



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COHESION STRATEGY 2024-2029

**Housing
Executive**

#togetherwecan

Listening to your voice, shaping our services together

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Foreword

A view from the Chief Executive, Grainia Long and Chair, Nicole Lappin

We are delighted to introduce the Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy 2024-2029. This strategy has been co-designed and will be co-delivered with our Housing Community Network; particularly members of the Central Housing Forum.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the Housing Community Network and are grateful to the community representatives for their time and commitment to inform and develop our service delivery to tenants, residents, and leaseholders in our estates.

In our most recent Customer Service Excellence accreditation, the assessor concluded that “for many years that the Housing Executive’s Landlord Services was, in his experience and that of the organisation’s customers, without doubt one of the most customer focused services in Northern Ireland, with tenants frequently stating to the assessor that if only other organisations were as responsive and easy to deal with, their lives would be so much better.”

We are delighted to report that the Housing Executive continues to support community involvement and cohesion initiatives and including through investment. It is encouraging to see our CSE assessment noted that this strategy will provide a framework for meaningful customer engagement to interact with individuals and communities in a range of ways which suits them. The assessor also noted the importance of this strategy in moving Northern Ireland forward to a more inclusive society.

The vision of this strategy is that communities should feel engaged, enabled and empowered as part of a more cohesive society.

Our strategic aims are to **engage** our communities to promote and strengthen involvement; to **enable** our communities to influence, shape and improve our services and to **empower** them to embrace community cohesion within and between our communities. We will ensure that progress against these ambitions is tracked and measured throughout the life of the strategy.


Without doubt, the past few years have been challenging for all of us. The communities that we are here to serve have been greatly impacted by the rising cost of living and adjusting to the post COVID-19 environment. The Housing Executive’s corporate strategy sets out our commitment to inclusion and involvement of our customers in decisions and services that affect their lives. Our new Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy provides the roadmap to achieve this ambition.

The development of a new strategy is an important moment for any organisation, its people and its customers. In developing this strategy, we have sought to undertake a genuinely inclusive process. We have based our conclusions on evidence of need and demand and have focused on opportunities for the future.


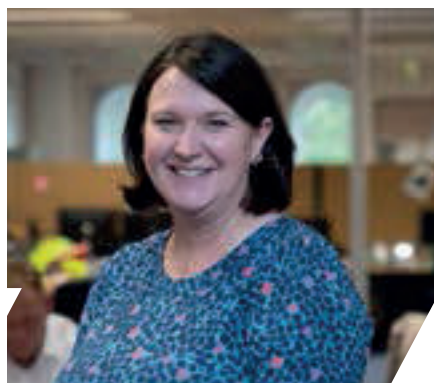
This strategy is the culmination of work which started last year at our Community Conference, where we commenced our pre-consultation process. We are delighted that the Housing Community Network have helped shape this strategy including throughout the formal consultation.

Looking ahead we will continue to meet with the Housing Community Network regularly to explore areas of mutually beneficial collaboration and shared learning. The purpose of these meetings will be to exchange best practice and identify opportunities for innovation and collaboration, in the face of significant challenges.

As Chair and Chief Executive, we make a commitment on behalf of the organisation that co-design and co-delivery will continue, both in the implementation of the strategy and the development of our annual action plans.



Grainia Long,
Chief Executive



Nicole Lappin
Chair

A view from Community Voices

**Linda Watson BEM - Chair of the Central Housing Forum
and independent member on the Tenant & Customer
Services Committee**

As Chair of the Central Housing Forum (CHF), I am both proud and excited to endorse this new and important strategy, for the Housing Executive as an organisation, but more importantly for the tenants, residents and leaseholders who represent communities across Northern Ireland on the Housing Community Network (HCN).

Members of the CHF have helped to lead in the development of, and formal consultation for this strategy, including various roadshows across the province. We have actively listened to everyone's views and included the opinions of the communities that make up the HCN, Housing Executive staff, Supporting Communities staff, as well as the various agencies and other stakeholders who work in our local communities.

The Housing Executive is rightly recognised as being a model of best practice due to our encouragement and development of community engagement work for over 40 years.

We hope that the content of this Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy encourages and inspires you to become more involved in your own community. All tenants, residents and leaseholders within Housing Executive estates have the opportunity to influence change by becoming actively involved in the decision-making processes and ultimately improve the quality of service across all Housing Executive departments.

Getting involved with your local community and the Housing Executive can be hugely rewarding and has many benefits such as gaining new skills, meeting new people and working together to make positive changes in your area.

The Housing Executive has shown in the past and continues to show that by stakeholders working together we can all make a difference. This is evidenced by my own involvement as the Housing Executive tenant representative and independent member on the Tenant and Customer Services Committee. This is a role I take very seriously as I meet with other independent committee members as well as the Chief Executive, Chairperson and Board members from the Housing Executive.



Patricia McQuillan MBE - Vice Chair of the Central Housing Forum and Chair of the Rural Residents Forum

The Housing Community Network gives us, as community representatives, a stronger voice. We welcome this new strategy as a reflection of that voice through consultation across all tiers of the Housing Community Network.

We are proud to have been involved in the co-production of this new strategy through a partnership approach with the Housing Executive.

The strategy sets out what the Housing Executive aims to achieve in partnership with us in our local communities over the next five years. It has built on the lessons and successes of the previous strategy, and offers a wide range of opportunities for tenants, residents and leaseholders to become involved.

We encourage you to take up the opportunities to get involved at a level that suits you; there is something for everyone. Support will be available to help you become involved and have your voice heard.

We look forward to welcoming you and working together to make a real difference for Housing Executive tenants, residents, leaseholders and their communities.



Executive Summary

Developing the Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy has been a significant moment for the organisation; our staff, partners, customers, tenants, residents and leaseholders across our communities.

It has been carefully produced, through a genuine co-design partnership with community representatives from across the Housing Community Network (HCN). We have undertaken an inclusive consultation process, and we have based our conclusions and recommendations for the future from this feedback which includes our vision:

Communities should feel engaged, enabled and empowered as part of a more cohesive society.

Over the past 50 years the Housing Executive has provided high quality housing and a wide range of additional support services to our communities. Tenant, resident and leaseholder participation is embedded in the way we deliver our services. Over the years, communities have been involved in transforming our services through a process of partnership and co-design, and this strategy seeks to create the environment for continued progress in this regard.

Northern Ireland is a society in transition and the Housing Executive is in a distinct position to help our post-conflict communities deal with division. Last year marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement, which set out the aspiration for a shared society.

Post COVID-19 provided the opportunity for us to pause, reflect and refresh our involvement and cohesion activities. We took the decision to bring together both the Community Cohesion Strategy and the Community Involvement Strategy. This will ensure that good community relations are embedded throughout this strategy and throughout our policies as well as the HCN structures.

We have achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard for a number of years and the CSE assessor in his 2023 assessment told us, 'The Community Involvement Strategy 2018-23 continues to be instrumental in your plans to move Northern Ireland forward to a more inclusive society.'

The HCN has contributed to an increase in community cohesion through increasing connections, knowledge and trust between individuals from different communities across Northern Ireland. Many significant outcomes have been delivered as a result of our previous Involvement and Cohesion strategies. The Housing Executive recognises this work must

continue to be prioritised to ensure effective and meaningful partnership working within and across communities.

There are a number of underrepresented groups across Northern Ireland. These groups have often found themselves being called 'easy to ignore'. We want to make sure that what we do reflects the diversity of our communities, and we make efforts to ensure these groups are engaged and involved in the development and delivery of services.

The CSE Assessor stated, "The Community Involvement Strategy 2018-23 ensures that groups that are difficult to reach, such as Youth, Disability, Rural, LGBTQIA+ are engaged and given the assistance that they require.... The Housing Community Network (HCN) has over the past few years brought on representatives from all under-represented groups."

We know from our recent research into customer segmentation, that new communities are emerging in our estates, and neighbourhoods are becoming ever more dynamic, complex and culturally diverse. We welcome this cultural shift, and we want to ensure new communities not only are integrated but also feel safe in their homes. We believe that supporting and encouraging neighbourhoods, where everyone is valued and where diversity is celebrated, is fundamental to building a lasting peace and a stable society.

We have always been at the fore in delivering various initiatives that bring our communities together, including our PEACE programmes, Community grants and Community lets. The CSE assessor said, "The Housing Executive works with communities in ways that are well outside what could be considered normal for a social housing provider, such as the provision of social enterprise support funding to a wide range of communities...This level of engagement is exceptional."

Our efforts were also recognised by the CSE assessor, who called the Housing Community Network, "The jewel in the Housing Executive's Crown."

The Housing Executive, "is without doubt one of the most customer focused services in Northern Ireland."

"Many of your strategies and policies are seen by the Department for Communities as being best practice and suitable to be shared with other housing associations. Your HCN has been identified as something that housing associations could emulate."

The 2021/22 benchmarking process completed by Housemark, compared the Housing Executive to similar large scale social housing landlords (with a minimum stock size of 20,000 units). It found that the Housing Executive invests a significant level of funding into our communities, in comparison to our size-comparable counterparts across the United Kingdom. The top 25% resident involvement management cost in 2022/23 per property was £21.83 compared to the Housing Executive's £70.96.

We have seen the benefits of that investment, with 90% of customers in our annual Continuous Omnibus Tenant Survey (2022) saying they are content with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

This strategy sets out three key aims; Engage, Enable, Empower, as well as an action plan that we will deliver throughout the life of the strategy and will be updated annually. We will take a flexible approach, responding to new challenges and opportunities as they arise. This strategy will be a living document, continually evolving and taking cognisance of the changing internal and external environment and developing in response to new ideas, research and best practice.

Together with our communities, we are committed to ensuring our estates become stronger and more resilient. [#togetherwecan](#)

A word of thanks

It is important as we consider our strategic ambitions to pay tribute to all the work completed through the Housing Community Network in the delivery of our previous strategies as well as all our community representatives who have helped shape and assemble this strategy. Many people have given freely of their time and skills so that our customers have a say in how our work is prioritised and services developed and delivered.

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is the Strategic Housing Authority for Northern Ireland, and a public landlord at scale. With an annual budget of approximately £1.2bn, we provide a range of public services across Northern Ireland. Our footprint extends to more than 220,000 homes, and our services impact on the lives of one in every three people across Northern Ireland. We have two distinct strands to our business: our Landlord role and our Strategic Housing Authority role, both of which are underpinned by our Support Services.

Vision for Housing in Northern Ireland

Our aspirations of this strategy are weaved into our organisation's challenging vision for housing in Northern Ireland.

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

Our values reflect our culture and underpin how we approach our work through making a difference through passion, fairness and expertise.

This strategy has been developed to help deliver the Housing Executive's corporate objectives four and five:

"We will work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help reduce poverty and improve Health & Wellbeing".

"We will engage with our customers to ensure that they are at the heart of service improvements and our business delivery model."

In working towards our corporate vision, our role is to work with local communities and other agencies, whether public, private, community, voluntary or social enterprise sector, to tackle issues that make a real difference to everyone's quality of life including:

- The physical and social regeneration of local neighbourhoods
- Community safety and reductions in anti-social behaviour
- Good community relations

Policy Context

The Housing (NI) Order 1983 places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to consult with tenants on matters affecting tenancies and since then, tenant participation has become key in the delivery of social housing.

The New Decade, New Approach agreement set out a commitment that the new Executive would “introduce reformed measures to put civic engagement and public consultation at the heart of policy-making, recognising the vital role that wider society plays in supporting effective and accountable Government.” It made a number of recommendations to “foster a culture change to strengthen citizens’ engagement and improve dialogue with key stakeholders.”

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires the Housing Executive to carry out an equality of opportunity duty. The second good relations duty requires that the Housing Executive have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and racial group. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland recommends that “it is vital that the good relations duty is taken seriously.” We also acknowledge the ‘Together: Building a United Community’ (T:BUC) Strategy, which reflects the Executive’s commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

Another key policy document is the Department for Social Development’s (Now Department for Communities) Tenant Participation Strategy Northern Ireland 2015-2020, which aimed to challenge all social housing landlords to be consistent and to increase the extent and effectiveness of their tenant participation services in Northern Ireland. In this paper, the Housing Executive was set forward as a model of best practice. Work on the Tenant Participation Strategy has been put on hold until further notice due to the on-going budget and resource pressures within the Department, with a time frame on when a review of the strategy will be resumed to be confirmed.

All social housing providers must provide effective and efficient services to all tenants and make sure that their rights are safeguarded. We have ensured that this strategy encapsulates the 10 principles contained within the Department’s Regulatory Framework. The Department for Communities are currently reviewing the strategy and its review will serve as the architecture for future best practice in the social housing sector in Northern Ireland and beyond.

The wider UK Context has also been taken into consideration to include the Charter for Social Housing Residents/Social Housing white paper 2020, which intended to deliver ‘transformational change’ for social housing residents and set measures to drive a renewed focus on engagement efforts.

A key aim was to amplify the voice of tenants and to improve the performance across the sector, which to date had been inconsistent. Specific proposals were laid out to empower residents, by requiring landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement. 'Involved tenants' should be a key part of any landlords' governance and scrutiny arrangements.

The 2022 Better Social Housing Review looked at the quality of social housing from a tenant voice and power lens. Whilst the review is focused on housing association provision across England, the recommendations are of value to all social housing providers. A key priority for social housing tenants is their provider's culture and responsiveness to tenant concerns and complaints. Tenants should be recognised as key partners, with influence at every level of decision making.

Housing providers are encouraged to think more widely and creatively about a range of forms of engagement and develop a proactive local community presence through community hubs.

Delivering Community Involvement and Cohesion

What do we mean by Community?

The strategy has been developed for, and is relevant to, not only our 83,000 tenants, but our residents and leaseholders who live in the more than 220,000 homes within the footprint or our estates who use Housing Executive services or are impacted by our policies.

What do we mean by Community Involvement?

Community involvement is when you share your voice, time and skills to build better communities in partnership with others.

Community involvement is about engaging directly with communities in a way that suits them. The Housing Executive have been working with communities via the HCN in different formats for over 40 years.

We desire to develop strong relationships with our tenants, residents, and leaseholders, giving them a central role in the decisions that affect their lives. The ways to get involved are wide and varied. Our approach is co-production based, whereby the design and delivery of services is in partnership with our customers. It is a way of monitoring both the effectiveness of our policies and the quality of services provided.

We are committed to making a difference through passion, fairness and expertise and community involvement does make a difference - to participants, to decisions, and to better service delivery.

Co-production/Co-design

The Housing Executive working with tenants, residents and leaseholders through the Housing Community Network structure to jointly identify and design initiatives, policies and programmes which will benefit Housing Executive tenants and communities province wide. It is a collaborative approach that produces outcomes that are owned by communities.



Community Involvement entails **collaboration and partnership working** with communities, local councils, and other key stakeholders to co-create solutions that reflect the community's needs and enhance their lives. It involves **empowerment** and **capacity building**: Providing resources, training, and support to communities to build the capacity to engage effectively and **sustainability**: Focusing on sustainable solutions that contribute to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of communities.

The Housing Executive believes that effective community involvement will create a more inclusive, responsive, and effective housing system that enhances the quality of life for all residents in Northern Ireland.

What do we mean by Community Cohesion?

Community Cohesion focuses on building positive relationships among people from diverse backgrounds. It aims to strengthen social bonds, reduce inequalities, and foster a climate of acceptance and understanding.

Cohesion has 5 key themes:

- Residential Segregation/Integration
- Race Relations
- Communities in Transition
- Interface areas
- Flags, Emblems and Symbols

13 Good Relation Officers work to meet the need and demand for good relations and cohesion-based support for local communities.

A cohesive community is one that:

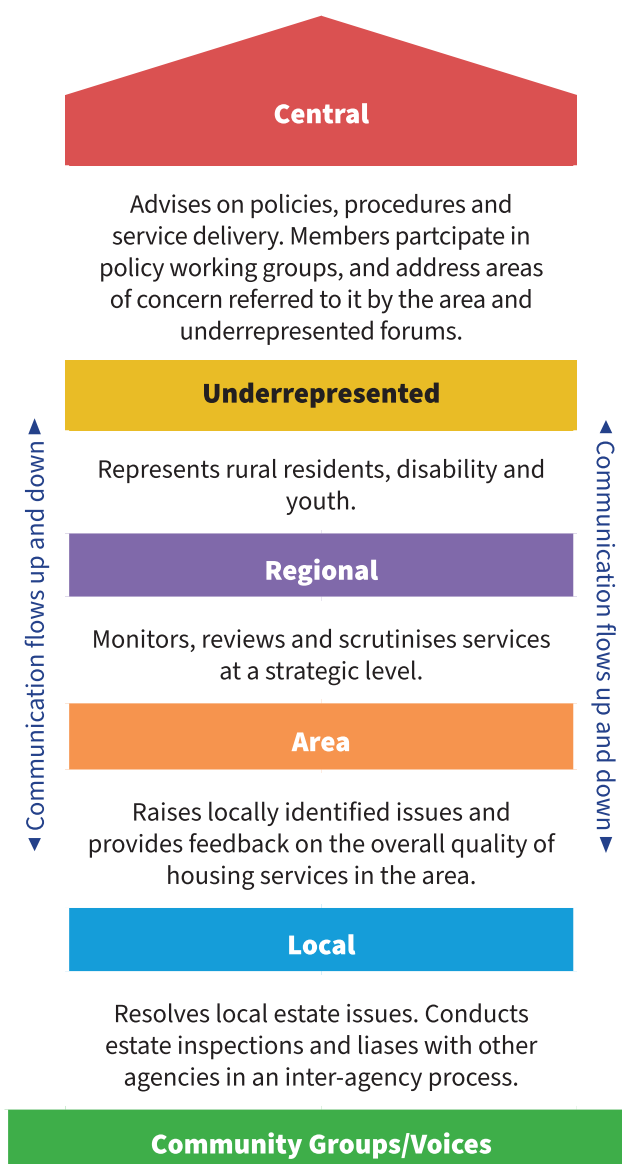
- Creates a common vision and sense of belonging
- Values and appreciates people from different backgrounds and circumstances
- Provides similar life opportunities for people from different backgrounds
- Develops strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods
- Brokers good relations between groups, communities and key government stakeholders

Segregation places pressure on the best use of existing housing and land. We will promote good relations and work in partnership with others to develop mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.

Community Involvement and Cohesion Structure

The HCN has been at the core of our community involvement activity. There are five levels, which has been re-imagined for this strategy as a housing structure.

The foundation is made up of the community groups and community voices. The structure is comprised of a number of levels, with the Central Housing Forum at the top. Communities are supported to develop the skills needed for effective participation.



Community groups/ Community voices

We have over 500+ groups which form the foundation of the HCN across Northern Ireland.

THE LOCAL LEVEL

Some areas have chosen to have a local forum

Inter-agency Meetings / Estate Inspections - Community groups meet with the Housing Executive and external agencies to resolve local estate issues. Estate inspections are a key step in the inter-agency process. Relevant agencies come together in person and walk around local estates and raise any issues.

Community voices / community groups are invited to select up to two representatives to sit on the Area Housing Forum.

THE AREA LEVEL

13 Area Housing Forums

Community groups raise locally identified issues. Their role is to provide feedback on the overall quality of the housing services in the area, monitor the performance of the Housing Executive against established performance standards, seek ways of improving communication with customers, and provide advice and support to new and established community groups.

THE REGIONAL LEVEL

3 Regional Housing Forums

Their role is to monitor and review services at a strategic level. Members engage in scrutiny of services. Each area forum is invited to select a minimum of three representatives to sit on the regional forum and are joined by members from the underrepresented forums.

THE CENTRAL LEVEL

1 Central Housing Forum

The Central Housing Forum advises on policies, procedures and service delivery. Members participate in policy working groups, and address areas of concern referred by the area and underrepresented forums.

It comprises of 14 community representatives nominated from the Area network, and representatives from underrepresented forums. They meet with the Housing Executive board annually.

3 Underrepresented Forums

There are three underrepresented forums for rural residents, disability and youth, facilitated in partnership with Rural Community Network, Disability Action NI and Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Ways to get involved

We want our tenants, residents and leaseholders to find it easy to participate in and influence our decisions at whatever level they feel comfortable. There are a variety of ways to get involved including:

Community Groups

We would encourage tenants, residents and leaseholders to represent their local community by getting involved in their local residents' or community group. If one does not exist, we support the creation of new groups.

Community Voices

We support the creation of community voices who are individuals who want to represent their community in the absence of a group.

Housing Community Network

The central forum, three regional forums and area forums discuss housing related issues and share best practice ideas.

Underrepresented Forums

We have a number of underrepresented forums which include Rural, Disability and Youth, in partnership with Rural Community Network, Disability Action NI and Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

Scrutiny Forums

Scrutiny is the process of communities checking and challenging how the Housing Executive delivers services. Three regional panels examine one service area annually. The groups report twice a year on services scrutinised and provide recommendations for improvement. The necessary training and support to carry out scrutiny are provided.

Thematic Working Groups and Task & Finish Groups

Over 15 groups exist, which provide a platform to offer the opportunity to review areas of interest such as welfare reform, digital inclusion and maintenance including damp and mould.

Communications

Communications contributes to the annual tenant publication, Streets Ahead magazine, social media videos and other customer communications.

Estate Inspections

Enables those who live within our estates to identify common concerns or areas for improvement. Provides the opportunity to come together with Housing Executive staff and other key statutory agencies, to discuss important housing, environmental and social issues.

Mystery Shopping

Allows customers to examine the quality of housing services and provides a strong customer-based feedback mechanism. Appropriate training will be provided to those who participate.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey Focus Group (CTOS)

We invite our members to become fully involved in the design and delivery of our annual Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey. The results are evaluated and monitored by an independent company and tenants are advised of the results.

Other Surveys

Customers can respond to surveys or comment on specific service areas which they are interested in. Contact can be made via text, post, email, telephone call or through our tenant portal. ([MyHousingExecutive \(nihe.gov.uk\)](https://myhousingexecutive.nihe.gov.uk))

Conferences and Networking Events

We hold an annual community conference, workshops, funding fairs and 'Meet the Housing Executive' events to meet customers.

Training

A range of training is available to increase communities' knowledge and understanding of good housing service practice, their IT and communication skills and confidence levels.

Community Events

We support the work of local groups in our estates through Community Involvement grants and Community Cohesion grants for events and programmes. We promote good relations and encourage inclusiveness across our housing areas. Good Relations Officers provide assistance and advice on what customers can get help with.

Good Practice Visits

Good practice visits are a way for community groups to share ideas and help each other grow. Increased visits were requested by the community during the consultation process. It has therefore been included as a theme of community involvement grants.

How we support HCN members

Sometimes barriers exist which prevent people from getting involved, and we are committed to helping anyone who wants to be involved to overcome these. Below are some of the ways we can provide support.

Barrier	Solution
"The meetings are too far away."	We want to ensure we provide you with access to all our meetings. We aim to provide a hybrid approach of face to face with the option to join meetings digitally.
"I cannot afford to attend meetings."	We will assist with costs e.g. travel costs
"I don't know enough to comment."	Your experience as a tenant, resident or leaseholder will be enough. However, we can provide you with training courses to support you to engage as much as you want.
"I am not confident using digital technology to join or take part in virtual meetings."	We will provide ongoing digital inclusion training and provide you with digital equipment if required.
"I don't know anyone else."	We can ask another member to be your buddy, whilst you get to know everyone and how things work.
"I'm from a rural community and find it difficult to connect with groups."	We will connect you to the Rural Residents Forum.
"I'm too young so I don't think it's for me."	We aim to make community involvement relevant for young people.
"I have limited time to get involved."	We have low-level participation options such as short surveys.

What our communities have told us about Community Involvement and Cohesion

"I am enthusiastic about my role as a representative for local, area, regional, and central forums on the Housing Community Network. This position allows me to establish direct communication with key decision-makers and bridges the gap between the Housing Executive and our local communities at a grassroots level. My active participation aids us in monitoring and comprehending the Housing Executive investments and project deliveries, providing us with a more comprehensive insight into their processes."

"Being a member of the HCN gives me the knowledge and information that needs to be passed on to our local community group. This in return empowers them to act and advice local residents to make best decisions for themselves."

"The HCN allows a voice and opportunity. It ensures issues are resolved, and the Housing Executive is held accountable."

"Community engagement with the NIHE has blossomed in recent years. The main benefit to being a HCN member is the grants available, which are vital to the local community."

"We have an opportunity to be listened to. When we are at the centre, sitting with housing officers, Patch Managers and even directors and discuss the community issues, I believe they do listen to us."

"I love volunteering in my local community and always wondered if I could be good enough to do this as full-time work. When I was offered to complete the OCN qualifications, I jumped at the chance."

"Because my area is so large geographically, it would be easy for the voices of some smaller or rural groups to be lost and that could be a shame for all of us as there are innovative solutions and good advice being brought to the table at every meeting. Area meetings are vital to the sharing of good practice and discussions around opportunities for partnership."

"Our group has benefited greatly from the Cohesion Fund; it has abated heightened tensions during summer periods and helped our communities to strengthen social bonds and respect for each other's differences."

"If you are looking to improve your community, the HCN is the body to be a member of. Over the past few years, I have seen big improvements in the Creggan area. The HCN brings the NIHE together in the one room with the community groups where we have the opportunity to discuss the problems face to face and have them resolved."

"When we established our resident association, the Housing Executive were brilliant with us. They've been out and done an estate inspection. They've got a lot of work all cleared up for us."

“Being a HCN member keeps our group informed on what is happening with services in our area and gives us the opportunity to make suggestions on how to improve on them! Through the Housing Community Network, our Gardening Group has built a partnership with another Community Group in our area. This has enabled us to share good practice information, promote our gardening groups in the local area, and regularly attend day trips together.”

“The HCN serves benefit to all local community groups as it provides a networking opportunity. The HCN has created the opportunities for different groups to attend other areas to carry out some observation on what other groups provide in their community. Being part of the HCN allows reps to address arising issues within their area at a local level. The benefits it has had is invaluable.”

“Without the HCN, as a group we would not have built the vital relationships with not only the NIHE but also the wider Lisburn and Castlereagh community groups. For the betterment of the community, these platforms allow groups to share ideas on projects, bring new and fresh ideas for groups and to create dialogue between groups that are aiming towards a shared outcome which is community development.”

“It’s been great as a young person to be welcomed onto the central housing forum. Getting the chance to engage in issues and sit on working groups that I am passionate about.”

“The HCN members forum is great because if you miss a meeting, you can go on the platform to read the minutes and keep up with what’s going on.”

“Attending the housing forums and interagency meetings has enabled me to widen my knowledge on local issues, realising that there are several similar issues within each community.

I have also gained valuable insight on how some of the historical issues have been dealt with and now many remain ongoing.

From a personal perspective everyone has been very welcoming and supportive in my community working journey.”

“I’ve been in HCN for more than 20 years, at local level in Omagh it’s the opportunity to have direct queries answered by the Housing Executive and discuss issues we all have. Area level is about relaying information from Central and vice versa, ensuring I get the voices from my area heard. CHF and the Working, Advisory and the Task & Finish groups that I am part of, allow the tenants and residents needs to be considered in a proper meaningful manner. Which is the essence of ‘Community Involvement’.”

Key Achievements from the Outgoing Strategies

Review/evaluation of strategies

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

Feedback obtained through the tenant participation survey and HCN survey has been vital in assessing our performance, satisfaction with current structures, and identifying improvements in how we work and shape our policies and services.

Community Involvement Achievements

- We developed the capacity of community groups by funding strategic partners to deliver training programmes, including OCN accreditation in Community Development, Understanding and Developing Social Enterprise, and Service Improvement (Scrutiny). 457 participants received OCN training accreditation over the life of the strategy.

Antrim Bridge Association's football tournament



Antrim Bridge Association: The winners of the George Best Community Cup 2023 with the Housing Executive's South Antrim Good Relations Officer Stephen Gamble and Joint Managing Directors of Bridge Association in Antrim, Jacqueline Barnes (far left, back row) and David Edmont (second from the right, back row).

Antrim's Bridge Association provides vocational, work-based, educational training for adults with a learning disability. They received an Involvement Grant worth £2,000 to participate in the George Best Community Cup, giving them a fantastic opportunity to showcase their skills on the football field. The five-a-side squad became the crowned champions. David Edmont, Joint Managing Director said, 'I could not be prouder of our team –we sang 'We are the Champions' the whole way home.

I would like to sincerely thank the Housing Executive for helping us take part, as those with learning disabilities aren't often given the same opportunities as others.'





- We enabled 2,036 participants to take advantage of other non-accredited training, including completing successful funding applications, mental health resilience, good governance, community involvement, capacity building, and pre-tenancy. Feedback from the training yielded an average of 99% satisfaction rates.
- We supported the Central Housing Forum's specific working groups to ensure our policies and procedures are 'customer proofed'. We produced an annual report on the Central Housing Forums' activities and achievements. They attended a residential to expand on their skillset and sign off a Terms of Reference, which reinforced our commitment to co-production and co-design.
- We encouraged involvement of our underrepresented customers by supporting and working in partnership with the Rural Residents' Forum, Disability Forum, and NI Youth Forum. A LGBTQIA+ rep from the Rainbow Project was added to the Central Housing Forum.

Lagan Village keeping communities warm



Lagan Village Youth Handwarmers: Dr John Kyle, High Sheriff of Belfast, who is also Chair of Lagan Village Youth and Community Group, with resident Caroline Morrow and Housing Executive Team Leader Brenda Brown wrapped up in hand warmers made by young people from Lagan Village Youth and Community Group.

Lagan Village received an Involvement Grant for young people to sew cosy hand warmers for the residents at Looiland Fold in East Belfast. Over 200 'Rolly Pollies' were distributed, addressing the health and wellbeing of older people.

Manager George Newell, said, "We realised that there were many older people in this area who were struggling to keep their hands warm, especially those who reduced their heating as fuel prices rose during the winter months. We felt that hand warmers would be much more practical than gloves when you are

indoors, so we decided to get sewing. As word spread, we were inundated with requests. The young people who got involved were massively enthusiastic, which was wonderful to see. They've also learned a new skill with a needle and thread, which can come in handy, and some are even talking about taking up crocheting too."

- Young people completed capacity building training. Sessions included teambuilding, confidence building, cultural and community awareness, leadership and personal and social development. Training was provided around Housing Executive structures in preparation for becoming actively involved in the HCN.

- Rural Residents Forum took part in researching and highlighting barriers and opportunities for rural new build development. They met with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) regarding rural social housing new build targets being missed. They are currently helping to address poverty in rural areas with relevant stakeholders. They have worked with the Housing Executive's Rural Unit to identify hidden needs and support the delivery of housing needs tests in rural communities.
- We promoted digital inclusion by establishing a digital inclusion working group. It was included in the Involvement grant criteria and we introduced a new online grants system. We provided tablets to the Central Housing Forum to ensure meetings could continue during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Getting connected at Strabane Community Unemployed Group



Strabane Community Unemployed Group: *Strabane Community Unemployed Group launched a new digital hub for residents to learn creative skills, following a £5,000 feasibility study funded by the Housing Executive.*

Strabane Community Unemployed Group utilised a £5,000 Cohesion Grant to conduct a feasibility study in order to launch a digital hub, which has given local people seeking employment the valuable qualifications and mentoring needed to improve their job prospects. Digital courses are taught in partnership with the North West Regional College, without participants having to travel further afield. The hub is furnished with creative IT equipment including a virtual reality system and 3D printer. The group also runs digital

skills workshops in local schools featuring the new tech, providing a fun and engaging way for children to learn. Digital Hub coordinator Tim Jenkins said, "We would not have won this generous funding from The National Lottery Community Fund if it wasn't for the initial Housing Executive grant for the feasibility study."

- We developed a tenant online portal to access key services such as payments and reporting a repair. We also established an online portal for HCN members. This will be rolled out across the network, with members now able to communicate with each other, share good practice and report on new initiatives.
- We developed the Interreg VA Peace IV ONSIDE (Outreach, Navigation, Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement) Project – a cross-border project led by Disability Action Northern Ireland and in partnership with the Independent Living Movement in Ireland and Supporting Communities.

2,323 disabled participants were provided with digital skills training and equipment. It proved a lifeline for participants during the enforced COVID-19 lockdowns, who would have experienced further isolation if it were not for their new digital skills and social connections.

- We improved networking and sharing of best practice by encouraging good practice visits. We publish an annual report of HCN activities.
- 560 inter-agency estate inspections were carried out over the life of the strategy.

“I joined up thinking I’d learn how to use a tablet, but it’s been a life changing experience for me. When you’re disabled, you tend to stay in the house or rather, you can lose your confidence, and so the opportunity to meet new friends or other disabled people is greatly reduced. Having experienced ONSIDE’s training and support, I realised there are many opportunities for disabled people, all I needed was the right support and equipment.”

“Prior to joining this course and being given the tablet to use, I had no purpose, no outlet, no visitors either. I felt isolated and alone. This has felt like opening a doorway into my home through which friends have called round every week. And through this doorway, I now have access to a whole new way of life, new options to investigate, and experiences that I can now access, and all in the comfort of my own home.”

- We carried out community involvement training with Patch Managers and Housing Solutions staff, to create awareness of the role they play in delivering community involvement.
- Last year we re-introduced our annual Community conference which had been paused during COVID-19. The conference provided a forum for community workers to share knowledge, ideas and community successes, as well as space for people to reconnect and make new contacts.

The theme of the conference was HELPP- Heat, Eat, Light, People and Power. Key topics were covered, including research into poverty in Northern Ireland and the cost-of-living crisis. Attendees were able to watch videos, showcasing the incredible funded projects which are making a real difference in communities. Information stalls provided advice relating to the cost-of-living crisis and showcased the many products and services available from community groups and social enterprises. Two young singers from the Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network (NACN) entertained attendees.

“Great turnout and good to see so many groups.”

“I have extremely enjoyed the presentations and informative, friendly stands - look forward to passing on info to our community.”

“Conference through the years has been inspirational, great to see it back.”

Community Cohesion Achievements

- 2,515 Housing for All shared housing units developed in 77 schemes over the period 2017/18 to 2022/23.
- 41 schemes (1,223 homes) have been completed.
- 36 schemes (1,292 homes) are programmed, under construction or awaiting allocations.
- £27.2M has been invested in Good Relations Programmes through the Shared Housing programme.
- 103 race relations projects delivered over the life of the strategy.

Celebrating diversity at the Belfast Mela



Belfast Mela: Celebrating diversity at the Belfast Mela. The Housing Executive race workstream members took part in the Belfast Mela Carnival Parade.

The Housing Executive race workstream members took part in the 2023 Belfast Mela. We hosted a stall at Mela Day, which seen Botanic Gardens transformed into a global garden filled with the sights, sounds and aromas of nations around the world. We had a very positive response at our stall with colleagues promoting the Housing Executive as an inclusive employer, committed to being representative of the diverse communities we serve. We were also able to showcase some of the career opportunities we have to offer, and advise about the many services and support we can provide.

- 12 inter-agency partnerships established, with a focus on needs assessment, hate crime prevention and development of services.
- 659 estate-based cohesion projects were allocated to organisations across the 13 areas to progress good relations outcomes.
- 6 major programmes delivered under Peace IV and Interreg VA:
 1. Listen Share Change
 2. Futures
 3. MEA Local Area Network
 4. BCC Building Positive Relationships
 5. Children and Young Peoples Programme
 6. ONSIDE

- Areas at Risk programme delivered in 2 areas in North Belfast (Glenbank/Whitewell) resulting in 166 Areas at Risk projects delivered within the initiative, with £261,000 invested in the area.
- Since the implementation of the Community Cohesion Strategy in 2015 there has been significant progress made through the T: BUC Housing Executive-led Interfaces Programme.

This has included the following:

1. In 2013 the Housing Executive had 26 interface sites identified over 21 locations in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. A number of sites have been transferred to enable regeneration, including social and private housing/a women and family centre and a retail complex.
 2. A further number of sites involving interface barriers consisting of Peace walls and communal lands have been either reimaged, reduced, removed or reclassified.
 3. Aftercare Schemes to a number of properties has provided enhanced security through 'Secure by design (DOJ)' enabling the removal of security grills at interface locations.
- 158 Community Cohesion reimaging projects were delivered.
 - There are fewer bonfires on Housing Executive lands than at the start of the strategy, with 6 areas now using beacons as alternatives to bonfires, through the Positive Expressions of Culture programme.
 - Stakeholders noted the work across all cohesion themes had enabled a 'desegregation of mindset and attitude', which had opened conversations and communication channels. In addition, there was clear evidence from the output data and from the survey and qualitative consultation process that the strategy had contributed to the creation of more stable, safer and cohesive neighbourhoods.
 - In addition, the evidence suggested work undertaken through the Community Cohesion strategy had made a contribution to the Good Relations outcomes of various wider government strategies including the Programme for Government, T:BUC, Fresh Start and the Racial Equality Strategy.

The first of Housing Executive owned peace walls come down



Peace Wall: The brick barrier along the Crumlin Road in Ardoyne was the first of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's peace walls to come down.

Rab McCallum, a member of TASCIT and North Belfast Interface Network Coordinator, said, "The residents who live here have decided to reject the fear and negativity that epitomise peace walls and to embrace hope and a better way of life for their children and their grandchildren." The removal has brought greater reconciliation, created better educational, training and employment opportunities, improved access to essential services and a better quality of life for those living in interface areas.

On 25th February 2016, the first of the Housing Executive's peace walls was taken down, replaced by a family friendly landscaped area and railings with decorative panels, which local residents helped to design. The community-led decision to transform the interface barrier came about after years of talks and relationship building within and between communities in North Belfast.

It was a significant milestone in the journey towards a positive future for both communities.



Peace Wall 2 & 3: Residents at a North Belfast interface held a celebration event on 11 August 2016 to mark a new era after the removal of a peace wall by the Housing Executive.

The Strategic Review Process

In developing this strategy, there have been various stages to the strategic review process. This has included reviewing relevant research and benchmarking data. We commissioned several pieces of research to help qualify our findings from the consultation process and feedback from our key internal and external stakeholders.

Evaluation Reports on previous strategies

- S3 Solutions were appointed to independently review the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 (extended to 2023) and Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023, in order to provide lessons learned and insight for the new strategy.
- The key recommendation was that both strategies should merge to ensure good relations is mainstreamed fully into operational delivery. The report acknowledged that increased cohesion is a key involvement outcome which creates social value.
- The Cohesion Strategy evaluation acknowledged the challenge in measuring change in the good relations and cohesion outcomes. However, it found clear evidence that the strategy has contributed to the creation of more stable, safer and cohesive neighbourhoods. “There is strong evidence of partnership working throughout the lifespan of the strategy; this is considered one of the critical success factors and is a cornerstone of the NIHE approach. Further, there is evidence that shared housing and many of the small grant allocations, interface work and bonfire-based initiatives and interventions by NIHE staff on the ground made a contribution to responding to danger resulting from community conflict.”
- It was felt that the work across all the cohesion thematic areas has enabled a “desegregation of mindset and attitude” which has opened conversations and communication channels among people and communities that was unimaginable a decade ago.
- Consultation with key internal and external stakeholders showed they felt the Community Involvement Strategy was live, ambitious, and empowering which engendered a sense of ownership and connection. They felt involved fully and able to shape housing services. Consultees felt there were a good range of community involvement options and those working in the community relations field felt that the approach taken by the Housing Executive was a model of good practice.

- The research found we invested £1,146,035 through Community Grants during the lifespan of the strategies and highlighted that we are one of the largest funders in terms of Community Grants in Northern Ireland. Recipient communities reported enhanced social, emotional and mental wellbeing in addition to improved connectivity and cohesion within their community.
- The research found that during the life of the strategy, there were 74 new groups established within underrepresented areas. The Rural, Disability and Youth Forum grew exponentially to represent the views of underrepresented people and groups and recommended to focus future efforts on broadening the participation of LGBTQIA+ and culturally diverse groups including Travellers, refugees, economic migrants and asylum seekers.
- Work began on digital inclusion, which encompasses digital skills (being able to use and navigate devices and digital platforms), connectivity (having access to the internet through wi-fi, broadband and or mobile internet), accessibility (ensuring service redesign is person-centred and accounts for barriers to digital inclusion). Improving digital inclusion should continue to be a priority, as it can improve operational efficiency and the tenant experience. However, we should also remain committed to maintaining traditional communication channels, ensuring a digital by choice approach.
- We are committed to driving positive impact through every pound we spend, for example, boosting local employment to retain wealth locally. As the largest social landlord in the country, we are in a unique position to leverage social value from the supply chain by working with suppliers who share our values. Going forward, this research recommended to scale up and expand this work of community wealth building, to deliver benefits for local economies and people.

Tenant Participation Research

The Tenant Participation Research focused on discussions with HCN members to ascertain the existing barriers and difficulties in encouraging wider participation and the potential incentives that may help overcome these barriers. Other objectives were to establish a baseline of tenant involvement and participation, including views on current approaches and satisfaction with these.

Only 5% of respondents were dissatisfied with current opportunities to become involved. However, 55% of tenants surveyed had no opinion and the research indicated there is a large proportion of the tenant population who have little interest in becoming involved in a local community group, panels or forums. This highlights the need for a wider range of involvement methods, increasing face-to-face engagement with Housing Executive staff, and flexible meeting times to help facilitate participation.

The overall perception of how the HCN operates was positive and respondents praised the organisation for their commitments and efforts. High satisfaction levels (95%) were found with respect to the communication and feedback received from the Central Housing Forum to the groups and vice versa. HCN members believed that the information they received contained relevant content, was easy to understand and was distributed in their preferred format.

HCN Survey

Echoing this sentiment, the 2023 HCN Survey, which built on a previous baseline survey carried out in 2019/2020 showed that the majority of respondents were satisfied with all organisational aspects of the HCN. Respondents said their involvement has led to increased sharing of information and resources within their community and had increased partnership working with other agencies and groups.

This survey will be used to help the Housing Executive improve services and build upon the existing HCN structures to continue giving communities the best possible services. It highlighted poverty (including food/fuel) as the greatest concern for communities, which will be given priority through our Community Grants. More than half (56%) of respondents stated that their group had taken steps to involve young people. We will continue to encourage succession planning, as encouraging younger people to be involved is critical to the sustainability of the network.

Tenant Segmentation Research

We endeavoured to gain insight into our customers through customer profiling and segmentation by bringing together the available demographic, behavioural and perceptive information that the Housing Executive holds on customers. Statistical analysis was then used to identify segments of relatively homogeneous groups of residents, which was analysed in order to gain a better understanding of our tenants' diverse needs and expectations.

For example, the research sought to gauge tenants' preference for how they want to engage with the Housing Executive and the barriers they currently face. Many segments requested more of a "personal role" from the Housing Executive, with increased community events and pastoral support. However, we recognise a "one size fits all" approach does not benefit either the customer or service provider, and this research will be used in tailoring communications that resonate with the channel preferences of each group.

Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (CTOS)

The 2022 CTOS Survey was the twenty-ninth comprehensive assessment of tenants' attitudes to be carried out by Housing Executive since 1994. The survey provides important insight into customer satisfaction around the area of involvement, consultation and communication, and identifies areas for improvement.

90% of respondents were satisfied with their neighbourhood as places to live, and we maintained our usual levels and standards of contact and consultation which reflects the organisational commitment to prioritising a customer focus.

73% felt the Housing Executive were good at keeping them informed about things that might affect them as a tenant. 72% felt they were well consulted by the Housing Executive, and 70% were satisfied that the Housing Executive listens to their views and acts upon them.

67% of households had access to the internet, and interest in other methods of contact is growing. As more become digitally enabled, we will continue to design programmes to support customers to become more digitally included by developing their confidence, skills and knowledge to access and use our online services.

We have a specific digital inclusion working group, which identifies key actions and information to help us and customers communicate digitally, including making our online platforms as easy and efficient to use as possible. Our social media team continues to play an important role in providing up to date information for customers, and we are reviewing the content of the community section on the website.

Customer Service Excellence Accreditation (CSE)

Landlord Services has held the CSE accreditation since 2008 and held Charter Mark for many years prior to that. The CSE Standard is a crucial part of the organisation's excellence framework. The CSE assessor considers the Housing Executive to be, "without doubt one of the most customer focused services in Northern Ireland."

We are assessed on five key areas:

- Customer insight
- The culture of the organisation
- Information, access and partnership working
- Delivery (including complaints)
- Timeliness and quality of service

The assessor spoke to a number of community representatives who are members of the HCN, including those on the Central Housing Forum. Without their input this accreditation could not be achieved. "The foundation of your customer service remains the Housing Community Network (HCN). It is through this very close relationship that you are able to better identify and meet the needs of tenants and other customers."

We have worked together, co-designing the consultation review process, in order to engage with communities and key stakeholders.

Pre-consultation process

The pre-consultation framework was co-designed, establishing a Community Involvement strategy task and finish group, to oversee the development of this strategy. This group was made up of representatives from the Central Housing Forum, Supporting Communities and the Housing Executive.

Regional events were held at 4 different locations across Northern Ireland to obtain the views of Community representatives in the following locations:

- Belfast
- Craigavon
- Coleraine
- Derry/Londonderry

“The Coleraine consultation was very well attended with people that had never been in the Housing Executive office.” - Patricia McQuillan MBE (Chair of Rural Resident’s Forum and Vice Chair of the Central Housing Forum)

We also consulted with our underrepresented groups and key stakeholders including:

- Central Housing Forum
- Disability Forum
- Rural Residents Forum
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- Consultative Forum on Equality
- Supporting Communities Staff including Community Development Officers
- Housing Executive Staff including Good Relations Officers

Furthermore, we also had the opportunity to capture the views of the delegates attending our community conference in February 2023. A talking wall was erected at the venue gathering the views of a wide audience of stakeholders including Housing Executive staff, community, voluntary, social enterprise and public sector partners.

Equality screening and consideration of rural needs

The Housing Executive has considered the following in the preparation of this strategy:

- Equality and Human Rights – to assess the potential impacts on Section 75 groups, human rights implications, and opportunities for promoting good relations; and
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment– to assess the potential impacts on people living in rural areas.

All partners will work together to identify appropriate measures which will ensure and demonstrate an equitable service is provided irrespective of their difference or circumstance and we will continue to monitor our performance per our obligations under the Equality Legislation.

Equality and Good Relations is central to this strategy and will become a standing agenda on the performance review process throughout its life.

In developing this strategy, the Housing Executive has considered the views of organisations representing a range of client groups. We will adopt a community-centred approach in meeting our equality obligations and will consult with stakeholders across the community sector to ensure that our annual action plans are reflective of any emerging equality issues.

We will also monitor our performance in keeping with the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and the legislative requirements. The HCN and strategic partners will play a key role in ensuring this strategy is meeting the needs of our population, whether they live in urban or rural areas.

Appropriate place-based responses will be developed, which are informed by local needs, context and capacity. Enhancing the role and capacity for regional and local area decision making is important to help make sure the right responses are delivered in the right places.

Formal Public Consultation

A public consultation on the draft Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy 2024 - 2029 opened for a 12-week period from April 2024 – July 2024. The consultation gave members of the public, tenants, customers, partners and stakeholders the opportunity to share their views and help shape the strategy. The consultation campaign was promoted through traditional and digital media to encourage participation.

Implementation of the Strategy Awareness Campaign

A launch press release was issued to all media and to community publications during April 2024 detail the launch under "Have Your Say" branding. It was then supported by a social media advert across all Housing Executive channels (X, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) for the duration of the 12 weeks.

The Strategy was available on the Housing Executive's website and the consultation was promoted internally to get staff views.

Seven consultation workshops took place throughout the consultation period in the following locations:

- Ballymoney
- East Belfast
- West Belfast
- Craigavon
- Derry/ Londonderry
- Dungannon
- Omagh.

A further 3 consultation workshops took place with the Rural Community Network, the Disability Forum and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum.

A press release was issued at the end of the consultation with further information on next steps in the process. This was reflected on social media with a vlog from Grainia Long, Chief Executive.

Strategic Aims and the Principles in Delivery

Over the next five years, our strategic ambition is to ensure our tenants, residents and leaseholders have a real voice in shaping our policies and services.

At the core of this strategy there are a number of guiding principles that will underpin our approach to both the development and delivery of our annual plans throughout the lifespan of the strategy.

The 7 key principles are:

1. Accessible and inclusive - All people within our community have the choice and opportunity to get involved.
2. Clear and professional - Establishing trust, reliability and credibility.
3. Targeted - The right people get the right information to be involved.
4. Open, honest and transparent - Having a clear purpose and that we are honest about any limitations.
5. Timely and relevant - Giving people enough time and notice to get involved.
6. Sustainable - To ensure on-going mutually beneficial relationships.
7. Two-way - We will have a conversation, listening, not just talking.

Our strategic vision is **communities should feel engaged, enabled and empowered as part of a more cohesive society.**

We will achieve our overall vision for community involvement and cohesion by doing more of what is working well, recognising and building on the strengths of our communities and finding new ways to improve services through co-design and delivery.

The Housing Executive will produce an annual action plan upon publication of the strategy, as we wish for this strategy to be a living document. The actions identified to deliver the aims are outlined below. This strategy has been developed around three key aims.

Our strategic aims

1 ENGAGE with communities to promote and strengthen involvement

Strengthen local engagement

- Strengthen, develop and maintain opportunities for local people and groups to influence what happens in their communities.
- Work in partnership with other departments to encourage involvement from all sections of the community, particularly section 75 groups and those often missed out from engagement activities including LGBTQIA+, Travellers, refugees, economic migrants and asylum seekers.
- Increase digital capacity of communities and continue our commitment to digital inclusion.
- Promote variety, flexibility and choice in community involvement activities.
- Increase awareness of the HCN to encourage wider participation.
- Develop new ways of keeping communities informed about what's going on in their area.

Develop and maintain support infrastructure to sustain community organisations

- Strengthen and train members of the HCN to maximise input at all levels into service delivery via support from our strategic partner for engagement and participation.
- Provide our network members with the right skills to engage with us.
- Review the effectiveness of the existing Community Involvement Grants Programme and ensure resources are targeted to most relevant themes.

2 ENABLE communities to influence, shape and improve our services

Strengthen strategic engagement

- Implement and promote co-design and co-production principles across the HCN, the working groups and the Housing Executive.
- Promote the benefits of involvement to encourage new members joining the HCN at all levels.
- Provide support and training to allow HCN members to influence policy and service delivery.
- Provide a variety of opportunities for our communities to shape and influence policies and service delivery.

Provide opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services

- Provide regular and varied ways of involving our customers using various methods including through the HCN with both face to face and digital engagement.
- Provide opportunities through the HCN and the range of working groups to provide feedback, shape policy and service delivery for identified priorities.
- Engage and facilitate our customers to scrutinise key policy areas and service delivery.
- Provide a variety of mechanisms for our tenants and customers to shape and influence services outside of the HCN.

Engage and educate communities in terms of climate change and net zero ambitions and contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy

- Improve the health and wellbeing of communities through promoting the positive outputs of Sustainable Living (Aim 2 of Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy)
- Support the delivery of Outcome 1.1 - Our staff, tenants and supply chain will be aware of the impact of everyday activities on the climate and encouraged to take action to become more environmentally responsible as individuals and organisations.
- Support the delivery of Outcome 4.4 - Education and empowerment of householders to understand new technology and systems and encourage environmentally responsible behaviour.

3 EMPOWER communities to embrace community cohesion

Work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a post-conflict society

- Deliver the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Housing Executive led Interfaces Programme in partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ), to reimage, reduce, remove, reclassify or regenerate interfaces barriers including lands, walls and/or structures within and between our communities.
- Support the Housing Executive's Shared Housing team in the delivery and implementation of the Shared Housing Programme and good relations plan with a view to facilitate and encourage mixed housing where this is practicable, desirable and safe..
- Work in partnership with 'Communities in Transition' to help build relationships, promote participation in community development and peacebuilding and create community cohesion.

Encourage improved Race Relations

- Demonstrate a clear and positive commitment to tackling race issues within our communities.
- Support the promotion of good relations between and within ethnic groups and communities.
- Contribute towards improved race relations at a strategic and operational level through effective partnership working.

Encourage cohesion to create more stable, safer neighbourhoods

- Deliver reimagining projects via a community led approach to address the physical manifestations of segregation within and between our estates.
- Deliver estate-based cohesion projects across our communities.
- Continue to work with statutory partners to assist communities to move forward positively to address bonfires, flags, emblems and sectional symbols.
- Encourage positive expressions of culture, and create an environment where people feel safe to celebrate and respect other cultures.
- Identify areas ready for positive intervention in collaboration with our Regional/Area offices and consult and support local communities in the process.

Year 1 Annual Action Plan

AIM 1	Actions
ENGAGE with communities to promote and strengthen involvement Strengthen local engagement Develop and maintain support to sustain community organisations	Review the HCN Structure to maximise engagement at all levels.
	Review communication and governance across the HCN.
	Analyse the annual HCN Survey results to prioritise actions to strengthen local engagement.
	Further develop our menu of involvement and continue to invest time and resources in supporting those opportunities.
	Engage with those working to deliver community planning with Housing Executive and statutory agencies across a province.
	Encourage digital engagement within the HCN through further development of our online platform and dedicated support to digital inclusion.
	Extend opportunities for engagement digitally to our broader customer base with a pilot digital tenant scrutiny panel.
	Provide training to HCN members including induction training for new members.
	Review of Community Involvement Grants Programme and the five themes to ensure they are contemporary and relevant.

AIM 2	
ENABLE communities to influence, shape and improve our services	In Year 1 review strategic partner training on sustainable development.
Strengthen strategic engagement	Provide ongoing support and training in order to provide our communities with the skills and knowledge to help influence policy and service delivery with a focus on Central Housing Forum and Working Group members in Year 1.
Engage and educate communities in terms of climate change and net zero ambitions and contribute to the delivery of the Housing Executive's <u>Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy</u>	Provide Community Involvement training to staff members; particularly to those in a front line and decision-making roles.
	Provide a variety of mechanisms for communities to shape and influence services within and outside of the HCN with a focus on extending Working Group membership in Year 1
	Work across the Housing Executive to develop a consultation plan for the HCN, mapping all consultations relating to housing services, policies and procedures.
	In Year 1 support the current resident scrutiny panels to scrutinise services and make recommendations for improvement.
	Develop the role of communities in service review and improvement initially through mystery shopping exercises, the implementation of a digital scrutiny panel and the consideration of other opportunities in Year 1.
	In Year 1 review the Live Here Love Here Programme with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and The Best Kept Awards with the Northern Ireland Amenity Council.
	Raise awareness of the impact of everyday activities on the climate and of the Housing Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy.
	Develop the role the of the HCN and CHF including through the CHF Sustainable Development Working Group, to educate and empower our tenants in terms of climate change and net zero ambitions.

AIM 3	
EMPOWER communities to embrace community cohesion	Deliver the Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Housing Executive led Interfaces Programme in partnership with Department of Justice (DOJ).
Work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a post-conflict society	In Year 1 review number of interfaces that have been reimaged, reduced, removed, reclassified and/or regenerated.
Encourage improved Race Relations	Work in partnership with key stakeholders to build relationships within and between communities, assess needs, and develop services for 'Communities in Transition' and 'Areas at Risk'.
Encourage cohesion to create more stable, safer neighbourhoods	Support the Housing Executive's Shared Housing team in the delivery and implementation of the Shared Housing Programme.
	Work together with the Shared Housing and Community Safety Teams to support race relations and community cohesion and to avoid duplication of services.
	Work with partners to develop a Regional Race Relations Programme.
	Deliver support including through funding to improve race relations and community cohesion
	In Year 1 review number of reimaging projects delivered.
	Deliver estate-based cohesion projects across our communities.
	Recognise the impact of the Troubles on the health and wellbeing of communities. Develop Cohesion training for communities.

Measuring our success

How we will measure the progress and outcomes of the Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy

An annual HCN survey to gather participant levels and views across our communities including measuring:

- Level of participation
- Support received from strategic partners
- Funding
- HCN Satisfaction Levels
- Breakdown of membership representation

Quarterly monitoring and review of action plans with our strategic partners to include measuring:

- Areas with active community groups and identified gaps
- Levels of participation across all groups.
- Type of support provided
- Breakdown of HCN participants completing training.
- Participants' satisfaction levels with their ability to shape our services
- Funding secured through Grant Tracker

Measuring funding and various activities under various themes including:

- Number of re-imaging initiatives within single identity estates.
- Number of race relations projects that celebrate diversity
- Number of projects where culture is celebrated in a positive way that is respectful and acceptable to the wider community
- Number of estate-based cohesion projects
- Number of shared housing initiatives.
- Number of initiatives at interface areas

	<p>Undertaking a Social Return on Investment analysis at mid-point of the strategy.</p> <p>Monitoring customer views and satisfaction with our services through our Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey.</p> <p>Regular monitoring of the Central Housing Forum Action Plan.</p> <p>Continually measuring progress against the annual area Housing Investment Plans with our research department.</p>
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Contact Us

Community Involvement and Cohesion Team

getinvolved@nihe.gov.uk