
SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGIC INTENT

2026-2031

**Improving
Lives**

**Delivering
Outcomes**

**Driving
Efficiency**

**Streamlining
Services**

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Our Vision

Improving Lives, Delivering Outcomes, Driving Efficiency, Streamlining Services

The Supporting People Programme (SP Programme) grant-funds housing-related support to help 20,000 vulnerable individuals and families live independently across Northern Ireland.

From its inception in 2003 the SP Programme's person-centred philosophy has delivered high-quality housing support services to those most in need, while making best use of the available funding.

The SP Programme has considerable worth for a wide range of stakeholders across health, housing and justice.

The importance and value of the SP Programme has been recognised by the Northern Ireland Executive and is included in the NI Executive's Programme

for Government (2024-2027) 'Doing What Matters Most', affirming that 'housing support for vulnerable people across our society through NIHE's three-year SP Strategy will continue to be prioritised'.

We recognise that to maintain and sustain these vital services, against a backdrop of external challenges including increased costs of service delivery and accommodation provision constraints, the SP Programme must modernise and adapt.

We want to ensure that SP services are sustainable in the longer term given that the SP Programme provides considerable benefits to recipients of services whose ability to live independently is improved as well as broader public financial benefits in terms

of costs relating to homelessness, tenancy failure, Health services and Justice.

The Strategic Intent provides a framework to prioritise the work of the Housing Executive in the continuation and development of the SP Programme over the next five years. The Supporting People Modernisation project (SPM) 2025 to 2027 is the primary mechanism to deliver the strategic aims and priorities in the short to medium term.

The SPM will deliver a set of evidence-based improvement recommendations and operational efficiencies to provide better outcomes and improved lives for service users.

In developing the Strategic Intent we have engaged with our stakeholders, listened to the

lived experiences of service users and built on the achievements of the previous Supporting People Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

We are committed to ensuring the SP Programme will continue to grant-fund high quality agile and efficient housing support services to provide the right service in the right location to the right people.

As we move forward, our service users, delivery partners, staff and statutory stakeholders will shape the journey ahead, engaging, collaborating and working in partnership to improve lives.

Grainia Long, Chief Executive

Our Mission

An agile, efficient, quality grant programme that meets service users' needs

The SP Programme promotes independent living and prevents homelessness. The SP Programme awards grant-funding annually to provider organisations; and is a contribution to the overall cost of providing housing-related support services. We are committed to ensuring the SP Programme will continue to grant-fund high quality agile and efficient housing support services to provide the right service, in the right location, to the right people.

Housing-related support enables vulnerable people to develop and maintain the skills necessary to live as

independently as possible in their own home, preventing problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, or homelessness. For those leaving an institutionalised environment, housing support can help smooth the transition to independent living.

The SP Programme provides services across four thematic areas: Homelessness, Disability and Mental Health, Young People and Older People. This includes short-term accommodation-based support for those people in housing need (e.g., homeless hostels and refuges for victims of domestic violence), long-term accommodation based

support where a person has a tenancy and long-term support via the provision of peripatetic services to enable a person to sustain a home. Short-term support is also available through floating support services to assist vulnerable people with housing-related support tasks to help them maintain independence in their own home (typically for a duration of up to 2 years).

The vast majority of the SP Programme's services will have some interface with Health and Social Care and, to a lesser extent, Justice. The SP Programme provides a mechanism for collaboration between strategic partners to support the most vulnerable

people in society which reduces the burden on, and delivers better value for, the public purse.

Eligible housing-related support tasks include¹: support to maintain and feel secure at home, assistance with managing mental health through general counselling, guidance with accessing welfare benefits, support with social networks and advice on budgeting.

Almost 20,000 people are supported to live independently each year by 80 providers delivering approximately 800 services across Northern Ireland.

¹ [The Housing Support Services Regulations \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

[2003, Regulation 2 Housing Support Services](#)

Our Impact

Our Service Users have told us about their lived experience of SP services



"I feel like my life is finally moving in the right direction. I now have the independence I wanted"

"The impact that this had was enormous for this young person. For the first time in 10 years, she had a safe place to call home"

"Blake has gone from strength to strength. He is maintaining a successful tenancy, he is holding down a job that he enjoys and he continues to look for ways to make his life better."



"They gave me quality and improvement and the ease that it gives me in life, they are there for me at a moment's notice. Nothing is ever too much for them and it makes life so much more bearable for me"

"It has changed my life, I now get out to different places, and I get to celebrate my birthday with friends."

"It is so rewarding seeing how happy the people we support are and how much the group means to them"



"I have been so lucky and feel so privileged to have had my Support Worker. When they came to my house for the first visit, I was broken and did not see a way forward. They saved my life and turned what I felt was a prison into a home."

"I went from someone who wanted to die to someone who definitely wants to live. My Support Worker gave me my life back."



"I can't tell you how happy I am. I don't know how to thank you all."

"Both the tenants and I have felt the advantages of getting out and exercising weekly. I have found the tenants have something to look forward to every week."

²The above quotations have come from a selection of stories received from our providers and show the real-life impact and lived experiences of people supported.

SP Modernisation (SPM)

Supporting People Modernisation (SPM) aims to implement a set of evidence-based improvement recommendations and operational efficiencies across the Supporting People Programme and is the key delivery mechanism for the Strategic Intent.

The Housing Executive has embarked on a range of actions to modernise the SP Programme. Modernisation is necessary in the light of challenges that have emerged in both the scale of administration and in demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness of SP Programme. These challenges include: increased complexity of service user needs which requires more flexible models of provision; increased costs of service delivery and budget uncertainty; and pressure on accommodation supply. These factors have led to sustained funding constraints and uncertainties for provider organisations.

The Supporting People Modernisation project (SPM) 2025 to 2027 is the primary mechanism to deliver the strategic aims and priorities in the short to medium term.

The SPM Project will be delivered through four interrelated workstreams:

1. **A Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA)** that will provide a robust evidence base of current and projected housing-related support needs at local and thematic levels.
2. **A revised outcomes framework** that enables improved monitoring, benchmarking, and evaluation of Programme impact.

3. **To direct more of the SP grant to frontline service delivery** by proposing funding approaches that better reflect client complexity and maximise value for money.
4. **To review and enhance governance, decision-making, and operational processes** that better support more efficient and accountable programme delivery.

The SPM will be delivered across a two-year timeframe ending in March 2027. There are three project stages:

- **Stage 1:** Initiation
- **Stage 2:** Engagement and Data Analysis

- **Stage 3:** Test and Learn and Implementation.

We are currently in Stage 2 within which delivery of the Strategic Needs Assessment is the key priority. The findings from the SNA will inform future SP Programme priorities and the potential reprofiling of services through Stage 3.

Initial findings from the data analysis element of the 2025 Strategic Needs Assessment appears to indicate a material increase in the gap between need and supply from the 2020 SNA.

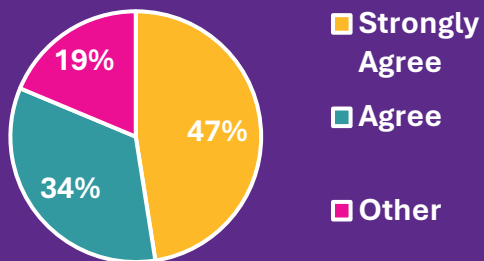
Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has been central to the development of the Strategic Intent. This was comprised of two strands:

- A series of Pre-Consultation information presentations on Strategy development and SPM were held between May and November 2025.
- Stakeholder Evaluation Surveys on the SP Strategy 2022-2025.

Strategy Evaluation Survey (2022-25)

81% of Stakeholders Agree with Draft Strategic Aims (2026-31)



Pre-Consultation Presentations Key Themes

1. Strategic Alignment
2. Recruitment & Retention
3. Policy Implications
4. Eligibility Criteria
5. Engagement & Co-Design
6. Funding/Budget

SP Strategic Aims

Working Towards
Closing the Gap
Between Need for
Service and Supply

1

Improved
Outcomes for
Service Users

2

Drive Financial
Efficiency and
Agility in the
Programme

3

Collaborate with
Strategic and
Commissioning
Partners, Including
Health, to Improve
Programme
Impacts

4

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Stakeholder Engagement

The feedback from the Pre-Consultation presentations and Stakeholder Evaluation Surveys coupled with the DfC Ministerial proposed priorities have been incorporated into the Strategic Intent and shaped our Strategic Aims.

Ministerial Proposed Priorities

Refresh the Strategic Needs Assessment

Development of a revised outcomes framework & work together to improve outcomes

Develop value for money metrics, focus on investing to save & research revised delivery models

Commit to collaborating and working together to increase impacts and improve outcomes



SP Strategic Aims

Working Towards Closing the Gap Between Need for Service and Supply

1

Improved Outcomes for Service Users

2

Drive Financial Efficiency and Agility in the Programme

3

Collaborate with Strategic and Commissioning Partners, Including Health, to Improve Programme Impacts

4

Strategic Aims (2026-31)

Our Strategic Aims have been developed through stakeholder engagement, listening to the lived experiences of service users and incorporating the proposed Ministerial priorities.

Short to Medium-Term Priorities

Strategic Aim One: Working Towards Closing the Gap Between Need for Service and Supply

1. Deliver a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) identifying current housing support needs by theme, demographic and geographic areas and mapped against service provision to inform targeted strategic development of Supporting People (SP) services.
2. Work with partners on viable solutions to address voids and optimise service utilisation.
3. Work to secure funding by submitting evidence-based robust Programme Budget and Monitoring Round Bids.
4. Explore opportunities to remodel services in discussion with partners to meet the needs of service users.

Strategic Aim Two: Improved Outcomes for Service Users

1. Identify best practice with regards to Outcomes Frameworks, including monitoring outcomes to ensure that they properly reflect the impact of the services on service users and the quality of the services.
2. Develop and test an Outcomes Framework for Young People, which has been designed through a collaborative approach between SP, SPPG, HSCT and Providers.
3. Review and roll out updated SP outcomes framework to monitor service user outcomes across service areas.

Strategic Aim Three: Drive Financial Efficiency and Agility in the Programme

1. Develop a revised criteria for eligible costs met by the SP Grant in line with legislation.
2. Increase value for money by working with delivery partners to ensure that grant funding is maximised toward frontline service delivery.
3. Conduct financial modelling scenarios on client complexity, thematic areas, and service types.
4. Explore and propose flexible service and funding models that align with the recommendations from the SNA.
5. Initiate the review of governance and administrative processes to support a revised and efficient SP Programme delivery model.

Strategic Aim Four: Collaborate with Strategic and Commissioning Partners, Including Health, to Improve Programme Impacts

1. Work with DfC to enable greater collaboration across Government departments, thus achieving greater strategic alignment and greater value for money.
2. Review governance, administration and commissioning structures and identify options that aim to ensure strategic alignment with recommendations from the SNA
3. Continue to work with SP Stakeholders to measure programme effectiveness and ensure continuous improvements.
4. Work with key stakeholders to ensure that the SP programme continues to be prioritised at both NI Executive and Ministerial levels.

