


Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report 2024 -25

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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.
Signature:	

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

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

This report reflects progress made between April 2024 and March 2025

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 2024-25, 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 2024/25. 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.)

‘Energising Communities’ 2022/23 – 2024/25

2024/25 represented the final year of our outgoing Corporate Strategy, ‘Energising Communities’, which covered the period 2022/23 – 2024/25. During this period we developed three, one year Business Plans which were aligned to our Corporate

Strategy, and which provided strategic housing policy and strategic business objectives across the social housing sector. Since launching the strategy in 2022 we believe we have made a significant and positive impact across communities, right across Northern Ireland. In many instances, we designed developed and delivered a range of new initiatives and services that are now embedded within the full remit of services and activities we deliver for and on behalf of our tenants, customers and communities.

Energising Communities outlined six high level strategic objectives, each of which was supported by a number of priorities. Our six high level objectives were:

- 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,
- 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,
- 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,
- We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help **reduce poverty and improve Health & Well-being**,
- We will **involve our customers** to ensure that they are at the heart of service improvements and our business delivery model and
- We will be an **employer of choice** and deliver high quality services for all in Northern Ireland's increasingly diverse community.

Many of the objectives within Energising Communities were 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.

Some of the key achievements over the duration of the strategy are detailed below. Further information on progress on an annual basis is our previous annual reports that can be found online [here](#).

- We invested over £3 billion into our local economy across the full remit of our services;
- We installed nearly 13,000 energy efficient measures via the Affordable Warmth Scheme and the Boiler Replacement scheme, spending over £39 million;

- We approved 2,439 referrals for Disabled Facilities Grants;
- We invested more than £523 million via the Social Housing Development Programme and delivered starts on 4,968 new social homes;
- Our Financial Inclusion Team generated an additional £6.6 million in annual benefit entitlement for our tenants;
- We Invested £37.3 million in 1,406 homes via the Energy Efficiency in Social Housing project, which was part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). These retrofits have demonstrably improved heat retention in these properties and reduced energy use by our tenants;
- There have been 362 apprentices recruited via our social value programme;
- We provided a range of Communication Support Services, including more than 20,000 telephone interpreting calls;
- We enabled our tenants to live more independently by investing over £233 million in the Supporting People programme;
- We completed 242 major adaptations and 11,756 minor adaptations;
- The Housing Executive played a key role in the cross departmental response to the delivery of accommodation and support for Ukrainian nationals, who arrived in Northern Ireland as part of the UK Governments response to the war in Ukraine. It is estimated that in excess of 3,453 Ukrainian nationals have now arrived in Northern Ireland through a recognised visa process since March 2022.

Each year we produce an annual business plan, which is aligned to our Corporate Strategy and which details our performance objectives for the year ahead. Our 2024/25 business plan set-out 92 objectives comprising of **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**, **Performance Indicators (PIs)** and **Sub Objectives (SOs)**, which we monitored and reported on each month. Relevant performance information, together with key policy and service delivery developments which promote equality of opportunity and good relations, are summarised over the following pages under each of the six key objectives.

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. The 2024/25 year presented significant early and ongoing budgetary challenges, with an initial funding allocation which would have been sufficient to fund starts on around 400 new homes. However, the final budget allocation for

2024/25 was £173.2m, comprised of £141.7m for SHDP and £31.5m for the Housing for All programme, which was sufficient to allow us to exceed key delivery targets in out-turn starts and completions. During the year Housing Associations delivered starts on 1,504 new social homes (across 72 schemes) against a target of 1,500. There were 1,410 completions against a target of 1,400. These new social homes will address a range of housing needs across Northern Ireland for client groups including single people, families, older people and Applicants with Complex Needs.

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 2024/25, a total of 751 Minor and Major Adaptation claims were received, with a total in year expenditure of £5.2m to facilitate these works.

The Housing Executive monitors the delivery of new homes constructed to Wheelchair Design Standards and new homes built in rural locations. There is an on-going annual target for 10% of General Needs New Build units within eligible schemes to be built to Wheelchair Design Standards. Of the 1,504 SHDP Starts, 1,148 units were eligible General Needs New Build. Of these, 125 units (10.89%) have been designed to Wheelchair Design Standards.

The target for 2024/25 was to deliver 13.05% of the total SHDP Starts in rural locations. Based on the Starts out-turn of 1,504 units, this equates to 196 Starts in rural locations. Of the 1,504 units (72 schemes) confirmed as 2024/25 SHDP Starts, 188 units (16 schemes) were in rural locations. This represents 12.5% of the 1,504 units confirmed as SHDP Starts. Work is on-going between DPG, the Housing Executive's Rural Unit, and housing associations to improve levels of new social housing provision in rural locations and review our rural targets.

DPG is also working closely with DfC and Housing Associations to bring forward Pilot Schemes to deliver new homes to higher standards in terms of Energy Efficiency, designs for older people, and City Centre living.

Housing for All

The Housing Executive is responsible for the 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme. The programme is helping to create inclusive, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods and emerged from Northern Ireland Executive's Together: Building a United Community (T:Buc) strategy.

During the year a total of 439 new Housing For All units were delivered across eight schemes. The Programme now supports 11 Housing Associations working across 85 developments with a total of 2,925 homes delivered or under development. 49 schemes (1,399 households) are now celebrated as Shared, with another 36 schemes (1,526 homes) programmed, under construction, to be

allocated or celebrated as shared. The benefits of shared housing, however, extend far beyond those 2,925 units as the Housing Associations work with 37 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 continue to implement an ambitious business plan, continuing to promote 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 11 Housing Associations, to deliver the programme.

Shaping and Informing Government Policy

As the Strategic Housing Authority and a statutory partner in the Community Planning process we have an important role in promoting the general wellbeing of our community and its citizens, and the need for housing for all tenures. 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 the Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039, the Housing Executive continued to use 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 up to 20% affordable housing on appropriate development sites through Council Local Development Plans.

A number of housing supply initiatives have commenced in 2024/25 year as part of our contribution to Community Planning. In 2023/24 we received Departmental approval of a Business case for a Housing Executive Land Acquisition (HELA) project. The aim of this pilot project is to identify and acquire land in public ownership, to support continued development of social housing through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP). The pilot aims to deliver 100 homes over a three-year period. This will assist the delivery of the Housing Executive and DfC's Housing Supply Strategy's objective of increasing housing supply and addressing housing stress within areas of acute housing need. The Land Asset Management Strategy (LAMS) was approved by the Housing Executive's Board in February 2023 and during the year work continued on Year 2 of the LAMS action plan.

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>.

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.

Throughout 2024/25 the Housing Executive worked in partnership to commence the redevelopment of two existing sites to ensure the availability of culturally sensitive accommodation for Irish Travellers. We remain working towards the identification of two new sites and to bring forward planning applications in Belfast and Magherafelt.

The Housing Executive has been working with Belfast City Council to identify a suitable site for Irish Traveller accommodation in the Belfast City Council area. In parallel, and in the event that no suitable site is identified in the short term, the Housing Executive is also working with the Council to make provision for land to be zoned in the Local Policies Plan as part of the Local Development Plan process.

The Housing Executive continues to work with Mid Ulster Council with regard to the planning application for a serviced site which was submitted in November 2022 and which a determination remains outstanding.

The Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-2026 was published on the Housing Executive website in July 2021. The strategy 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 4 of the Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-2026 has completed with progress made across all achievable actions including:

- Irish Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment methodology has been completed. Work to implement the new methodology and develop a system for Irish Traveller applications is progressing;
- The Housing Executive has written to all Community Planning Partnerships to raise awareness of Irish Traveller housing needs and to seek assistance with site identification;
- The development of accommodation management policy for serviced sites is progressing. This will provide Housing Executive staff with guidance on the management for Irish Traveller sites as well as a new system to record applications for the Irish Traveller community; and
- The Irish Travellers Accommodation Strategy 2021-26 will be reviewed, and a new Strategy will be developed over the coming year, for launch in 2026.

Throughout 2025/26 work will continue on the delivery of two (sub) Objectives:

- **Working in partnership commence the redevelopment of two existing sites to ensure the availability of culturally sensitive accommodation for Irish Travellers:** Whilst completion of this target has been delayed, significant work and progress has been made in 2024/25. Any outstanding issues are being appropriately addressed, and work on the two redevelopment schemes continues.
- **Work to source two new sites and bring forward planning application in Belfast and Magherafelt:** We continue to work with Belfast City Council on the potential zoning of appropriate lands through the Local Development Plan process while looking to identify suitable sites through the Development Management process. There have been a number of challenges in the delivery of this, many of which are outside of the Housing Executive's control for both the Belfast and Magherafelt sites.

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 Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 Act places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to have due regard to the needs of people in rural areas when developing, adopting, implementing or revising our policies, strategies and plans

when designing and delivering our public services. In 2024/25, the Housing Executive considered 31 policies, strategies, plans or services to ensure that due regard was given to meeting the needs of people in rural areas in a fair and equitable way.

During 2024/25, Year 4 of the Rural Action Plan was successfully delivered, with progress being made against all the actions. An annual report detailing progress during Year 4 of the Rural Action Plan will be published in 2025/26. 188 new social housing units were started in rural areas, supporting the sustainability of these communities. This represented 12.5% of the overall SHDP out-turn of 1,504 starts, against the strategic rural target of 13.05%. Although closer than previous years the continued shortfall emphasises the ongoing challenges of delivering new housing in rural communities.

A Rural Housing Steering Group, including representatives from DfC, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, the Housing Executive, and Land & Property Services, continued to explore the barriers to rural housing development. Rural public land that may be suitable for social housing was reviewed, and a research piece was completed to consider the barriers and opportunities to rural social housing development. This research was published in March and the recommendations are still being reviewed (the published research can be accessed [here](#)).

We undertook nine Housing Need Tests during 2024/25 to uncover hidden housing need in rural areas. As part of this process we engaged with key stakeholders including community representatives, Community Planning partnerships, local elected representatives and Housing Associations. Tests were delivered at the following locations: Dervock, Loughgiel, Garrison, Cashell, The Rock, Swatragh, Seaforde, Clough, and Dundrum.

The Housing Executive organised the 2024 Rural Community Awards event in the Seamus Heaney HomePlace, Bellaghy, in partnership with the Rural Community Network who were launching their strategy. This was an extremely successful event, where prizes were presented to community groups and individuals, recognising their achievements and contribution to rural communities. The three categories were: Cleaner and Greener, Community Spirit and Community Champion both North and South. The runners up were from Bushmills, Dromore, Park Village/Learmount, Maghera, Cullybackey and Moneydarragh. The winners were from Dervock, Loughgilly, Glenravel, Laurencetown, Lenderg & Tullylish, Carnlough and Shrigley.

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

Within the Strategic Housing Authority, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) is the focal point for the Housing Executive's strategic function of Northern Ireland's Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) and the Housing Executive's Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy.

Our HECA role requires the Housing Executive to prepare an annual report setting out the practical and cost-effective energy conservation measures (which includes information, advice and education, promotion, making grants and carrying out works), and subsequent greenhouse gas reduction across all the Northern Ireland housing sector.

The Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan provides a framework for tackling environmental and social challenges by 2027, responding to the climate emergency. Ultimately, the long-term goal of the Strategy is to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 right across all of our activities. Here the SDU monitors the climate targets across our business areas to ensure compliance within our strategic approach to balance our responsibility to provide quality, affordable housing and improving on our social and environmental impact.

To help achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 across all of our activities, a number of short-term targets have been set, and by the end of March 2025, we have already achieved the target of 25% reduction in CO₂ across our office accommodation and business mileage areas. We are on course to achieve our landlord housing target of 23% reduction by 2030/31 which will reduce our CO₂ emissions by 89,000 metric tonnes per year.

As the Home Energy Conservation Authority (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. During 2024/25, the Northern Ireland Energy Advice Service (NIEAS) helped our community with almost 20,000 unique queries. This advice offers vital help on 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, helping 10,949 customers in 2024/25.

The Housing Executive launched a new interactive Home Energy Saving Tool in November 2023, in collaboration with the Energy Saving Trust, using local data. This tool helps householders lower their energy bills and make their home more comfortable, and it had over 1,659 users in 2024/25. This easy to use tool helps determine how energy efficient a home is, and what changes would make a home more energy efficient (to use the tool, visit our website:

<https://energyadvicetool.nihe.gov.uk/>).

We worked with DfC in the delivery of their Residential Climate Action Plan 2023 – 2027 and continued to deliver Affordable Warmth Scheme measures. During the year, 1,694 homes completed works, with 2,944 energy efficiency measures installed.

During 2024/25, the Housing Executive continued with its Low Carbon Programme (LCP) and completed 111 retrofits, with a combined total of 141 completions since the programme inception in 2023/24, leaving 259 houses to complete. This programme will provide an evidence base and key learning points to ensure the Housing Executive will provide decarbonised retrofitted solutions for the Landlord and Private Sector Investment business areas. This will align with the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Related achievements:

- **Geothermal Energy Momentum on the Island of Ireland (GEMINI):** The Housing Executive is a partner in the recently launched GEMINI EU Peace Plus funded project. This successful consortium of 15 partners is focused on installing four geothermal energy demonstrator pilots across Ireland, with the Housing Executive delivering one of these demonstrators in its Net Zero Centre of Excellence site at Newtownabbey, outside Belfast over the next three years. As part of the project, the Housing Executive has agreed to install geothermal boreholes at the Newtownabbey location to support a ground source heat pump, demonstrating how this new technology can heat residential houses.
- **ENERGYCLOUD NI:** Energy Cloud is an initiative to create solutions to divert surplus renewable energy, which would otherwise be wasted, to homes based in Northern Ireland, with a primary focus on those in fuel poverty. The Housing Executive is planning a small pilot programme in Omagh of up to 20 houses to evaluate the outcomes of this pilot for both the householders and landlord. The plan is to use the potential of otherwise curtailed wind energy to heat hot water tanks in an intermittent basis at no cost to tenants.
- **Education and Empowerment:** NI Energy Advice Service received 19,976 queries and signposted or referred customers 10,949 during 2024/25;
- **Health and Wellbeing:** We planted our 1 millionth tree in summer 2024

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.

It has been a challenging year but also one of significant achievement. During the year we invested approximately £1bn into the local economy through various housing programmes and services across Northern Ireland. This includes approximately £465m in Housing Benefit payments, £80m in administering the Supporting People Programme, £176.9m in the delivery of new housing starts by Housing Associations, and a record £250.1m investment in improvements to our 83,000 homes. 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. Further to this, we administered the Supporting People Programme on behalf of DfC.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit is a means tested benefit which helps people on a low income who have to pay housing costs for the property they live in. An effective and efficient Housing Benefit service assists people to sustain their tenancies. The Housing Benefit PI to 'Ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the Housing Benefit Service in line with agreed performance indicators, including the transition to Universal Credit' was successfully achieved. At the end of March 2025 there were 76,167 customers living in the rented sector and claiming Housing Benefit. Over the course of the year, we paid out £464.77m in Housing Benefit, excluding Discretionary Housing Payments; and assessed 14,830 new claims for Housing Benefit, as well as processing 146,129 changes to existing claims notified by claimants. Additional financial assistance was delivered to 7,336 customers through the Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme, with awards totalling £2m being made over the course of the year.

Further help with rates charges was also provided through the Low-Income Rate Relief (LIRR) and Lone Pensioner Allowance (LPA) Schemes. During 2024/25 a total of £1.06m was paid in LIRR to Housing Executive and housing association tenants, with an additional £662k paid in LIRR to tenants in the private rented sector. Total caseload including the private rented sector is recorded as 6,528 at the end of March 2025. A further £115k in LPA was paid to Housing Executive and housing association tenants, with an additional £710k paid in LPA to tenants in the private rented sector. Total caseload including the private rented sector is recorded as 4,646 at the end of March 2025.

Housing Executive Homes

In 2024/25 we continued to deliver considerable investment in pursuit of providing modern, safe and warm homes. We delivered a response and planned maintenance service, carrying out cyclical health and safety compliance work to our stock. We delivered 18,550 elemental improvements to tenants' homes (including bathrooms, kitchens, loft insulation), with a further 5,371 improvements delivered via response maintenance contracts. This improved living conditions for

many of our tenants and their families. We worked towards delivery of a PI to implement 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.

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. During the year we carried out around 260,000 response maintenance jobs (including 3,746 minor adaptations) at a value of over £60 million, maintaining and upgrading tenants' homes.

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.

In 2024/25, there were 80 providers providing over 800 services to almost 20,000 service users, across four key thematic areas:

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

Supporting People also funds Floating Support services and outreach services, for people who need support to live in their own community-based accommodation. From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 expenditure on Floating Support was £14.48m. This ensured that 17.8% of Supporting People spend was on floating support, exceeding the target of 17.5% set-out in the corresponding Performance Indicator.

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 2024/25, there were 15,905 households that presented to the Housing Executive as homeless, representing a decrease of 6.13% from 16,943 presentations during the previous year. Of those presenting, 10,855 were accepted as Full Duty Applicants and owed a full housing duty, increasing from 11,537 (5.91%) from 2023/24. Accommodation not reasonable; Loss of private rented accommodation and sharing breakdown/family dispute, remained the top three reasons for homelessness presentations.

We began delivery of homelessness awareness sessions to schools across Northern Ireland. The sessions aimed to raise awareness of homelessness and the services available, with a view to ensuring young people access homelessness prevention at the earliest possible opportunity. The Homelessness Strategy Year 4 Action Plan has been developed alongside our partners on the Central Homelessness Forum and it is anticipated this will be published in July 2025. The Action Plan has been developed with consideration of the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on Homelessness, published in March 2025. We also published a Youth Homelessness Action Plan (which contains 18 actions to support children and young people who are homelessness or threatened with homelessness) and our Domestic Abuse Action Plan (which contains 16 actions and recognises the impact the Housing Executive can have as a landlord).

Demand for temporary accommodation continued to grow significantly in 2024/25. There was a target to end the use of bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation as temporary housing for children for more than two weeks, which was not achieved. Progress has been ongoing on a remodelling programme for large-scale congregate hostels, and the Housing Executive agreed a three-year lease of two Housing Associations blocks, with associated housing management provision, as temporary accommodation in the Lisburn area. The Housing Executive was also successful in procuring Belfast Dispersed Intensively Managed Emergency (DIME) (118 units of accommodation to replace an existing service) service, and in procuring a similar new service in Derry/Londonderry, to provide accommodation and support for those experiencing chronic homelessness in the West Area.

Adaptations and Grants

During 2024/25 the grants team promoted available grant aid directly to those who may benefit, through participating in a range of locally based community events and at regional events, including the Balmoral Show and Love Your Home. The

team delivers funding schemes for the private housing sector, and aim to improve housing standards, address disrepair and remedy unfitness. In turn this will improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel poverty and enable persons with a disability to live as independently as possible and to remain in their own home.

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. During the year we started 93 Major Adaptations for people with disabilities, and following a review of our major adaptations process we are continuing 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, and in 2024/25 we invested £7.67million into the completion of 3,746 Minor Adaptations. Repair Grants are awarded to homes following the issue of a statutory notice by a local Council, and during 2024/25 we paid out £553k resulting in vital improvements to 286 properties in the private rented sector.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are managed by the Housing Executive and are delivered in partnership with Health Trusts to privately owned properties. They are critical in helping improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and help support independent living. During 2024/25, we approved 812 referrals in total for DFGs (the total in-year spend on DFGs was £13.63million). We also continued to fund the Home Improvement Agency services to support our customers in finding architects and contractors and complete necessary grant forms.

For 2024/25, our target to improve service delivery times for the stages of DFG's that were inside the Housing Executive's control was 294 calendar days. This was based on a 7.5% reduction of the 2021/22 baseline. By the end of 2024/25 we exceeded the target by achieving a processing time of 114 days. To ensure customers are at the heart of service improvements, we continued to work with the Disabled Adaptations Subgroup of the Central Housing Forum, through a cross-departmental approach with colleagues from Housing Services. This partnership working helped to develop a new DFG leaflet for customers, which has proved successful in supporting the adaptation journey for private sector grant applicants.

Older People

The Older People's Housing Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26 was published in March 2021, and there are four themes within the 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.

The strategy is due to end in March 2026, and from that point on our work to support older people will be detailed in a new Strategic Housing Authority 'Housing and Health Strategy', which will be developed throughout 2025/26.

Some of our work in 2024/25 which supported older people included:

- The second tranche of funding in the Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme 2023-2025 was awarded in November 2024. Ten projects were awarded a total of £782K to provide our tenants with early tenancy support, practical support in the home for older tenants, and help to manage a tenancy and look after a home.
- As the Home Energy Conservation Authority (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. During 2024/25, the Northern Ireland Energy Advice Service (NIEAS) helped our community with almost 20,000 unique queries. This advice offers vital help on 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, helping 10,949 customers in 2024/25.
- DPG is working closely with DfC and Housing Associations to bring forward Pilot Schemes to deliver new homes to higher standards in terms of Energy Efficiency, designs for older people, and City Centre living. In 2024/25 DPG assessed and approved five schemes under the Energy Efficiency pilot.
- With a budget of £468k in 2024/25, the Small Pockets of Deprivation (SPOD) Programme provided funding support to 13 areas for activities. These included: the running costs and maintenance for community premises within Housing Executive estates, which in-turn allow for signposting to services and advice; salaries or contributions to salaries to run projects and community premises; training and courses; initiatives to support young and older residents; environmental equipment and programmes; and health and wellbeing projects. Additional support payments were also issued to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Vulnerable Persons Relocations Programmes

This programme was launched in January 2014 and has helped those in the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. In 2024/25 the Housing Executive administered a range of housing assistance for Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian Refugees, accommodating circa 2,204 individuals via these programmes.

Community Safety

We officially launched our new Community Safety Strategy, Building Safer Communities Together 2025-2030, in March 2025 after extensive stakeholder consultation. The consultation included online social media campaigns and in-person events with the Central Housing Forum (CHF), Disability Forum, Rural Forum and Youth Forum).

We continue to work with other agencies, groups and tenants to deal with anti-social behaviour. During the year this included collaboration with statutory partners at Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and other inter-agency forums to help make communities safer and to ensure that the voices of local people are heard on policing and community safety issues. In 2024/25 we responded to 1,501 reports of alleged anti-social behaviour, and we used an incremental and proportionate approach in our response, with the majority of reports resolved using 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 2024/25 two properties were returned to us following action.

We also worked in partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ), Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other statutory partners to promote and support race relations for our tenants and customers. Through records on race hate incidents we were able to identify priority areas to assist with the provision of Race Relations funding.

During 2024/25, our procured mediation service provider worked on 35 neighbour disputes. With funding from the Housing Executive our community based restorative partners, Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) and Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI), provided mediation and community support in 745 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 (PCSPs) to enable the development of local solutions to address anti-social behaviour in Housing Executive estates. In 2024/25 just over £600K was awarded to a range of voluntary and community groups to partner with councils to address community safety issues in our estates.

Community Involvement

The Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy 2024-2029 provides a framework for the Housing Executive, tenants, residents and leaseholders to work together towards mutually agreed outcomes. During 2024/25 we successfully launched the new strategy at our Annual Communities Conference in October 2024. When developing this strategy, we facilitated numerous consultation events with community representatives, our underrepresented forums and the Central Housing Forum.

During the year we awarded £257K Community Grants to groups and continued to progress our current Funding Agreements in order to support our hard-to-reach groups. Looking forward, we will continue to support the Central Housing Forum to challenge and lobby our services; and participate in Working Groups to ensure the Housing Executive increases tenant, resident and leaseholder engagement.

Community Cohesion

The Housing Executive invested over £1.1million into our communities through Cohesion funding during 2024/25. Our Good Relations Officers, Race Relations Officer and Interface Officer work in partnership with communities to implement our new Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy 2024-2029, producing practical and tangible actions that benefits those communities.

We successfully produced a new combined Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy in year after a 12-week public consultation was completed, we launched the new strategy in October 2024 and successfully implemented the 2024/25 Action plan.

We collaborated with statutory partners to promote and support race relations for our tenants and customers in 2024/25. The Race Relations Officer (RRO) continued to work in areas of ongoing race hate incidents using information on hotspots in conjunction with Community Safety records; this lead to positive engagement with Ethnic Groups and linkages with HCNs. The RRO will continue to engage and collaborate with Ethnic Groups throughout 2025/26 to grow and to promote and improve race relations within our communities.

During 2024/25 the Housing Executive delivered the following:

- We funded and administered 131 estate based good relations projects, and 32 race relations projects;
- We supported 8 projects in Greater Whitewell and a funded worker in Glenbank via the Areas at Risk Programme in North Belfast, on behalf of Department for Communities;

- We supported the development and implementation of 13 reimaging projects via a community-led approach, addressing the physical manifestations of segregation within and between our estates;
- We completed work at 12 interface locations and invested funding into our communities; and
- We delivered 28 Positive expressions of culture projects.

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

Customer Service Excellence:

Customer Service Excellence accreditation is an acclaimed independent UK national standard of excellence in service delivery. In 2024 Housing Services was assessed as fully compliant across the 57 rigorous criteria and achieved “Compliance Plus” (best practice standard) in 29 of these 57 criteria. This is an organisational best performance building on our result of 25 compliance plus elements in 2023.

Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey:

Through our Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS), we measure tenant satisfaction annually, across a range of key metrics, including overall satisfaction with the overall service provided by the Housing Executive, tenant satisfaction with repairs and tenant satisfaction with the general condition of their property. We missed our challenging target of ensuring 79% of our tenants are satisfied with the overall service they receive, achieving 72%.

We also missed the target of ensuring 71% of our tenants are satisfied with repairs, achieving 65%. Prior to 2024 our CTOS asked tenants about their satisfaction with the quality of their home; we planned to once again ask this question in 2024/25, but Housing Services made the decision to remove this question. Due to this, the PI was not graded at year end.

A new question was added to the CTOS, regarding satisfaction with the general condition of the property, achieving a result of 77%. Ongoing challenges experienced in some key operational areas are likely to be contributing to these reduced satisfaction results, including contractor backlogs, contract challenges and resourcing issues.

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.

With this in mind we established the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group, which is comprised of senior leaders and colleagues across the organisation. The takes a lead role in supporting the delivery of our Affirmative Action Plan, including planning the steps we are taking to attract diverse talent and ensuring we are representative of the communities we serve. It meets on a quarterly basis, and receives regular updates on recruitment, training and workplace culture.

The EDI Steering Group has also established a range of EDI workstreams to provide colleagues with the opportunity to share their lived experiences and to help inform actions we can take to create a more inclusive workplace.

- The **Community Background Workstream** is open to all colleagues working at the Housing Executive. The group supports us in our ambitions to create a work force that is representative of the people we serve. This includes how we attract people from different political and religious backgrounds, ensuring we are seen as an employer of choice to everyone in our community.
- The **Disability Workstream** is open to all colleagues with a disability or long-term health condition, and anyone interested in promoting equality for disabled people. The workstream has led on a range of activities, including: Delivery of Autism Awareness Training for colleagues across the business; Sessions on Deaf/Hearing Loss Awareness; and Disability Pride Month.
- The **Gender Workstream** is open to all colleagues with an interest in promoting sex and gender equality. Members have been involved in a range of activities, including: International Women's Day Events; Men's Health Month; Baby Loss Awareness Month; Reviewing key Housing Executive policies and strategies, including flexible working, menopause guidance and domestic abuse.
- The **Race Workstream** is open to all colleagues who are keen to promote race equality and cultural inclusion. The group is keen to ensure that all our diverse ethnic communities feel welcomed and supported in the workplace and in our community. They take part in local events, such as Belfast Mela, to help raise awareness about the different cultures and faiths of people living in our communities. The race workstream also encourages colleagues from different national, racial and ethnic backgrounds to share

their experiences of working here. In this way we can explore ways we can make our workplace more inclusive for everyone.

- The **LGBTQ+ Workstream** is open to all colleagues who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community, and to anyone keen to be an active ally. The group encourages colleagues to share their lived experiences, helping to identify ways we can be a more inclusive place to work for LGBTQ+ people. They also assist with other activities to help promote ourselves as an inclusive employer.

The Housing Executive continues 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. We will also 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.

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 500 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.

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.

The Housing Executive's Equality Scheme provides a template for promoting equality and during 2024/25 the team: Screened 32 policies; held 10 Equality Awareness Training Sessions and 9 Corporate Induction sessions, with 321 staff attending; held two full meetings of the Consultative Forum on Equality; held a

learn at lunch session on communication support guidance and tips for staff; completed four Quarterly Reports on the Implementation of the Equality Scheme; developed two Equality Monitoring Reports and a draft Ethnic Minorities Monitoring Report; provided consultation guidance and support on a range of consultations including the Draft Housing Executive Corporate Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28 and the Social Investment Strategy; responded to 99 information requests, including Freedom of Information requests; and provided a range of Communication Support Services including: 18,585 telephone interpreting calls (compared to 11,403 the previous year); 330 requests for document translations; 27 requests for Alternative Formats including large print; 36 Face to Face interpreting requests; 57 Sign Language interpreting requests and 403 Video Relay Service (VRS sign language) calls.

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 £1.9 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.

The network consists of over 500 community groups across our community involvement framework. This allows us to engage with our customers to learn from the lived experiences of those within our communities.

It is one of the most unique forms of tenant participation and engagement. It operates from community level across the Housing Executives 13 geographical areas to central level within the Housing Executive. The HCN are a key consultative body for the organisation in terms of developing and reviewing policies, strategies and service delivery in advising on customer engagement and

hold us to account for decisions we make which effects local communities; but also help provide input into how we can improve our services.

Central Housing Forum (CHF)

The CHF is a consultative panel to the Housing Executive and represents the HCN. It is comprised of representatives from each of the 13 Housing Executive areas, as well as representation from underrepresented groups including the Rural Residents Forum, the Disability Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

Each of the fora have a recognised and meaningful role and support the Housing Executive to co-design and/or co-produce policies, procedures and services where appropriate, prior to their introduction or implementation from across all Housing Executive Divisions as relevant.

The CHF Chair and Vice Chair are elected by Forum members. The Forum meets with the Housing Executive Chair, Chief Executive and representatives from the Housing Executive's Board at least once per year.

The CHF has 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.

All forum members are volunteers and have attended and participated in the following meetings:

- 12 CHF meetings held in 2024/25.
- 26 working group meetings held in 2024/25

Resident and Interagency meetings

Resident and Interagency partnerships have been established in all of the Housing Executive areas and strive to make our estates better places in which to live. These meetings involve community, voluntary and statutory organisations who have a vested interest in their area. 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.

In 2024/25 the following meetings occurred:

- 154 Inter-Agency Panels/ Housing Forums
- 135 Estate Inspections across all 13 Areas
- 165 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 listened to and that all major policies are consulted on. Currently, our underrepresented forums are Youth, Disability and Rural.

The following information are key areas of work each forum has undertaken last year.

Housing Executive's Youth Forum

This is facilitated by Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

- 2024/25 cohort completed the development phase of the project
- Progressing 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
- Supported the facilitation of the Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy public consultation and the 2024 Community conference

<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 2024/25:
 - Community Involvement and Community Cohesion Strategy
 - Inclusive Design – Housing and Health
 - Homelessness Presentation and feedback
 - Review Housing Executive Office Audit
 - Review of the Housing Executive tenant handbook
 - Equality Diversity, Inclusion and Safeguarding (EDIS) for customers
 - Adaptations Leaflet

- Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) Materials

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.

Areas of work included:

- 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, strengthening & supporting the delivery of housing needs tests in rural communities.
- Rural Strategy & Policy development
- Focus on Tradesmen workmanship.

The overarching purpose of the working groups is to act as a reference and sounding board for the Housing Executive. Each group influences and shape services, helps develop strategies and policies, as well as assisting in the dissemination of information and/or advice to tenants, customers and leaseholders across the Housing Community Network membership.

In addition to the Forums, the following working groups have been put in place to address specific issues, projects, or initiatives that directly impact our communities as set out in their Terms of Reference.

The following information is a summary of the Working Groups programme of work:

Adaptations Working Group

- Storm impact
- Landweb
- Disability Hate Crime
- Increase in Neurodiversity adaptation requests
- Link in with Neurodiversity advocacy service
- Shared custody
- Prioritise adaptations
- Searchlight
- CSE compliance plus
- All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference
- Reviewed and successfully helped develop user friendly adaptation leaflets through co-design for public and private sector grants.
- Updated on Housing & Health Assurance Framework

Digital Inclusion Working Group

- HCN Members Forum working alongside Portal developer addressing issues raised
- Members Forum app to be rolled out with changes for testing by members,
- Tenant Portal, Customer portal now has 26,990 registered users which is approximately 30% 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

- Universal Credit, New Claims, Active Caseload and Rent increase process.
- Make Your Money Work Services, referrals at local HCN meetings.
- Reviewed and consulted on migration, migration timetable, migration notices to legacy benefit claimants and the next phase of Move, Rollout dates and what tenant support is available.
- The group noted the achievements of the first year Financial Inclusion Strategy action plan and provided feedback on the year two plan.

Sustainable Development Working Group

- Net Zero Carbon Literacy Training
- Housing Executive 300 Low Carbon Programme
- Dormant Battery – Emergency Use Potential
- External Heat Pump – Safety and Protection
- Maximum Utilisation of the Heating System
- Continued Engagement with Tenants

Fundamental Review of Allocations Advisory Panel

- The reassessment of the social housing waiting list
- Reassessment of housing points
- Members reviewed communication going to tenants relating to Fundamental Review of Allocations.

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.
- The group received updates about financial inclusion work undertaken to support tenants during the cost-of-living crisis.
- Round table discussion on the Financial Inclusion Strategy action plan.

Community Investment Advisory Panel

- Initial meeting held in February 2024.
- Overview of Housing Executive administered funding provided.
- Members provided suggestions for the funding processes and eligibility.

DLO Materials Working Group

- 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 completed to the pilot properties in Belfast.

Working Groups in development-

Strategic Involvement and Cohesion Forum (formerly Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Panel)

After discussion and agreement with staff, CHF members and stakeholders the EDI advisory panel was renamed the **Strategic Involvement and Cohesion Forum (SICF)** merging both the EDI subgroup and the Strategic Cohesion Forum.

The first meeting of the SICF is planned for 30th May 2025.

Maintenance Working Group

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.

- 2** Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2024-25 (*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 of 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. There has also been a wide range of equality initiatives being driven internally by our People Strategy. Key activities in 2024/25 include:

Human Resources Advisory

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

Some of the achievements of the team were:

- There were 221 recruitment exercises with 252 appointments to date from these exercises. 3,811 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 2024/25 we provided guidance for staff on a range of Health & Well-being topics. These included contact details for Mental Health First Aiders, promoted a range of awareness days & weeks such as National No Smoking Day, World Suicide Prevention Day, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. In addition to this the Health & Wellbeing Team have delivered health and wellbeing masterclasses, arranged health and wellbeing events, share a monthly health and wellbeing flyer which includes details of events e.g. online yoga sessions, resources and signposting to organisations. In early 2025 a health and wellbeing theme was selected for each month e.g. the theme for March 2025 was sleep awareness. Also in early 2025 the organisation trained an additional group of Mental Health First Aiders.
- We reviewed and rescreened a number of policies with a link to equality in 2024/25, which included Dignity at Work policy, Grievance policy, Disciplinary policy and Organisational Change Policy.
- People Management masterclasses continued to be delivered across the organisation with a focus on Attendance Management. The aim of masterclasses is to embed our core policies and equip managers to implement these in their areas of responsibility.

Learning and Organisational Development (L&OD)

Over the past year, the Learning & Organisational Development (L&OD) team has played a central role in delivering key elements of the People Strategy, with a strong focus on engagement, leadership, development, and cultural transformation. Through a wide range of initiatives—including leadership development programmes, performance management reform, skills training, coaching and mentoring, and inclusive talent pipelines—the team has worked across the organisation to build capability, support wellbeing, and drive continuous improvement. This report outlines the key areas of impact over the past year, demonstrating how L&OD has contributed to creating a more inclusive, engaged, and high-performing organisation.

Employee Engagement and Organisational Voice

A key priority of our People Strategy is fostering meaningful employee engagement. In May 2023, we launched the comprehensive employee engagement survey, *'The Big Listen'*, which gathered feedback from across the organisation. In response to the insights gained, each Directorate developed and implemented tailored Engagement Action Plans aimed at addressing specific challenges and capitalising on areas of strength.

One of the most successful examples of employee engagement occurred within Asset Management, where 758 staff were invited to attend regional engagement events. These sessions achieved an impressive 89% attendance rate, including 419 trades staff from Housing Executive Direct (formerly DLO). These events not only provided a platform for staff voice but reinforced the organisation's commitment to acting on feedback.

Further embedding engagement as an ongoing process, we conducted a Pulse Survey in February 2025 to assess the impact of these interventions. Results are being analysed in conjunction with outcomes from our recent Investors in People (IiP) Gold Assessment (October 2024), helping to refine our Engagement Action Plans over the next three years.

Our proactive approach to engagement has yielded notable outcomes. The IiP Gold accreditation confirms our success in this area, recognising our strategic efforts and making NIHE the largest public sector organisation in Northern Ireland to hold this prestigious status.

Wellbeing, Culture, and Recognition

Supporting staff wellbeing remains at the forefront of our agenda. The introduction of our new performance management framework, the *GROW Conversation*, has been instrumental in facilitating meaningful and values-based dialogue between managers and staff. The framework integrates goal setting, health and wellbeing, career planning, and flexible working into a structured yet supportive model.

Feedback on GROW has been overwhelmingly positive, with an 83% completion rate of Stage 1. The IiP assessment praised the shift from traditional appraisals to more dynamic and developmentally focused discussions. The assessment noted this approach as a “supportive, developmentally based, and reciprocal” model that places core values and behaviours at the centre of the performance management process.

Complementing this, we have also rolled out a revised *Reward and Recognition* approach, increased leadership visibility through regional visits, and improved communication channels, including our ‘Connect’ Brief and the ‘Huddle’ intranet platform.

Our emphasis on employee voice, wellbeing, and recognition continues to build a workplace culture that supports high performance and genuine care for our people.

Learning, Leadership, and Development

We have invested extensively in upskilling our workforce through a wide range of training and leadership programmes. Our Learning and Organisational Development (L&OD) team, guided by a corporate Learning Needs Analysis

conducted in 2023, delivered targeted programmes to support organisational capability and individual growth.

As part of our commitment to effective project governance and delivery, we delivered PRINCE2 Foundation and Practitioner courses, training 42 staff in 2024/25. We also developed an internally led *Introduction to Project Management* course, which was delivered to 160 staff. Our PMO team continues to support professional growth through regular Lunch & Learn sessions, particularly focused on transitioning to PRINCE2 Edition 7.

In parallel, our *Leadership Development Programmes* continue to grow. Since the launch of our Interdependent Leadership Model in 2022, 273 people have completed programmes across Band 6 to Band 8 levels. Evaluation results show that 79% of participants experienced improvements in performance, knowledge, and confidence. These efforts are supported by our *Leadership Charter* and *Competency Framework*, launched in 2023, which are now fully embedded across development programmes and the GROW process.

To further integrate these elements, we are finalising the '*How We Lead*' and '*How We Work*' programmes. The former will be rolled out in 2025/26, prioritising managers in operational and trades roles, while the latter focuses on values-based working and engagement.

Employer Brand and Inclusive Recruitment

Recognising a changing labour market, we have continued to enhance our Employer Brand, focusing on transparency, values, and inclusivity. Our recent recruitment campaigns have included outdoor advertising, social media outreach, and career fair participation. These efforts have significantly increased the quality and volume of applicants and have reinforced the public's perception of NIHE as an employer of choice.

Recent evaluation highlighted that:

- 83% of respondents found our branding highly visible.
- 79% believed it reflected an inclusive, growth-oriented culture.
- 83% would recommend NIHE as a place to work.

We continue to refine our recruitment strategy by ensuring alignment between our Employer Brand, Leadership Charter, and Competency Framework. This integration ensures that our recruitment processes attract individuals who not only have the right skills but who also share our organisational values.

Entry-Level Talent and Sectoral Partnerships

To support the long-term talent pipeline and increase social mobility, we have continued to develop partnerships with educational institutions and sectoral bodies. During Apprenticeship Week 2024, our L&OD team engaged with approximately 1,640 students across 12 events, showcasing the breadth of career opportunities within NIHE.

We completed a review of previous apprenticeship schemes and incorporated the findings into a refreshed approach for 2025, which includes new partnerships with USel and the Now Group to create more opportunities for people with disabilities. Our *Foundations of Success* training programme has already been delivered to Housing Apprentices and Graduates, enhancing their confidence and organisational understanding.

Work inspiration programmes and the Catalyst Innovation Generation Programme concluded successfully in June 2024, and preparation is underway for their relaunch in 2025.

Organisational Learning and Continuous Improvement

In addition to formal training, we continue to support learning through mentoring, coaching, and tailored team interventions. Our newly launched *Coaching Hub* provides staff with access to up to six sessions with internal, accredited coaches. Feedback indicates a strong impact on leadership confidence and change management capability.

We have relaunched our *Mentoring Programme*, aligning experienced professionals with staff seeking development, and we continue to deliver bespoke *Team Facilitation* sessions. These include team charters, resilience training, upskilling, and time management—all designed to respond to staff needs raised through engagement feedback or departmental requests.

A robust blended learning programme is now in place, including eLearning modules on climate awareness, suicide prevention, safeguarding, domestic abuse, and diversity, delivered through quarterly cycles. Over 2,490 staff have now completed Carbon Literacy Training, well above the 1,950 target, demonstrating our organisation-wide commitment to climate action.

The initiatives outlined above reflect the breadth and depth of our commitment to engaging and supporting our people, fostering inclusion, and delivering excellent services to the communities we serve. By embedding our values into our performance systems, leadership models, learning strategies, and recruitment processes, we made tangible progress towards our goal of becoming a great place to work and a trusted provider of housing services across Northern Ireland.

As we move forward into 2025/26, our focus will remain on listening, learning, and leading. Ensuring that both staff and customers continue to benefit from a workplace and service environment shaped by inclusion, respect, and high performance. Reflective of the community we serve.

Outreach Activity

The Housing Executive reviewed and updated actions within the Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) in 2024/25 to ensure it continues to deliver on its key objectives. This included 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 continue to take place between 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 73).

Our partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC) Employment Team continues to provide opportunities for the Housing Executive to enhance its visibility as an inclusive employer and maximise opportunities to promote vacancies through the JobApplyNI website. The partnership has provided access to local job and careers fairs, with the Housing Executive in attendance at over 20 events during the 2024/25 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, Banbridge, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Craigavon, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and Newtownards.

The Housing Executive has also committed to delivering annual outdoor recruitment campaigns which are also targeted in areas to help increase Protestant Community Background applications. This year's campaign involved advertisements in 102 different outdoor locations including in Derry/Londonderry and Strabane, and a poster campaign in 77 bars and social clubs including in Coleraine, Coagh and Limavady. A LED screen advertisement was also displayed during the Northern Ireland v Belarus match at Windsor Park in November 2024.

The Housing Executive continues to promote our commitment to apprenticeship opportunities and we had a presence at a range of events during Apprenticeship Week in February 2025. This included events at regional colleges in Bangor, Coleraine, Lisburn, Newtownards, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey, seeing us engage with approximately 200 students. We also supported Antrim and Newtownabbey Council's careers and apprenticeship fair at Mossley Mill, a DfC Apprenticeship Fair in Ballymoney and an apprenticeship event in W5.

Our partnership with Business in the Community (BITC) also continues to support our ambitions to promote careers in housing to young people. In June 2024 the Housing Executive delivered its second annual Work Inspiration Programme in

partnership with BITC. The event provides students aged 14+ with opportunities to learn more about the careers on offer at the Housing Executive. We had students from 8 local schools attend the event, with colleagues from across the business there to share their career journeys and advise students on the benefits of a career in social housing.

In line with our AAP objectives, we will be delivering the programme in our North Region during 2025/26 to provide opportunities for schools in Derry/Londonderry, Coleraine and the wider area to take part in the programme. In June 2024, the Housing Executive also took part in Catalyst's Generation Innovation initiative for the second year running, with Customer Experience tasking students to explore how we can better engage with younger tenants through the design thinking process. Our annual attendance at the School Summit at the Eikon Centre in Lisburn provided further opportunity to promote our careers to students from schools from across Northern Ireland.

The Housing Executive continues to work alongside Women's Tec through the #notjustforboys partnership helping us to promote opportunities for women in traditionally male dominated roles. We have secured funding to deliver four 'Try a Trade' events with schools across our regions in 2025/26, with sessions scheduled in Coleraine, Newry and Belfast, and one additional event for SEN schools in the Belfast area.

The EDI Outreach Manager has also been engaging throughout the year with a range of customer and stakeholder forums to help promote the Housing Executive as an inclusive employer. This included hosting a stall the Community Conference in October 2024 to raise awareness of our career opportunities.

External Feedback

The Housing Executive recognises the value and insight that can be gained on its equality performance through external accreditation processes. In June 2024 we were notified of our successful application to be awarded the Silver Diversity Mark, enhancing our commitment beyond gender to other equality areas including race and disability. As part of our commitments under the Autism Strategy we are now also exploring accreditation opportunities 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 three 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 2024/25 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 (68.6%)
- Housing Associations (17.9%)
- HSC Trusts (9.9%)
- Private Sector & Others (3.7%)

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 2024/25. 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 2025	Special Needs Management Allowance (SNMA)	Non-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	494	535
Older people with support needs	130	9,937	10,067
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	1,410	1,517
People with Mental Health Problems		1,484	1,484
Single Homeless Crisis Accommodation Service		31	31
Single Homeless with Support Needs		1,522	1,522
Traveller		31	31
Women at Risk of Domestic Violence		1,141	1,141
Young People		880	880
Grand Total	438	19,236	19,674

Supporting People Annual Report 2024-2025

The Supporting People Annual Report for 2024/25 gives a detailed account of the work of the Programme for the year ending March 2024/25. We have continued to maintain service delivery and effective partnerships with our providers and stakeholders, despite the ongoing challenges.

In 2024/25 a total of £81.18m Supporting People Programme funding was made available to Providers, £14.44m 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.

Non-recurring funding was identified in the 2024/25 Supporting People budget and was made available on two occasions to providers (excluding SNMA provision and

Health Trust) before the end of the financial year. One off payments to providers totalled £1.173m.

The 2024/25 Funding Agreement terms and conditions applied to this additional funding; therefore, the funding could only be used to meet the cost of Supporting People eligible expenditure incurred in the 2024/25 financial year, any unspent funding will be recouped in the 2025/26 year.

Supporting People Outcomes 2024/25

Outcomes Measurement is a way for providers to report on outcomes being achieved by clients within their services. The data is collected at client level and reported to Supporting People at scheme level. 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 2024/25 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.
- Older People Thematic Group –average 93% overall success rate against the indicators.
- Young People Thematic Group – average 95% overall success rate against the indicators.
- Homelessness Thematic Group – average 87% overall success rate against the indicators.

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 2024/25 year, the crisis accommodation services showed an overall average success rate of 93% against the Outcomes Indicators.

Supporting People Strategy 2022-2025

The 'Supporting People Three Year Strategic Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2022- 2025' has been extended by one year to facilitate the formulation of a new

Five-Year Strategy (2026-31) and to inform the ongoing Supporting People Modernisation (SPM) workstreams.

The current Strategic Plan continues in its mission 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 four 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'. 33 actions were designated to 2024/25 and 13 of these actions were completed within 2024/25. 9 actions were partially achieved, and 11 actions were not achieved due to a lack of budget availability.

Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Projects

The Finance, Audit, and Assurance Division administer the Welfare Reform function on behalf of the Strategic Housing Authority. The Housing Benefit department 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 March 2025. However, the Minister for Communities announced plans to extend mitigation payments for the Benefit Cap and the Social Sector Size Criteria – commonly known as the bedroom tax, with most payments set to run until the end of March 2028.

At the end of March 2025 there were less than 10 Housing Benefit claims impacted by the Benefit Cap and 14,789 Housing Benefit claims impacted by SSSC.

Each week the Housing Benefit Team complete a 100% accuracy check on all Housing Benefit claims impacted by the Benefit Cap and SSSC, prior to transferring the reports to DfC. This process assists with the sustainment of both Housing Executive and housing association tenancies, ensuring that tenants receive the correct award.

- **The administration of Housing Benefit (Rates) and Low Income Rate Relief for Owner-Occupiers:** On 1 June 2022, the Housing Executive became responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit (Rates) and LIRR for owner-occupiers. At the end of March 2025 there were 32,097 owner-occupiers claiming Housing Benefit (Rates) and LIRR.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, we paid out £32.8m in Housing Benefit (Rates) and LIRR, assessing 1,394 new claims, and dealing with 14,030 changes to existing claims notified by claimants and 1,018,355 changes notified via the Department for Work and Pensions information system that informs local authorities of any change to other social security benefits or tax credits.

- **Move to UC:** Universal Credit (UC) has been rolled out to all areas with the completion date of 5 December 2018 achieved. Natural Migration continues with working-age customers moving to UC should they have a significant change in their circumstances.

In 2024/25, 15,611 HB customers moved to UC. Of these, 2,297 customers moved naturally due to changes in their circumstances, and 13,314 customers moved as they were invited to make a claim for UC as part of the managed migration process.

By the end of the 2024/25 financial year, the department had completed the migration of those people in receipt of Tax Credits with a legacy benefit.

Throughout 2025/26, working age customers will continue to migrate to UC as follows:

- From **February 2025** Income Support with Housing Benefit
- From **March 2025** Housing Benefit only
- From **April 2025** Job Seeker's Allowance and Housing Benefit
- From **May 2025** Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit.

Customer Support & Engagement

Throughout the year the Housing Benefit Team worked to ensure that customers were aware of the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme to help maximise uptake by working with our Communications Team to develop a bespoke communications plan for DHPs. This included the issuing of a press release to all media and a social media plan with bespoke graphics to ensure we raise awareness of the scheme so that we are helping and supporting as many people as possible.

In addition, in January 2025 the Housing Benefit Team wrote to 18,681 customers in receipt of Housing Benefit and living in the private rented sector to advise them that if they have a shortfall between the rent charged by their landlord and the rent we use to calculate their Housing Benefit award, they may be entitled to additional

financial help with their rent charges through the DHP scheme, and we advised customers of how to make an application.

We also worked to ensure that low income pension age households were aware of the extra financial support which is available through Pension Credit. We achieved this by writing to all pension age households in receipt of HB (15,754) and not currently in receipt of Pension Credit to make them aware of Pension Credit and what other support it can entitle them to.

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

The Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023 was extended until the end of 2024, in order to take cognisance of potential legislative and policy changes in the wider Northern Ireland Executive context of Community Safety on Hate Crime led by the DOJ and ASB Legislation led by the DOJ and the DfC, as this would impact the direction of the new Community Safety Strategy.

Formal public consultation took place between July and September 2024 following which the new Strategy 'Building Safer Communities together 2025-2030' was launched early 2025.

We will deliver our vision for community safety through activities associated with the aims which includes doing more of what is working well, recognising and building on the strengths of our communities and finding new ways to improve services and delivery.

The overarching aims of the new Strategy include:

- 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 in our estates.

We are working to strengthen our engagement with residents within our communities. This will allow us to better understand what matters to people and how their lives are affected by ASB so that we can respond appropriately and effectively. This work will involve working together with local people to identify and deliver community-led solutions and will also have a focus on protecting those that are most vulnerable in our communities from ASB. We cannot solve issues of ASB alone and we recognise the need to work with partner organisations and communities to effect behaviour change and create safer places for our tenants to live. Thus increasing confidence in our response to ASB within our communities. Working together will improve community resilience, support victims and challenge the behaviour of perpetrators.

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 ASB. This year's results show that:

- 80% 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.
- 88% felt that they would be willing to report ASB to the Housing Executive in the future.

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 2024/25, repairs to 17 properties were undertaken in line with the HIPA scheme (8 in 2023/24). A Service Level Agreement between the Housing Executive, DOJ, PSNI and DfC is currently 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 2024/25, 28% 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 2024/25 these organisations provided mediation and community support in 745 neighbour dispute cases, 114 of these cases addressed issues around hate through projects specifically funded to deal with hate incidents or crimes.

During 2024/25 our procured mediation provider Tides Training & Consultancy, intervened in 35 neighbour disputes between individuals and families.

Operational Performance

In 2024/25 Housing Executive local offices reported a total of 1,378 cases of ASB (including 123 re-opened cases). Of the 1,378 cases of ASB:

- 32% (449) related to noise nuisance.
- 11% (154) related to problems with pets and animals.
- 9% (125) related harassment.

The organisation served 10 Notice Seeking Possessions. One property was repossessed after the services of the Enforcement of Judgements Office (EJO) and 2 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

In the Housing Executive we understand that our employees are impacted by the environment they work in and a wide range of issues. For that reason we encourage colleagues to be the drivers of the charities that we support and the volunteering activities that we get involved in.

In 2022 we established a charity committee and from this point we have nominated charity partnerships on a biennial basis.

Teams raised over £25,000 through the course of our previous two-year charity partnership with Age NI. Staff also raised various amounts for a range of other charities. We promoted some of our fundraising activities on our intranet, in the local press and on social media.

In 2025 we had an organisation-wide vote and colleagues selected Air Ambulance as the nominated charity for April 2025 to March 2027. In our new partnership with Air Ambulance our Graduate trainees will be taking the lead on fundraising.

Staff have continued to have limited opportunities to engage in individual volunteering as many charities have reduced or cancelled larger scale (team) volunteering opportunities. Though this has started to increase. We have also run internal events such as a Cavehill walk, shop's challenge and our charity golf day for which we have had a number of staff volunteering from across the organisation.

Fundraising

In 2024/25 our teams donated a substantial **£50,730.48** to a range of charities through our payroll giving scheme (sometimes known as 'give as you earn'). This was **up £5515.98** from 2023/24.

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

Aside from payroll giving and moneys raised for our nominated charity our colleagues also supported a range of other charities through a range of fundraising activities including bake and other sales, coffee mornings and sporting activities.

Volunteering

The number of employees claiming CSR Leave for volunteering has remained low. We supported 30 colleagues to take time to volunteer. A total of 31 days volunteering were taken during 2023/24.

Charities Supported

We appointed Air Ambulance as our Nominated Charity in April 2025, so the fundraising efforts are at an early stage.

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

Our Previous nominated Charity:

- Age NI

Other Charities:

- Cancer Focus NI
- Hospice UK
- NI Charities together
- Trocaire
- NI Chest Heart and Stroke Association
- Concern Worldwide (UK)
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children – Northern Ireland (NSPCC - NI)
- The Cancer Fund for Children
- Together for Animals
- Cancer Research UK
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)
- Tiny life
- Amnesty International UK Section Charitable Trust
- McMillan Cancer Support
- Marie Curie Cancer Care
- Breast Cancer Now

- Sightsavers

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.

Our other research activities continued during 2024/25. 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 order to gain a better understanding of tenancy terminations, research was commissioned¹ to carry out a methodologically mixed research project to understand the antecedents as well as the outcomes of tenancy breakdowns. The aim of this project was to develop an understanding of the reasons for tenancy terminations in the three years after a tenancy commenced. The analysis indicated that external social influences were among the main reasons why tenants experienced difficulties sustaining their tenancies long term, and that most continued their housing journeys in the social housing sector.

Two independent evaluations of Housing Executive strategies were also carried out: An evaluation of the Community Involvement Strategy and an Evaluation of the Community Cohesion Strategy. The findings and recommendations of both projects were taken into account in producing the draft Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy 2024-2029: Enable Engage Embrace, which went through a period of public consultation in summer 2024.

A report² that analyses letting agent regulations and practices throughout the UK and Ireland was published in June 2024, with a specific focus on developing a new regulatory framework for letting agents operating in Northern Ireland's private rented sector. The research included an online survey of private tenants to record experiences of being charged letting agent fees, and a mystery shopper exercise was also completed to establish prevalence of letting agent fees and the types of fees being charged.

A report³ aiming to understand the barriers and impediments to the delivery of new rural social and affordable housing in Northern Ireland was published in 2025. Specific objectives for the research were to provide an improved understanding of any issues and challenges associated with the development of social and affordable housing in rural areas and to inform policy development and operational processes that may result in more social and affordable housing provision. The research found that there are a number of factors that impede the delivery of housing including the availability, value and quality of land, funding mechanisms and appetite of delivery bodies. By clarifying the barriers, the research aims to inform policy development and operational processes that can increase provision.

During 2024/25, work was undertaken to bring forward a number of new strands of research, including a project that explores the feasibility of delivering Housing First across Northern Ireland. This project has now completed and will be published shortly. Preparatory work is underway for an Irish Traveller Accommodation Needs Survey, which is due to commence in 2025/26, subject to confirmation of budget.

¹ The report is available [here](#)

² The report is available [here](#)

³ The report is available [here](#)

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 four objectives and 12 key actions and will guide the Housing Executive's strategic direction on the provision of accommodation for Irish Travellers.

During 2024/25 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 early 2026.
3. Research to identify a proposed new accommodation needs assessment methodology for Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland has been completed. The Housing Executive are working with colleagues in IT to develop electronic systems to accurately record Irish Traveller applications which will be used in the needs assessment calculation. A serviced site management policy is being drafted and will inform the IT system.
4. 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 Irish Travellers in the context of potential demand for transient halting sites on an all-island basis. Terms of Reference have been agreed.
5. 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.
6. The Irish Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2021-26 will expire in 2026. NIHE's Irish Traveller Policy Unit has commenced work on its successor.
7. Funding approval is pending for the Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey to commence. In anticipation of funding being made available work has commenced at risk. Results from the 538 households who participated in the

previous Survey were published on NIHE's website in 2018. The Survey plays an important role in assessing the needs of the Irish Traveller community and planning for future services and provisions.

8. NIHE's Director of Strategic Housing Authority wrote to all Council Chief Executives and Community Planning Partnerships to issue a call for sites to identify whether any partner may have sites in the short, medium or long term which could be assessed for suitability to develop suitable Irish Traveller accommodation across Northern Ireland. It is hoped that land can be identified to develop a suite of new Irish Traveller sites in Northern Ireland.

Adaptations and Accessible Housing

Interdepartmental Housing and Health Assurance Framework

The Interdepartmental Housing and Health Assurance Framework is 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 Accessible Homes Strategic Forum which was previously referred to as the Interdepartmental Adaptations Programme Board. It was rebranded as it was acknowledged that the focus and remit extended beyond adaptations to include a range of housing options.

The Forum 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.

The Framework is underpinned by a number of Regional Housing and Health Partnership Forums which have been established across both the private and social sectors (Housing Executive & Housing Associations). These forums are aimed at ensuring a joined up and consistent approach to operational 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.

Regional Interagency Complex Case Escalation Panels

The Escalation Panel process is fully operational and managed by the Housing & Health Team. The Housing & Health Team triage referrals and convene relevant parties to discuss/resolve issues across housing & health with a view to agreeing

an effective housing solution. A breakdown of cases as of 31st May 2025 is detailed below:

The total number of referrals for panel to date is: 148

Breakdown for referrals by tenure:

- Private Sector – 41
- Social Sector Housing Executive – 85
- Social Sector HA – 22

Accessible Housing Register (AHR)

A steering group is now in place with appropriate representation from the Housing Executive and Housing Associations. The group is tasked with taking forward the implementation of the Accessible Housing Register 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 nearing completion. The publication is titled *Designing Homes for All – An inclusive design guide to support people living with cognitive and sensory impairment*. The guide is aimed primarily at architects, designers and practitioners involved in housing design and provision for people with disabilities. Launch is anticipated in Autumn 2025.

Department of Health Autism Strategy

The Housing Executive provided a response to commitments embedded within the DoH Autism Strategy. The return was coordinated by the Housing and Health Team and endorsed by the Interdivisional Disability Forum.

Work included the delivery of Autism Capacity Building Training in collaboration with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team, DoH & Cedar Foundation. Training was successfully delivered to 321 staff, building on the same training in previous years. 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 October 2024. The session was a follow up to training delivered by the Housing Executive and HSC Trusts in March 2024 with a focus on Housing Associations and HSC Trust interfaces.

User Engagement

The Housing & Health Team continue to establish engagement with service user forums in relation to Housing and Health. Forums attended include:

- Disability Housing Forum - chaired by Disability Action
- Adaptations Working group
- Regional Disabled People's Health and Social Care Forum

Engagement involves regular attendance at forums to brief and update members on workstreams.

The Disabled Facilities Grants Review DoH task group, chaired by the Housing and Health Lead, carried out a service user survey to establish the impact of adaptation provision on people's lives. The results were extremely positive, evidencing the need for accessible housing to promote independence and quality of life for people with disabilities.

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
- 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 the second-year Financial Inclusion Strategy progress report is due to be presented to the Board in July 2025. The Year Three Action Plan continues to focus on the delivery of objectives and high-level outcomes.

Key Achievements from Year One (2024/25)

- Housing Executive staff offered Financial Inclusion advice and assistance to 8,309 tenants—of these, a total of 4,240 (51%) tenants accepted the financial inclusion help offered to them.
- 3,626 Housing Executive tenants accessed over £3.1 million in additional benefit entitlement with assistance from the Landlord Services Financial Inclusion team. This is the highest amount since the team's inception.
- The Financial Inclusion Team supported tenants through the first year of the managed migration to Universal Credit programme. This meant the team were able to help a further 1,512 tenants maximise their income and trouble shoot their benefit claim whilst providing reassurance and connection to other vital services.
- The Financial Inclusion team have continued to build links with the communities in which they work holding drop-in clinics where there is demand and providing support via regular attendance at Jobs and Benefit Office pop-up support events and Housing Community Networks.

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 were also made directly to the Financial Inclusion team from the Move to UC team. Referrals can 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 252 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 £7.7 million in extra income for Housing Executive tenants since September 2021, an average of £542 per tenant who engages.

For 2024/25 the Financial Inclusion team helped a further 1,512 tenants referred to them by the specialist Move to UC team which has been established to support Housing Executive tenants in the transition from the older legacy benefit system to Universal Credit. As part of this service, the Deputy Financial Inclusion Team are proactively contacting tenants in receipt of sickness and disability benefits to ensure they are fully supported in their Move to UC.

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 2024/25, a positive impact is evident in 57.7% of cases 6 months post-intervention.

The Making Your Money Work Service is now business as usual for the Housing Executive. During the second-year Financial Inclusion Strategy action plan, the package has been enhanced via the provision of a service map for use by frontline staff. The map provides a detailed breakdown of foodbanks, social supermarkets, credit unions, banking access, and other charities who offer assistance to social housing tenants in Northern Ireland. The Making your Money Work service is designed to be built upon as required. 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 2024/25 staff opened over 200 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 £ £723,00 six months later; this is a positive impact for 66.2% of all tenants receiving financial inclusion help.

Under the remit of the new strategy, we are continuously 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 2024/25, 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 232 tenants for debt advice, and 22 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 and some people in these groups will come from a range of Section 75 categories (for example pensioners, those in receipt of disability and/or sickness benefits). 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) had a commitment to invest in existing and create new social enterprises within Housing Executive communities.

The Social Enterprise Plus programme was open to all established or aspiring social enterprises with a strong connection to our estates. The team ensured that there was fair and equitable access to the programme across Northern Ireland, working with a wide range of community and statutory sector partners in 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 re-evaluate 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 the benefit of Housing Executive Communities

A 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 cost of living crisis, climate change, post-Covid-19 Recovery and the introduction of Social Value in public sector procurement.

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.

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

(3) Current and Future Environment

In 2021, Northern Ireland's public sector procurement policy underwent changes, leading to a mandatory requirement for government departments to allocate at least 10% of the award criteria to social value in services and works contracts.

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.

As part of the Housing Executive's Central Housing Forum, the Social Value Working Group is in operation to act as a consultative forum on all matters related to social value. 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 working group members to help ensure that our communities feel the maximum benefit as a result of our procurement and spend.

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

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

We will continue to engage internally with our colleagues in Asset Management and Procurement to ensure we get the best outcomes for our tenants and communities.

Development of the Draft Social Investment Strategy 2025 - 2030

As the Social Enterprise Plus Strategy 2020 – 2024 was drawing to a close we commissioned an external independent organisation to review the outcomes of the strategy and programme for that 4-year period.

The aim of the research was to provide an evaluation of the impact of the Social Enterprise Plus Programme (2020-2024), which demonstrated both the financial and non-financial impacts including its Social Return on Investment (SROI).

The new Housing Executive 'Social Investment Strategy 2025-2030 People, Place & Prosperity' went out for formal consultation. This consultation closed in Spring 2025. The current Social Enterprise Plus Strategy and Action Plan will remain in operation in the intervening period.

The new draft strategy sets out 3 core priorities that are of relevance and which in turn will provide benefit to the communities we serve. Those priorities include:

- Community Wealth Building
- Social Value
- Employability and apprenticeships.

Feedback as part of the process will be taken into consideration, reviewed and where relevant will be incorporated into the final draft. After which internal approval will be sought prior to the launch of the new programme publicly via our Housing Community Network, relevant forums and also through our social media platforms, ensuring there is fair and equitable access to the programme across Northern Ireland, in line with the programme criteria.

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.

Delivery on the Homelessness Strategy during 2024/25 was guided by the [Year 3 Action Plan](#) which contained 46 actions. Key actions which were delivered during 2024/25 include,

- Engagement with the Centre for Homelessness Impact on the development of a Value for Money Report which is published on this [link](#). The Northern Ireland Audit Office has recommended that the Housing Executive should ensure that a timebound action plan to implement the value for money framework is established and that the Board monitors its progress.
- The Housing Executive delivered a number of successful awareness raising campaigns. This included a range of events and activities that took place during Homelessness Awareness Week 2024, which were organised by the Homelessness Local Area Groups and Local Area Teams. The Housing Executive also took part in Ormeau Park Run, during No More Week to raise awareness of domestic abuse.
- Over the course of 2024/25, the Housing Executive progressed engagement with the Education Sector, by co-ordinating youth networking events and successfully delivered our first homelessness awareness pilot in Erne Integrated College, Enniskillen. The Housing Executive have also been engaging with the Department of Education in raising awareness of the new RAISE Programme and promoting further engagement with local agencies. The Housing Executive continue to build upon relationships and contacts within the Education Sector and have further homelessness awareness events in schools scheduled for 2025/26. Whilst raising awareness of homelessness, its causes and the support services for those at risk or experiencing homelessness in local areas is the primary focus of the events, there has also been an interest in providing the schools and pupils with information in relation to careers in housing.

The Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 Year 3 Annual Progress Report has been approved and will be published on the Housing Executive website by August 2025.

The Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 has entered into its fourth year, and a Year 4 Action Plan has been developed alongside our partners on the Central Homelessness Forum, it is anticipated this will be published in July 2025. The Action Plan has been developed with consideration to the Northern Ireland Audit Office Report on Homelessness, published in March 2025, with all actions including milestones to assist stakeholders with monitoring delivery of actions.

The Housing Executive also delivers a number of other actions plans, as part of our response to homelessness in Northern Ireland. Key achievements across each of the action plans are noted below.

Youth Homelessness Action Plan

The introduction of 24 dedicated Youth Homelessness Housing Advisors/Team Leaders which are now located in each Housing Executive Area offices.

- The delivery of a range of training for staff which included:
 - Joint awareness sessions with Health and Social Care Trust staff in relation to existing guidance.
 - Training delivered by the Children's Law Centre in relation to Article 21 of the Children's (Northern Ireland) Order.
 - Training delivered by Include Youth- 'Children and Young People in Care awareness training'.
- There has been initial work on reviewing the Regional Good Practice Guidance, 'Meeting the Accommodation and Support Needs of 16-21 year olds'. The review will also incorporate additional information about use of assessment beds, procedures to adhere to when a young person who has parental responsibility in their own right presents for support with accommodation.
- A key achievement over the past year has been the commitment from DfC to award an interim funding allocation of £2.8m to support the New Foundations programme. This funding will play a key role in supporting young people leaving care.

Domestic Abuse Action Plan

- Engagement with the voluntary and community sector to increase understanding of difficult to reach groups and their experiences of domestic abuse. This has included engagement with representatives from NI Youth Forum, NW Migrants Forum, Rural Community Network, Hourglass, VOYPIC, CRJI, MAP, Rainbow project and Disability Forum to gain an understanding of the specific challenges their client group face and ways in which the Housing Executive could help them engage better.
- 22 members of staff completing training to become a Domestic Abuse Advocate with a further 18 due to complete their training in the first quarter of 2025/26.
- A review of all training packages with updates reflecting the changes in legislation that have guided the Housing Executive's response to domestic abuse. A new bespoke training course for assessing officers was developed and at the conclusion of Year 1 of the Domestic Abuse Action Plan, almost 500 staff had received the training.

- There has been a significant focus on increasing awareness and update of the Sanctuary Scheme. This has involved promotion of the Sanctuary Scheme during training and increase engagement with the PSNI, including the development of a referral form which will be implemented by the start of May 2025. This will provide further support and assistance to those experiencing domestic abuse.
- The Housing Executive has worked with Women's Aid to review the existing protocol with a revised protocol launched in November 2024.

Strategic Action Plan for Temporary Accommodation

- Increasing the Housing Executive's temporary accommodation portfolio by a net 361 units.
- Enhancing partnerships with Housing Associations, with a net increase in units provided for temporary accommodation, two Housing Associations providing temporary accommodation for the first time and long-term leases agreed at two sites.
- Introduction of a new HMO model of temporary accommodation.
- Approval of a programme to purchase properties in the private sector for use as temporary accommodation.
- Agreement to further roll out the Shared Tenancies model for young people.
- Development of a Homelessness Prevention Toolkit; a digital resource for Housing Executive staff which provides key information on prevention-based services in operation across Northern Ireland.
- Continuing to deliver and develop the Complex Lives project to support vulnerable customers and prevent repeat homelessness through a multi-agency approach.
- Continuing to deliver dispersed outreach to customers.

Homelessness Statistics 2018/19 – 2024/25

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number presenting as homeless	18,202	16,802	15,991	15,758	15,965	16,943	15,905
Number accepted as homeless i.e. Full Duty Applicants (FDA)	12,512	11,323	9,889	10,135	10,349	11,537	10,855
Number of new placements in temporary accommodation in year	3,354	4,527	9,752	9,265	10,253	11,368	11,887
Types of Households 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 5,884 (35%) Elderly 2,414 (14%)	Singles 8,255 (52%) Families 5,305 (33%) Elderly 2,345 (15%)
Households presenting due to intimidation	481	335	286	180	167	204	185
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	37.9 weeks

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2024-25 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☒ Yes

☐ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

By mainstreaming Section 75 duties into the planning and decision-making processes of the Housing Executive ensures 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 raised. Areas where equality issues have impacted on policy during the year include:

- Community Safety Strategy
- Health and Safety Policies e.g. New & Expectant Mothers Strategy
- HR Policies e.g. Dignity at Work Policy
- Affordable Warmth Policy Guide
- Home Improvement Grants Policy
- Programme Management Office Guidelines

- 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. It 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 improves 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 Involvement & Cohesion Strategy positively impacts on people and communities with different political and/or religious backgrounds and racial backgrounds. With Community Involvement and Participation policies often engage those groups that are not always as visible as others including children & young people and carers.
- 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.
- Health and Safety policies are sensitive to the risks associated with equality characteristics e.g. age, 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 centred 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):*

Processes 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. In many cases it 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 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 in performance management meetings to ensure a continuous consideration of the equality duties as policies are implemented.

Also, the EDIS Team produces equality monitoring reports on the performance of the housing waiting list and allocation 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, evidence and screening. Regular monitoring of recruitment performance, workforce data and the work of the EDI Steering group workstreams 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 2024-25 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 Team, each with specific job descriptions setting out

Section 75 functions, 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 (Grow Conversations) and are 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 2024-25 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. We also 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 relation to 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. 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 tackle 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. Many of those needs are associated with age or disability. 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 detail the range and breadth of activities 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 Equality Commission's "Key Inequalities in Housing" report and other publications such as 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 Housing For All Team and the Community Cohesion Team are charged with implementing the good relations duty.

This process is reinforced and supported 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

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 tackling housing inequalities. The main policies and strategies that drive this performance has been set out in more detail in Questions 1 and 2 of this report. It details our work in relation to the People Strategy and Affirmative Action plan, 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

The Housing Executive recognises that effective engagement, participation and consultation are essential to modern quality public services. The organisation 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 have a well-established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering group made up of staff from across the organisation. The work of this group has continued to develop in 2024/25 and we provide a full report on the work of this group and subsequent workstreams 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 makes a positive difference in people’s lives. Community Involvement is a cornerstone of the Housing Executive’s service, and we commit approximately £1.9 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.

The network consists of over 500 community groups across our community involvement framework. This allows us to engage with our customers to learn from the lived experiences of those within our communities.

It is one of the most unique forms of tenant participation and engagement. It operates from community level across the Housing Executives 13 geographical

areas to central level within the Housing Executive. The HCN are a key consultative body for the organisation in terms of developing and reviewing policies, strategies and service delivery in advising on customer engagement and hold us to account for decisions we make which effects local communities; but also help provide input into how we can improve our services.

Central Housing Forum (CHF)

As highlighted previously, the CHF is a consultative panel to the Housing Executive and represents the HCN. It is comprised of representatives from each of the 13 Housing Executive areas, as well as representation from underrepresented groups including the Rural Residents Forum, the Disability Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

Each of the fora have a recognised and meaningful role and support the Housing Executive to co-design and/or co-produce policies, procedures and services where appropriate, prior to their introduction or implementation from across all Housing Executive Divisions as relevant.

The CHF Chair and Vice Chair are elected by the Forum members. The Forum meets with the Housing Executive Chair, Chief Executive and representatives from the Housing Executive's Board at least once per year.

The CHF has 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.

All forum members are volunteers and have attended and participated in the following meetings:

- 12 CHF meetings held in 2024/25.
- 26 working group meetings held in 2024/25

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.

'Reaching Rural' Rural Strategy 2021 - 2025 & Action Plan

The Housing Executive launched its 'Reaching Rural' Rural Strategy 2021-2025 & Action Plan in 2021. This Strategy outlines the significant investment made to support tenants and customers in rural areas and reaffirms our ongoing

commitment to addressing the needs of rural communities, in line with the obligations set out in the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

This report sets out how the Housing Executive integrates equality considerations into rural regeneration, and how we work to accommodate and include a broad spectrum of people and households across rural areas in Northern Ireland.

The Strategy is structured around three high-level outcomes and 12 priorities, grouped under the following themes:

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

The Year 4 Rural Action Plan comprised of 27 specific actions. Of these, progress was achieved against 26. There was less opportunity to progress action 27 regarding collaborative investment and support due to no new Village Catalyst projects being able to receive funding for capital works during 2024/25. The remaining actions during 2024/25 delivered a range of positive outcomes for rural customers, including:

- Work commenced on 188 new build social homes in rural areas, increasing provision of housing options in rural communities 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 was commissioned to identify the barriers and opportunities of delivering rural social housing which resulted in a completed research document detailing a review into the barriers and opportunities in delivering new social and affordable homes. The recommendations from this research will be incorporated into the Housing Executives new Rural Strategy.
- Rural Housing Needs Tests (formerly referred to as 'latent demand tests') are carried out in rural areas to identify specific challenges in the area and any latent or hidden demand for housing. Nine Rural Housing Needs Tests were completed in 2024/5 which resulted in 174 people expressing their interest in social and affordable housing in rural areas;
- 12 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 2024 edition of our Rural Matters magazine included useful information for rural tenants and customers on homelessness support, Rural Housing Needs Tests, energy efficiency, sign posted advice through a dedicated 'Make Your Money Work' budgeting service, the Oil Savings Network and showcasing the Housing Executive's online Customer Portal.

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 2024/25, 31 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.

The Housing Executive continues to mainstream equality across its rural regeneration efforts, ensuring that all rural residents have access to inclusive, responsive and equitable services. By prioritising equality and diversity, we help to build resilient, cohesive and thriving rural communities.

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 2024/25 the forum met on 17th October 2024 and 19th March 2025.

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

The two meetings of Forum in 2024/25 discussed the following items:

- Housing Executive Annual Report Update
- Corporate Strategy Update
- Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy Update
- Housing for All Update
- Social Enterprise Update
- Disability Action Plan Update

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. It is planned to carry out a review of the Consultative Forum in the 2025/26 financial year.

EDI Steering Group and Workstreams

The EDI Steering Group oversees all activities that support the delivery of the Affirmative Action Plan, including oversight of the Outreach Plan, recruitment performance and outreach activities. In 2024/25 members received reports on the Housing Executive's response to new government strategies, with updates on the Autism Action Plan in line with NI Autism Strategy and Domestic Abuse Policy in relation to the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. The EDI Steering Group also received regular updates on the activities of the EDI Workstreams.

There are workstreams supporting our work on Community Background, Gender, Disability, LGBTQ+ and Race equality, with a new Age workstream set to be launched in 2025/26. Through the EDI workstreams colleagues are invited to share their lived experiences to help inform and improve our workplace practices, and also support us to identify key priority areas for training and awareness raising activities. We have over 60 colleagues currently actively engaged in the EDI workstreams, with many others taking part in EDI events they have organised.

A key action for the Disability Workstream in 2024/25 was to support us in the relaunch of our JAM Card partnership, helping us to reduce communication barriers for disabled customers when accessing our services. A promotional event marking our commitment as a JAM Card friendly business took place in January 2025, attended by our Director of Corporate Services and NOW Group's Managing Director. This marked the beginning of mandatory JAM Card e-learning across the business, with additional face-to-face training scheduled for customer facing colleagues during the 2025/26 financial year.

The Disability Workstream were also instrumental in organising the visit of the Autism Bus to the Housing Centre in July 2024. The bus is a virtual reality experience designed to provide participants with an experience of the sensory processing difficulties faced by autistic people. The session had a huge impact on those who took part and more sessions are being planned for 2025/26. The workstream also supported the launch of our Neurodiversity Peer Support group for colleagues. The group provides a safe space for people who are Autistic

themselves, or have family members with Autism, to share experiences and support each other with advice and guidance.

The Community Background Workstream has been engaged throughout the year in our activities to promote the Housing Executive as an inclusive employer. Discussions took place to help identify any barriers or issues that may be impacting on our ability to attract more applications from people of a Protestant Community Background, and actions suggested included within our outreach strategy. The LGBTQ+ workstream supported colleagues who took part in Belfast & Newry Pride festivals. We also promoted the Housing Executive as an inclusive employer at both events. The Race Workstream helped promote the Housing Executive as an inclusive employer at the Belfast Mela festival and the Black History Month Expo event during Black History Month in October 2024.

The Gender Workstream has built a strong partnership with our Health & Wellbeing Team over the past few years, and this has led to a series of joint activities in 2024/25 such as a Men's Health Month event in November and the roll out of Menopause Awareness sessions to colleagues across the business. This year the workstream also launched a series of empowerment sessions for female colleagues called WISE (Women Empowering & Supporting Each Other), with presentations on topics such as leadership, self-esteem, confidence and tackling imposter syndrome.

Other events supported during the year included International Women's Day, Disability Pride Month and Small Worlds' event for colleagues as part of Good Relations Week in September 2024, providing an opportunity to hear first hand the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Northern Ireland. There was also continued delivery of our Learn at lunch sessions for colleagues, providing opportunities for bite size learning on key equality issues. Employers for Disability NI again delivered some really useful sessions as part of our membership, and we also welcomed Emma Patterson-Bennett from the BBC who delivered training on inclusive language.

Consultation Toolkit

The Consultation Toolkit fine tunes the process of consultation in the Housing Executive and streamlines external consultation.

The toolkit promotes a consistent approach to consultation to ensure both compliance and effective consultation. During 2024/25 the toolkit was used as best practice guidance when consulting on a range of policies including the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy, the draft Housing Executive Corporate Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28, 'Building Safer Communities Together' Community Safety Strategy 2025 – 2030 and the Social Investment Strategy.

- 12** In the 2024-25 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 2024/25 in October 23 and March 24. Topics presented at the meeting included updates on a range of policies and strategies such as the Social Enterprise Strategy and the Corporate Plan. In addition to the Consultative Forum the Housing Executive's quarterly reports on the implementation of the Equality Scheme 2024/25 were circulated to the consultee list via email. The opportunity to receive an alternative format of the document was also offered.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2024-25 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

As mentioned previously the Housing Executive held Full Consultative Forum meetings in October 2024 and March 2025. Quarterly reports on the Implementation of the Housing Executive's Equality Scheme were also circulated to consultees.

- 14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2024-25 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)*:

32

<i>Title of policy subject to screening</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of Noise at Work Policy • Title Deeds Handling Policy • Place Making Policy • Call Recording Policy • Title Rectifications Policy • Fire Door and Procedures Policy • Incident Reporting and Investigation Policy • Community Safety Strategy • Revised Land Transfers to Housing Associations Policy • Housing Executive Land Aquisition (HELA) Project • Wider Amendments to the House Sales Scheme

- Work at Height Policy
- Health & Safety in Construction Policy.
- New & Expectant Mothers Strategy
- FOI Policy & Procedures.
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Organisational Change Policy
- Programme Management Office Guidelines
- Office Move Derry/Londonderry
- Rent Increase Proposals for 2025/26, 2026/27 & 2027/28
- Tenancy Support & Sustainment Strategy 2024 – 2030
- NIHE Exemption for DFI Caravans Act NI 1963
- Manual Handling Policy
- Affordable Warmth Policy Guide
- Revised Safeguarding Policy
- Driving for Work and Workplace Transport Policy
- Draft Land Disposals Policy
- Revised Land Transfers to Housing Associations Policy
- Home Improvement Grants Policy
- Draft Signing and Sealing of Document Policy

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2024-25:

0 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 2024/25 the principles set out in the toolkit were used when consulting on the following Housing Executive strategies and plans:

- ‘Building Safer Communities Together’ Community Safety Strategy 2025 - 2030
- Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy
- Draft Housing Executive Corporate Strategy 2025/26 – 2027/28
- Social Investment 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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:

During 2024 – 25 the Housing Executive's equality monitoring processes were reviewed to improve data collection. For example, on an ongoing basis we will be holding regular information sessions on the importance of gathering equality monitoring data to improve services.

- 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:

As already mentioned it was decided to provide regular information sessions to staff on the importance of gathering equality monitoring data.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2024-25 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

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

Use of Equality Monitoring Information

During 2024/25 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 2024/25 can be provided up to 31st March 2025.

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 2024/25 the EDIS team highlighted the importance of equality monitoring within the organisation. 2 comprehensive Equality Monitoring reports were completed and circulated to internal stakeholders. Following on from the circulation of the report, meetings were held with the Strategic Housing Authority/Regional Services management team. The importance of equality monitoring is also highlighted during mandatory induction sessions and equality awareness training. In addition to that, the EDIS team updated organisation's internal guidance note for staff 'Equality Monitoring in relation to our services: why and how' (which has been incorporated into the training packs for staff using the Housing Management System since 2013) and scheduled a number of separate online and in-person equality monitoring awareness sessions for 2025/2026.

Equality Monitoring data quality assessment

In 2024/2025, the EDIS team conducted an analysis of the quality of equality monitoring data in relation to our services. A number of approaches to improve data quality were identified, including further internal promotion of equality monitoring and improvements in relation to data retrieval procedures from the Housing Management System. The introduction of data retrieval improvements is scheduled to be implemented by Data Analytics & EDIS teams in 2025/2026. The EDIS team were also involved in the design of equality monitoring modules on the new Housing Assessment/Allocations and Homeless platform (currently in development).

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

In 2024/25, the EDIS team completed an internal overview of Northern Ireland Census comparators and demographic changes in relation to Community Background and Religion and had initial discussions with the Equality Commission about the findings of the report. The EDIS team also completed the draft edition of the 13th Ethnic Minorities in Northern Ireland report with additions driven by the Guidance for Ethnic Equality Monitoring in the Public Sector published by The Executive Office Racial Equality Legislation team.

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 2024/25 equality monitoring was used extensively for informing our Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) and for replies to FOI requests, Assembly Questions, requests from government departments, members of the public, internal information requests. A total of 77 separate requests were completed.

External Requests

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

- DfC
- MLAs
- Housing Rights
- Members of the Public
- Participation & Practice of Rights (PPR)
- Journalists

Internal Requests

Internal requests were received from various Housing Executive teams, including:

- Community Cohesion
- Housing Analytics
- Finance Development
- Housing Services
- Homelessness Strategy
- Corporate Planning

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 2024-25, 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. We also provide bespoke and targeted

training for Business Units, Policy writers, Board members and Directors on request.

Equality Awareness Training

Equality Awareness training is mandatory for all staff and continued to be delivered during 2024/25. 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 existing 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. An associated “Dignity at Work in the Northern Ireland Workplace” eLearning course is available for all staff.

In 2024/25 we delivered 19 sessions (including Induction sessions), involving 321 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 2024/25 30 sessions (including Induction sessions) were held covering 591 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 2024-25, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

Internal Communication

Information provided included in 2024/25 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.
- We issued 4 Equality Bulletins to staff Equality Bulletin Number 43 - Code of Courtesy for Irish & Ulster-Scots Language, Communication Support Quick Reference Guide, Equality Bulletin Number 45 – Full Guidelines for Using Communication Support Services for People Needing Language Support and Alternative Formats for People with Disabilities and Equality Bulletin Number 45 A – List of Translated Documents.
- 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.
- Communication Support Awareness training is conducted on request. A Learn at Lunch session on Communication Support was held in March 2025.
- 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 continues to be 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 2024/25 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 2024/25 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 2024/25 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 2024/25 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 2024/25 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. In March 2025 we also held a Learn at Lunch session on Communication Support and plan to roll more of these sessions out in 2025/26.
 - As mentioned previously in the report the Housing Executive has worked in partnership with the NI Youth Forum for a number of years on ways to engage with young people on housing related issues further details can be found at [NIHE Youth Forum - Northern Ireland Youth Forum](#) .

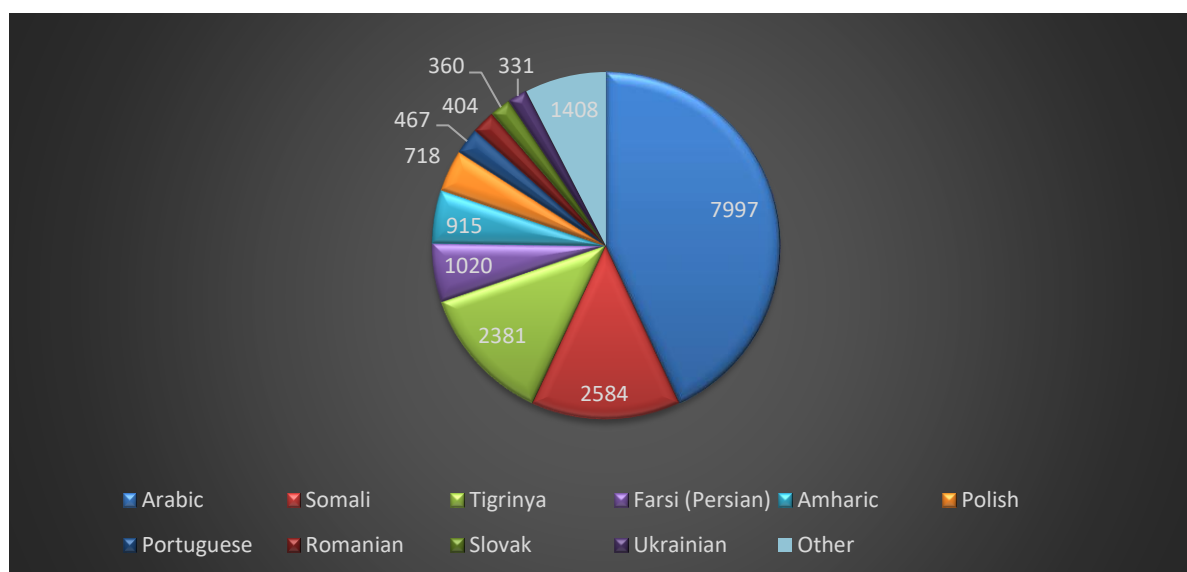
Communication Support Services

The use of telephone interpreting increased significantly in 2024/25. Service outlets are aware of the benefits of all the Communication Support services. Use of Communication Support services from 2022 - 2025 is detailed below:

Housing Executive Telephone Interpreting Service 2022-2025

NIHE Overall Usage Summary	<u>2024/25</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
Total No. of Calls:	18,585	11,403	6,571
Total No. of Outlets:	56	58	47
Total No. of Languages:	46	42	38

Languages Requested for Telephone Interpreting in 2024/25:



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

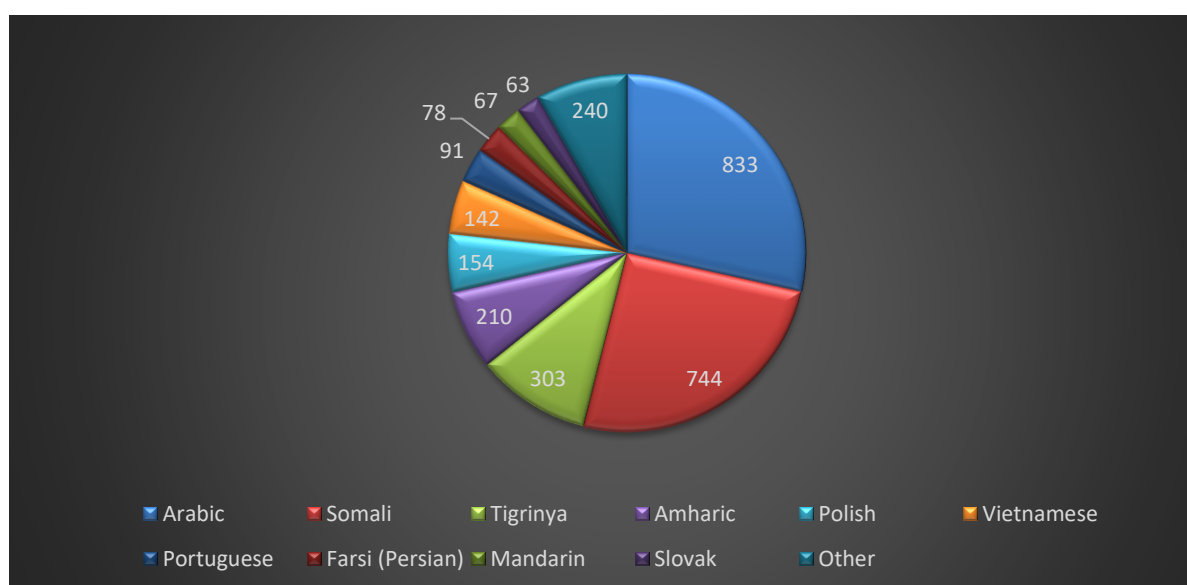
Russian (218), Bulgarian (192), Lithuanian (186), Mandarin (183), Hungarian (84), Farsi (Afghan) (83), Kurdish (Sorani) (83), Spanish (80), Czech (47), Bengali (38), Cantonese (33), Oromo (32), French (23), Vietnamese (23), Latvian (20), Pashto (12), Urdu (11), Turkish (10), Kurdish (Kurmanji) (<10), Gujarati (<10), Thai (<10), Albanian (<10), Hindi (<10), Italian (<10), Swahili (<10), Tetum (<10), Lugandan

(<10), Punjabi (<10), Sudanese (<10) Sylheti (<10), Tamil (<10), Bahasa Indonesia (<10), Greek (<10), Hausa (<10), Slovene (<10), and Tagalog (<10)

Telephone Interpreting Services 2022 - 2025 for Voluntary Sector Hostels

	<u>2024/25</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
Total No. of Calls:	2,925	2,127	2,281

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



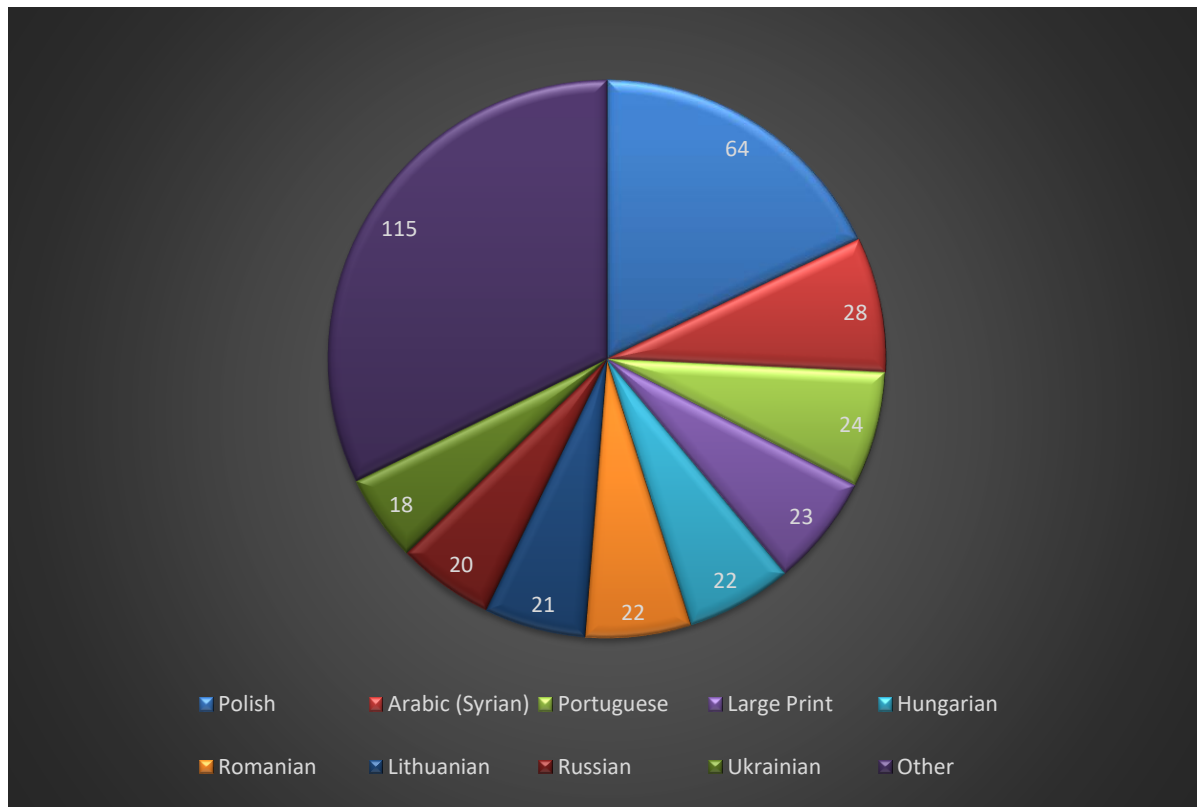
The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Romanian (37), Spanish (25), Hungarian (20), Kurdish (Sorani) (18), Lithuanian (16), Russian (16), Bulgarian (13) Czech (12), Farsi (Afghan) (10), Hindi (10), Pashto (10), Bengali (<10), Ukrainian (<10), Georgian (<10), Swahili (<10), Tagalog (<10), French (<10), Oromo (<10), Thai (<10), Bahasa Indonesia (<10), Cantonese (<10), Latvian (<10), Tetum (<10) and Twi (<10)

Translations 2022 -2025

Translations	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Total No. of Translations:	357	386	279

Languages Translated in 2024/25:



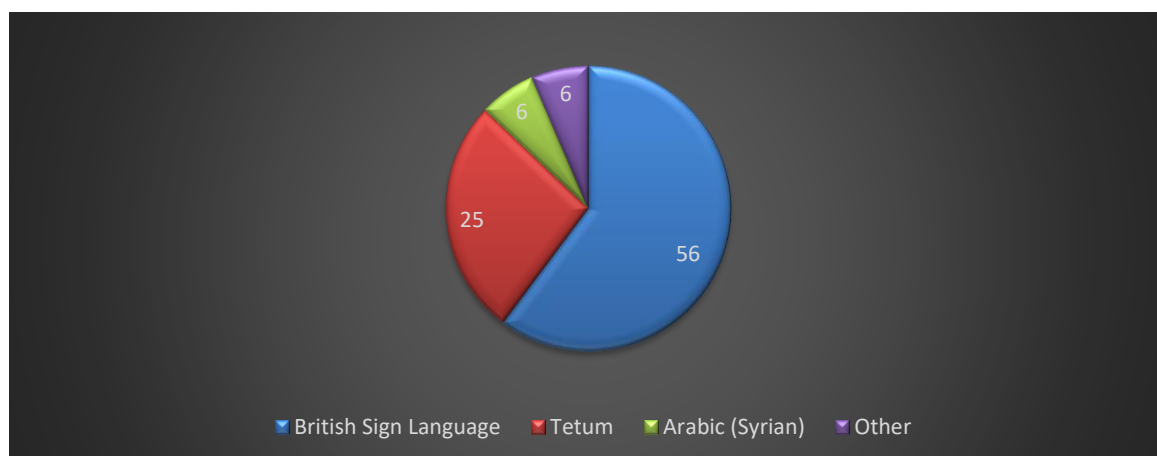
The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Bulgarian (16), English (15), Somali (15), Cantonese (10), Mandarin (<10), Tigrinya (<10), Arabic (Modern Standard) (<10), Latvian (<10), Slovak (<10), Tetum (<10), Braille (<10), Farsi (Persian) (<10), Amharic (<10), Bengali (<10), Spanish (<10), Armenian (<10), Filipino (<10), Greek (<10) and Turkish (<10)

Face to Face Interpreting 2022 – 2025

Face to Face Interpreting	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Total No. of Interpreter Sessions:	93	126	123

Face to Face Interpreting 2024/ 25:

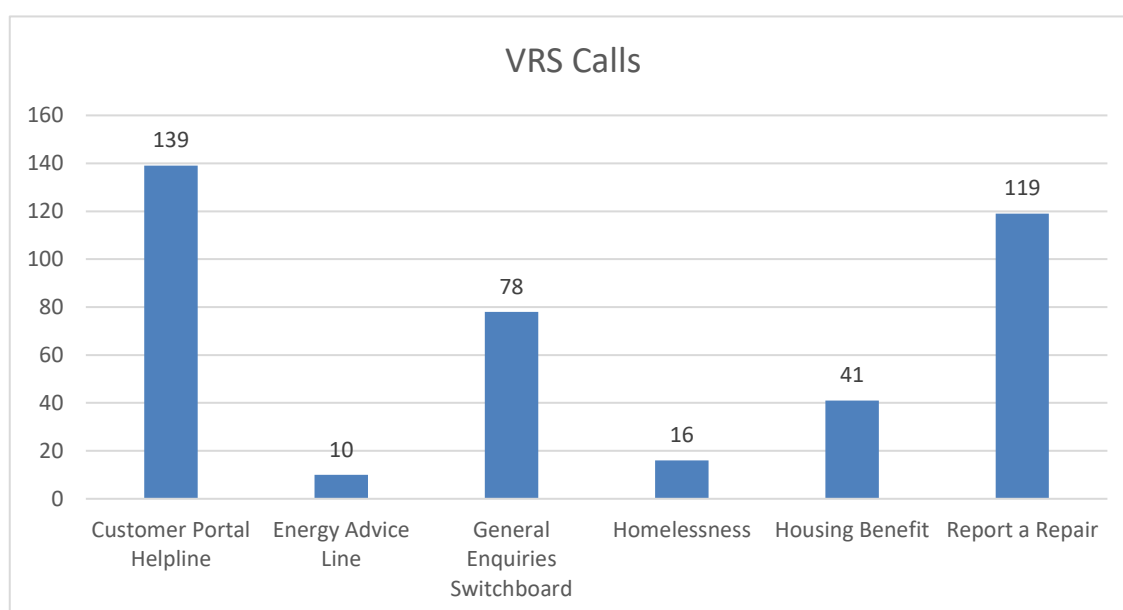


The 'Other' category in this Chart consists of the following languages:

Bengali (<10), Dari (<10), Irish Sign Language (<10), Latvian (<10), Lithuanian (<10) and Russian (<10)

Video Relay Service 2024 – 2025

No. of Video Relay Service Calls in 2024/25



Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2024-25?

Insert number here: 1

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

The complaint we received related to our screening arrangements. We responded to the complaint. The complainant was not satisfied with the response and contacted the Equality Commission who are now in the process of deciding if an investigation needs to be carried out.

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*)

This report highlights upcoming actions for several business areas across the organisation which have a direct link to Equality. For example, the development of a new five year Supporting People Strategy and year 4 of the Homelessness Strategy. In terms of the work of the EDIS Team in 2025/26 we will continue to 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. We will also be working to deliver a new Disability Action Plan to run from 2026 – 2030.

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 majority of Housing Executive functions not only target need but also address housing inequalities. However, 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:
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14	0	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</p>	<p>During 2024/25 there were 19 Equality Awareness Training courses (including Induction sessions) held involving 321 staff. Part of the course covers disability discrimination and delivering services to disabled people.</p> <p>In addition to Equality Awareness training an e-learning Diversity and Inclusion in the Northern Ireland Workplace course also highlights the Disability Discrimination Act and is mandatory for all staff.</p> <p>During 2024/25 we also facilitated Sign Language sessions for colleagues. These sessions were led by a Deaf member of staff and were well received by everyone who attended.</p>	<p>Staff are made aware of disability discrimination and delivering services to disabled people</p>

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	inclusions to the DDA as required.		
2	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 (Huddle).	In 2024/25 they provided guidance for staff on a range of Health & Well-being issues including contact details for Mental Health First Aiders and promoted a range of awareness days & weeks e.g. World Suicide Prevention Day, World Sleep Day and National No Smoking Day. They have delivered health and wellbeing masterclasses, arranged health and wellbeing events, share a monthly health and wellbeing flyer which includes details of events e.g. online yoga, resources e.g. Beneden Heath Care membership and Fitech Health Assessments , signposting to organisations, etc. In 2024/25 the organisation also trained an additional group of Mental Health First Aiders.	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.
	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	The business case for bespoke training to be delivered to all frontline Housing Services staff has received internal sign-off and approval. The current focus of activity is on finalising procurement documentation and a procurement exercise will follow. As part of the	Expected Outcomes will be: 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

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	<p>Northern Ireland who are supporting tenants. Accordingly, the existing Mental Health Awareness staff handbook will be reviewed and updated.</p>	<p>provision, the MHA staff handbook will be reviewed by the external training provider and updated according to any recommendations. This will provide assurance in relation to the quality and expertise of the advice it contains.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>customer satisfaction with the service received from the Housing Executive.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p>A key action for the Housing Executive's Disability Workstream in 2024/25 was to support the organisation in the relaunch of JAM initiative.</p>	<p>A promotional event marking our commitment as a JAM Card friendly organisation took place in January 2025, attended by our Director of Corporate Services and NOW Group's Managing Director. This marked the beginning of mandatory JAM Card e-learning across the organisation, with additional face-to-face training scheduled for customer facing colleagues during the 2025/26 financial year.</p>	<p>JAM Card partnership, helps us to reduce communication barriers for disabled customers when accessing our services.</p>

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

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	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Disabled people will receive communication in the media they understand.	<p>The Housing Executive has in place a communication support service for meeting customer communication needs as and when required.</p> <p>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, Braille, and email correspondence rather than by letter.</p> <p>In 2024/25 27 alternative formats including large print & Braille were facilitated for customers.</p> <p>57 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</p>	<p>Customers and staff were provided services in a positive way that removed any communication barriers.</p> <p>Disabled staff have access to all training available to staff generally.</p> <p>Customers receive communications that are accessible to them.</p>

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		<p>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 2024/25 the Housing Executive received 403 call from customers using VRS.</p>	<p>VRS has enhanced communications for Deaf customers.</p>
2	<p>Enhance Awareness of disability issues and promote positive attitudes.</p>	<p>As part of the Housing Executive's Affirmative Action Plan the Disability Workstream continued to promote awareness around disability.</p> <p>As already mentioned the Workstream supported the relaunch of our JAM Card partnership. The Workstream was also instrumental in organising a visit of the Autism Bus to the Housing Centre in July 2024. The bus is a virtual reality experience designed to provide participants with an experience of the sensory processing difficulties</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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		<p>faced by autistic people. The session had a huge impact on those who took part and more sessions are being planned for 2025/26. They also launched our Neurodiversity Peer Support group for colleagues. The group provides a safe space for people who are Autistic themselves, or have family members with Autism, to share experiences and support each other with advice and guidance.</p> <p>A range of Equality Bulletins about Disability have been issued in the past few years including:</p> <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 	
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		<p>Disabilities (updated and issued annually to staff).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 to the bulletins the EDIS Team distributed a guidance note prepared by the Disability Forum to all staff entitled ‘Useful Tips for Housing Executive Staff in Regard to People with Disabilities’. It is planned to refresh this guidance in 2025/26.</p>	
3	Review the current system of approval, resources and delivery of housing adaptations.	Better more efficient adaptation services.	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),

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			<p>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 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</p>
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			<p>Management, Corporate Services, Housing and Regional Services.</p> <p>Regional Interagency Complex Case Escalation Panel process is fully operational and managed by the Housing & Health Team. The Housing & Health Team triage referrals and convene relevant parties to discuss/resolve issues across housing & health with a view to agreeing an effective housing solution.</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 • Electronic communication formats that facilitate timely and consistent

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			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.	All Supporting People providers have signed funding agreements requiring compliance with all applicable equality legislation and the DDA. Validated on a rolling annual basis through implementation of Supporting People contract management arrangements.
2	Wheelchair Standard Social Housing.	Completed new standards mandatory from April 2017.	The Housing Executive also monitors the delivery of new homes constructed to Wheelchair Design Standards. There is an on-going annual target for 10% of General Needs New Build units within eligible schemes to be built to Wheelchair Design Standards (RSPI 1.2.3). In 2024/25 of the 1,504 SHDP Starts, 1,148 units were eligible General Needs New Build. Of these, 125 units (10.89%) have been designed to Wheelchair Design Standards.

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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 is now included in Tenancies that Thrive: Landlord 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. An interim guidance note to address this issue has been drafted with intention to circulate in 2025/26.</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>
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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
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.	Having disability issues as a standing item on the agenda of the Full Consultative Forum ensures there is a regular review of

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			<p>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. At the Full Consultative Forum meeting in March 2025 the Housing Executive's Disability Action Plan was discussed.</p>
2	<p>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).</p>	<p>From October 2008.</p>	<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 Assisted Living Technology for Tenants: An Evaluation of the Pilot Project (published October 2020) and Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT): North Lisburn Supported Housing (2018) are available at <u>The Housing</u></p>

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			<u>Executive - Health and welfare research</u>
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).	A steering group is now in place with appropriate representation from the Housing Executive and Housing Associations. The group is tasked with taking forward the implementation of the Accessible Housing Register 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.