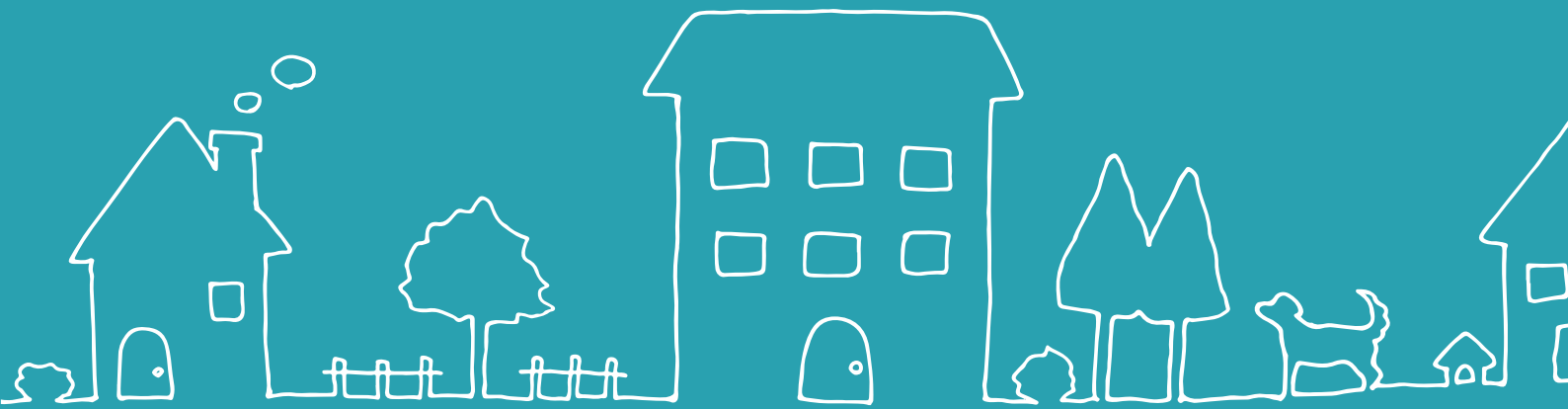


# Ending Homelessness Together

Homelessness Strategy **2022-27**



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## DOMESTIC ABUSE ACTION PLAN

Year 2 Actions



**Housing  
Executive**

# Domestic Abuse

## Year 2 Actions

The Housing Executive published the Domestic Abuse Action Plan in December 2024 with the action plan outlining intended actions covering a three year period up to the conclusion of the current Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 in March 2027. The Year 2 Actions build on progress delivered during Year 1 where key achievements included:

- 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 increased 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 having been launched in November 2025.

The development of the Year 2 actions seeks to improve accountability for our partners with the provision of clear milestones that will assist stakeholders in monitoring progress of the action plan.

The Domestic Abuse Action Plan supports delivery of the Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 and both will continue to be guided by the development of annual action plans that will support the Housing Executive and our partners in achieving our vision, aims and objectives.



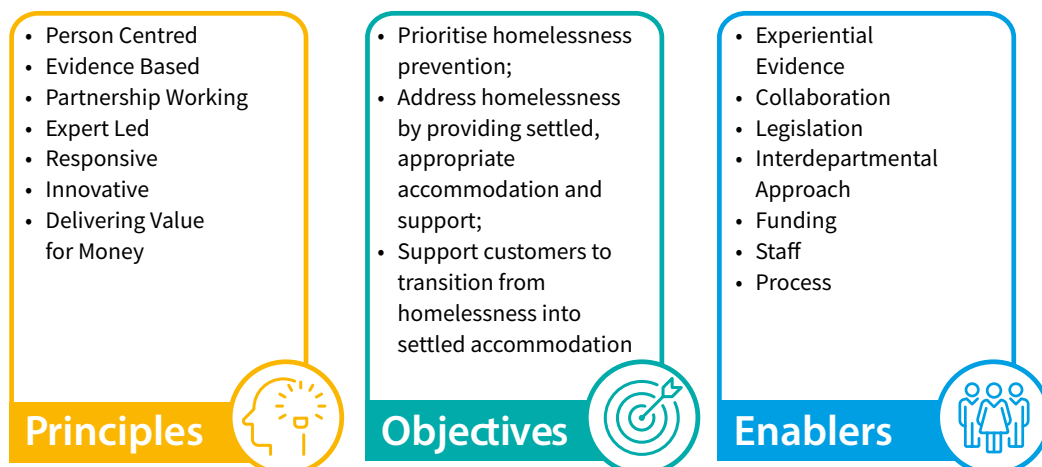
## Vision and Aim

The vision of ‘Ending Homelessness Together’ and aim of ‘Wherever possible homelessness should be prevented, if homelessness cannot be prevented it should be rare, brief and non-recurring’ is supported by three key objectives, each with priority actions that will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The overall strategy and Domestic Abuse Action Plan have been developed around three key objectives:

- Prioritise homelessness prevention;
- Address homelessness by providing settled, appropriate accommodation and support;
- Support customers to transition from homelessness into settled accommodation.

Additionally, the Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 is guided by a number of principles and enablers as below and these will have a key role in supporting the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Action Plan.



## Outcomes and Milestones

While the objectives of the Homelessness Strategy will continue to be guided by a range of outcomes and associated indicators, the Domestic Abuse Year 2 actions highlight a desired outcome aligned to each specific action. The inclusion of an outcome specific to each action seeks to consider findings from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Homelessness which noted a need to consider how actions have contributed to measurable homelessness outcomes for service users. In addition, milestones have also been included to each of the 16 actions which will act as key markers of progress to ensure we are achieving the overall outcome. All of the actions in Year 2 are directly carried over from those completed in Year 1.

# Year 2 Actions

Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 1</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Partners</i> <i>Women's Aid, MAP,</i> <i>Rainbow, CRJI,</i> <i>Hourglass, STEP, Rural</i> <i>Community Network,</i> <i>Disability Action</i>	We will continue to engage with relevant voluntary, statutory and community sectors to gain a better understanding of the challenges their particular client group face when presenting as homeless due to Domestic Abuse and accessing support services.	<b>Milestone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 30th November 2025 we will have had meetings with each of the client groups to update them on the progress made to date on the action plan and identify any issues their client group may be experiencing.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of the particular challenges faced by each client group.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 2</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Partners</i> <i>CIH, ONUS</i>	Two of the four criteria that are required to be met to sign up to the CIH "Make a Stand" pledge were completed in Year 1 of the action plan. The two remaining criteria include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Putting in place and embedding a Domestic Abuse policy for tenants.</li> <li>Developing or amending a Domestic Abuse policy for staff.</li> </ol>	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 31st March 2026 we will have developed and implemented a domestic abuse policy for tenants and customers.</li> <li>By 31st December 2025 we will have developed and implemented a domestic abuse policy for staff.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff will have a clear idea of their responsibilities in understanding domestic abuse, identifying signs of abuse and responding to it.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 3</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Partner</i> <i>ONUS</i>	We will enhance the number of Domestic Abuse Advocates across the organisation to ensure there are sufficient advocates to support all NIHE staff. In addition, we will set up bi-annual meetings to gain an understanding of the frequency and nature of queries the advocates are receiving. This in turn will inform the levels of awareness of the advocate service across the organisation.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 30th June 2025 we will increase the number of domestic abuse advocates to 40.</li> <li>By 30th September 2025 the first meeting of advocates will have taken place.</li> </ul> <b>Outcomes</b> <p>NIHE will have sufficient domestic abuse advocates to support all the staff in the organisation and we will have a better understanding of the demand for the service and awareness levels.</p>

Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 4</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Partner</i> <i>ONUS</i>	We will engage with ONUS to ensure all our public offices meet the Safe Space requirements and display the appropriate signage.	<b>Milestone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 30th September 2025 all public offices will be designated Safe Spaces and will be displaying signage to advise passers by as such.</li> </ul> <b>Outcomes</b> Members of the public passing the public offices can see that NIHE are a Safe Space for them to approach our staff for support if experiencing Domestic Abuse.
<b>Action 5</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will continue to review our training packages to ensure they accurately reflect domestic abuse legislation and any learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, the MARAC review and any relevant case law.	<b>Milestone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no milestones applicable to the delivery of this action as the development of such policies, procedures, staff training and guidance is often aligned to amendment of primary legislation and/or case law. Where appropriate milestones will be added throughout the course of the year.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved understanding of the development and delivery of policies and training for front line staff who directly support those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 6</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will develop an organisational wide domestic abuse policy which will include a clear process for staff to follow when they suspect domestic abuse within the workplace, and with our tenants and customers.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 31st March 2026 we will have developed and implemented a domestic abuse policy for tenants and customers.</li> <li>By 31st December 2025 we will have developed and implemented a domestic abuse policy for staff.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff will have a clear idea of their responsibilities in understanding domestic abuse, identifying signs of abuse and responding to it.</li> </ul>

Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 7</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> Housing Executive  <i>Key Partner:</i> PSNI	We will continue to raise the profile of the Sanctuary Scheme with NIHE staff, MARAC partners and with relevant statutory, voluntary and community sectors.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new referral form and process will be implemented on 1st May 2025.</li> <li>Guidance for staff will be developed and communicated to all staff via an LSAN on 30th April 2025.</li> <li>A leaflet for tenants will be available on our website and in hard copy in our local offices by 30th June 2025.</li> <li>The number of referrals received and the outcome of those referrals will be monitored to determine awareness levels and the success of the scheme in reducing risk as a homeless prevention measure.</li> <li>Liaise with our comms dept to promote the sanctuary scheme in the media and on social media platforms.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved access to Sanctuary Scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 8</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> Housing Executive  <i>Key Partner:</i> Home Office	The full range of additional security measures was reviewed in Yr 1 of the action plan and our guidance updated accordingly. If any additional security measures are added by the Home Office we will update our guidance to reflect the changes.	<b>Milestone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no key milestones applicable to this action as the action was completed in Yr 1. If the Home Office releases a new instruction the milestone will be to provide a quarterly update that details work to deliver this action. Where appropriate, milestones will be added throughout the course of the year.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A wider range of additional security measures can be offered to our tenants.</li> </ul>
<b>Action 9</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> Housing Executive/ Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations  <i>Key Partners</i> NI Housing Associations	We will promote the benefits to Housing Associations of adopting the Sanctuary Scheme as a homelessness prevention tool.	<b>Milestone</b> The Housing Executive will meet with NIFHA and Directors of Housing to explain the scheme in more detail by 31st December 2025.  <b>Outcome</b> If adopted by Housing Associations the physical safety of Housing Association tenants experiencing domestic abuse will be increased.

Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 10</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will continue to review all policy documents to ensure they are reflective of any legislative changes and any learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews, the MARAC review and any relevant case law.	<b>Milestone</b> There are no milestones applicable to the delivery of this action as the development of such policies, procedures, staff training and guidance is often aligned to amendment of primary legislation and/or case law. Where appropriate, milestones will be added throughout the course of the year.  <b>Outcome</b> Improved understanding of the development and delivery of policies and training for front line staff who directly support those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse.
<b>Action 11</b>  <i>Lead Partners:</i> <i>Housing Executive/</i> <i>Men's Advisory Project</i>	We will meet with Women's Aid and our local offices to review the effectiveness of the updated joint working protocol and explore the development of a joint protocol with Men's Advisory Project (MAP).	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 31st October 2025 we will have met with each of the Women's Aid branches and our local offices to discuss what is working well and what is not and update as necessary.</li> <li>By 30th September 25 we will have met with MAP to discuss the potential of developing a joint working protocol.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> Improved joint working protocol that is effective promotes collaborative working.
<b>Action 12</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Partners:</i> <i>Organisation successful in tender process (still to be appointed)</i>	We will introduce Trauma Informed Practice training for all frontline staff engaging with victims of Domestic Abuse.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 31st August 2025 an organisation will be appointed to deliver this training.</li> <li>By 31st March 2026 all frontline staff (approx. 600) will have attended this training.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> Improved understanding of the importance of adopting a trauma informed approach when engaging with customers.



Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 13</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will analyse our repairs system in order to gain a better understanding of the scale of domestic abuse in our properties.	<b>Milestone</b> By 31st August 2025 we will have set up a working group to analyse our repairs system and explore the possibility of adding a flag to properties where domestic abuse is reported or suspected.  <b>Outcome</b> Staff will be aware of properties where domestic abuse is occurring or is suspected enabling us to respond by offering appropriate support.
<b>Action 14</b>  <i>Lead Partner</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>  <i>Key Stakeholders:</i> <i>To be confirmed</i>	We will work in collaboration with relevant voluntary, statutory and community sectors to establish a week of events to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 31st August 2025 we will have established a small working group to agree a suitable week and plan how it will evolve.</li> <li>By 31st March 2026 the appropriate week will have been agreed and a draft programme of events planned.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> The general public will have an increased awareness of domestic abuse and the various agencies that are available to provide support.
<b>Action 15</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will support any recommendations that come out of the MARAC review.	<b>Milestone</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no milestones applicable to the delivery of this action as the outcome of the review has not yet been published. Where appropriate, milestones will be added throughout the course of the year.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An improved MARAC process that will be more effective in minimising risk to those experiencing domestic abuse.</li> </ul>

Action	Enablers	
Actions that will be delivered over the course of Year 2		Milestones/Outcomes
<b>Action 16</b>  <i>Lead Partner:</i> <i>Housing Executive</i>	We will consider means by which we can address perpetrator behaviour.	<b>Milestones</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By end 30th September 2025 we will have reviewed NI legislation to identify if there is any scope within it which would give NIHE powers to remove convicted perpetrators from NIHE tenancies.</li> <li>• By 31st December 2025 we will have researched means by which social housing providers in other jurisdictions address perpetrator behaviour.</li> <li>• By 31st March 2026 we will have drafted a summary of our findings and recommendations for addressing perpetrator behaviour.</li> </ul> <b>Outcome</b> Improved housing outcomes for those experiencing domestic abuse.

To discuss or comment on this document,  
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