p> <p>The Board is co-chaired by the DoH/DfC and is responsible for overseeing strategy and policy. In doing so it seeks to ensure collaborative working between Departments, Health & Social Care Trusts (HSC Trusts), the Housing Executive and Housing Associations and service users in the delivery of services for disabled people.</p> <p>Regional Housing and Health Partnership Forums have been established across both the private and social sectors (Housing Executive & Housing Associations). The Private Sector & Housing Association Regional Forums are fully operational with</p>

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			<p>the Housing Executive Regional Forum due to host its first meeting on 27th June 2024. These forums will ensure a joined up and consistent approach to delivery of services for disabled people between HSC Trusts, Housing Executive and Housing Associations.</p> <p>Internally the Housing Executive have set up an Interdivisional Disability Forum with senior management representation from Asset Management, Corporate Services, Housing and Regional Services.</p>
4	Interdepartmental Housing Adaptations Design Toolkit	<p>The Toolkit was reviewed/updated and re-endorsed by both the DoH/DfC and the Housing Executive in 2022. The revised document was formally launched and implemented in November 2022 with 5 awareness events across the region</p>	<p>The document is unique to Northern Ireland and frequently referenced as a good practice guide. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of minor housing adaptations (Select List), which can be provided by Housing Providers without the need for referral to Occupational Therapy Services • Evidence based, consistent and equitable housing adaptation design standards for all tenures • Improved design formats that help service users to visualise and gain a better understanding of proposed housing adaptations

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic communication formats that facilitate timely and consistent communications between health and housing staff involved in the adaptation process
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2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	The Housing Executive ensures that all partnerships arranged under supporting people adhere to the principles of key equality legislation.	From April 2008 onwards.	<p>All Supporting People providers have signed funding agreements requiring compliance with all applicable equality legislation and the DDA.</p> <p>Validated on a rolling annual basis through implementation of Supporting People contract management arrangements.</p>

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2	Wheelchair Standard Social Housing.	Completed new standards mandatory from April 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had a PI to ensure 10% of New Build units were built to Wheelchair Design Standards which we did not achieve in 2023/24. Of the 1,508 Starts confirmed in 2023/24, a total of 1,385 were New Build units, 113 of which have been designed to Wheelchair Design Standards (representing 8% against the 10% target). Whilst the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes has generally increased since the target was first included in 2017/18 (with 5% achieved in 2017/18) the targets have never been achieved. Following analysis by our Development Programme Group (DPG), it was identified that of the 1,385 'new build' homes started during 2023/24 there were 1,206 units (36 schemes) that were 'eligible' for wheelchair accessible homes (this represents 9.4% of starts). Going forward, in 2024/25 we intend to measure performance based on the number of New Build units and schemes which are started, and which are eligible for wheelchair accessible homes. In 2024/25, when designing our new Corporate Strategy, we will work with DfC to ensure that any targets set in relation to wheelchair accessible homes are challenging and achievable
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			to support independent living in the social housing sector.
3	Initially a pilot in the South Down area the Dementia Friendly Homes initiative was rolled out across the Housing Executive with over 50 Dementia Champions trained in every Area Office.	<p>The Dementia Friendly brand, including the 'dementia champion' role has been discontinued by the Alzheimer's Society as part of a programme of change within their organisation. This programme of change has now concluded. As a result we will now reboot our own provision for tenants who are affected by Dementia. This will be included as an action in the forthcoming Tenancy Support and Sustainment Strategy 2024-2030 Year 1 Action Plan.</p> <p>Dementia packs continue to be provided to local Housing Executive offices to distribute as needed.</p>	<p>The aim of the review will be to ensure that relevant staff are equipped to provide advice and signposting for tenants and their family members who are affected by Dementia.</p> <p>The review will also ensure that relevant staff are /become aware of the range of dementia related repairs and minor adaptations on offer, identify when these may be suitable, and promote uptake by tenants.</p> <p>It is intended that the review will also increase distribution rates of our dementia packs through improved awareness of their availability.</p> <p>The review will also identify ways in which we can support greater awareness of the issues which are faced by people living with Dementia and those who care for them across the organisation and in our communities.</p>

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact

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1	Disability Issues included as a standing item for the Housing Executive's Full Consultative Forum.	The Consultative Forum agreed to have disability issues included as a standing item on the agenda.	<p>Having disability issues as a standing item on the agenda of the Full Consultative Forum ensures there is a regular review of progress, and new actions can be introduced on an annual basis, or when required.</p> <p>A number of disability groups including Disability Action and members of the Housing Executive's Disability Forum regularly attend meetings and disability issues are discussed.</p>
2	Attitudinal (and associated) studies will be included in the main research projects conducted by the Housing Executive. This includes the Continuous Tenants Omnibus Survey (CTOS), the Public Attitudes Survey, the Staff Attitudes Survey (every 2 years) and the House Condition Survey (every 5 years).	From October 2008.	<p>Data regarding attitudes to disability will be collated using the Continuous Tenants Omnibus Survey (CTOS), the Public Attitudes Survey, Staff Attitudes Survey and House Condition Survey.</p> <p>Continued inclusion of disabled people in all research.</p> <p>Reports on findings/disability issues published for example the Public Attitudes Survey 2018 , which will includes a chapter on 'Attitudes to disability in Northern Ireland' was published in January 2020 and Assisted Living Technology for Tenants: An</p>

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			Evaluation of the Pilot Project was publish in October 2020.
3	Accessible Housing Register (AHR).	The development of the In-House AHR Solution was completed in March 2021. We now have facilities to capture accessible data via an electronic AHR survey form and an electronic calculation which will assign the appropriate AHR classification based upon the property attributes being matched against the relevant design standards i.e. wheelchair, life time homes, mobility etc. (linked in with the National Register of Social Housing Design Standards).	Work is ongoing with both the Housing Executive Landlord Services & Housing Association's to build the pool of accessible stock data.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

Click or tap here to enter text.

(b) Quantitative

Click or tap here to enter text.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes please outline below:

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	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
3	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
4	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
5	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

N/A

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.