

Northern Ireland House Condition Survey 2023
3rd User Engagement Group Meeting (via web-ex)
9 November 2022
Minutes

Attendees:

Pat Austin – NEA	Andy Kennedy – NIHE
Catherine Blease – NIHE	Claire Kennedy – NIHE (minutes)
Jahnet Brown – NIHE	Andrew Mawhinney – DfE
Lesley Curry – DfC	David Moore – NIHE
Kelly Devlin – NIHE	Ursula McAnulty – NIHE (Chair)
Andy Frew – NIHE	Oliver McHugh – DfC
Tim Gilpin – NIHE	Donna McLarnon – NIHE
John Goudy – NIHE	

Apologies: Michelle Bamford, Robert Clements, Denise Conlon, Ciara Cunningham, Jennifer Hawthorn, Ailbhe Hickey, Paul Isherwood, Sharon Jeffers, Gerard Jervis, Donna Knowles, Jamie Millar, Carol Murphy, Siobhan McCauley, Catherine McFarland, Stephen McGonagle, John McMullan, Hugh McVeigh, Elma Newberry, Claire Patton, Rural Community Network, Erin Savage, Susan Wilken

		Action
1.0	Welcome and Introductions U McAnulty welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself to the group.	
2.0	Minutes of previous meeting (25 March 2021) U McAnulty explained that she did not plan to go through the minutes and actions from the previous meeting as a significant amount of time had passed. The group was in agreement.	
3.0	Progress report U McAnulty outlined the key points from the progress report which was distributed to the group in advance of the meeting.	
3.1	NIHCS 2021 consultation U McAnulty noted the progress reported at the last User Engagement Group meeting in March 2021. This included that following an extensive consultation exercise relating to COVID-19, the NIHCS Steering Group recommended that the survey should be postponed until 2022, and that the NIHCS team should seek user agreement on priority areas for modelling some key statistics in the interim. The Housing Executive's CXBC approved the recommendation.	
3.2	NIHCS 2022 consultation U McAnulty noted that, due to ongoing concerns about risks to health and to data quality caused by COVID-19, another consultation took place. Based on the findings of the consultation the NIHCS Steering Group recommended a further postponement. The NIHCS was postponed again in February 2022. It was agreed that, due to the ongoing changing situation with COVID-19 this decision would be kept under review. The User Engagement Group was notified of this decision. In May 2022 the group was informed of the continuing impact of the pandemic on research and as part of the process of monitoring and reviewing, a pilot survey would be undertaken to assess the willingness of householders to take part in face-to-face research.	

3.3	Modelling	
3.3.1	U McAnulty noted two user led reports have been published on the Housing Executive's website (modelled using 2016 NIHCS data): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimates of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland in 2019 Energy consumption in Northern Ireland's housing stock 	
3.3.2	U McAnulty provided an update on the fuel poverty (FP) estimates requested by users for 2020 and 2021, these will be published together. It was noted that, because of the pandemic, there were some data gaps for 2020 income figures. As a result, it was not possible to complete consistency checks. Therefore there will be some caveats included in the 2020 fuel poverty estimates report.	
3.3.3	Mindful of user demand for information on FP, U McAnulty advised that we are liaising with BRE to determine the feasibility of a further piece of FP analysis, which would examine the impact of 2022 fuel costs on the 2021 FP estimates. This would be published as a research project and not an official statistic. A Frew welcomed this research.	
3.3.4	P Austin asked if the model used to produce FP estimates could possibly skew results in NI, in comparison to England, given the much greater reliance on oil heating in NI, quantities of oil purchased at a time and associated costs and oil prices used within the model. J Brown advised that the model takes account of the heavier reliance on oil in NI and uses a three year retrospective average of oil prices. Based on feedback from users, a question will also be included in the next survey on quantities of oil purchased; this will feed into FP analysis.	
3.3.5	A Frew had raised the potential usefulness of incorporating high and low oil prices within the model to allow FP figures to be compared in relation to varying oil prices. J Brown advised that this approach is included within the <i>Fuel Poverty Ready Reckoner report</i> , published on the NIHE website. The inclusion of different oil prices will be considered in relation to the research mentioned at point 3.3.3.	HCS Team
3.3.6	A Frew explained that it may be useful to differentiate between gas and oil within the FP estimates and to check that oil prices used reflect the higher volumes used when prices are higher in winter.	HCS Team
3.3.7	U McAnulty advised that the NIHCS Team is meeting with DfE later in November about modelling requested by users on low carbon heating in NI dwelling stock. We will provide an update after this meeting.	
3.4	Surveyor and supervisor recruitment	
3.4.1	U McAnulty provided an update on surveyor and supervisor recruitment. The supervisor recruitment process is completed. The surveyor roles will be advertised this month.	
3.4.2	A Kennedy noted the difficulty Asset Management are currently experiencing in recruiting building surveyors and asked about contingency planning for this eventuality. J Brown noted that in the event of difficulties recruiting HCS surveyors it may be necessary to reduce the sample size.	

3.4.3	A Frew noted the potential usefulness in using EPC datasets to supplement HCS data, if needed. It was noted that projects, utilising the EPC datasets, are underway by DfE but are not completed yet.	
3.5	Pilot Survey	
3.5.1	U McNulty advised the group that a pilot survey was about to begin, the findings of which will inform the planning for the next HCS. The aim of the pilot is to assess the willingness of householders to take part in face-to-face research, and for those who are not willing, to find out if COVID-19 is the reason/part of the reason for their refusal and if there was anything that would have encouraged them to take part.	
3.5.2	U McNulty advised that there is limited feedback available from other surveys in relation to carrying out face-to-face research. The English and Scottish house condition surveys have only recently resumed face-to-face surveys and feedback is not available yet.	
3.5.3	The pilot survey was due to start during the summer, but the supervisor recruitment process had to be completed before it could begin.	
3.6	Questionnaire	
3.6.1	U McNulty advised that, following consultation with the User Engagement Group in 2021, the questionnaire updates have almost been completed and we plan to send the final questionnaire to BRE by the end of November. The NIHCS Team tried to include user requests as much as possible, but also had to be mindful of the length of the questionnaire. U McNulty wanted to confirm with the group that there has not been any significant omissions from the questionnaire.	
3.6.2	A Mawhinney referred to requests relating to energy made by S McGonagle during the consultation exercise. U McNulty advised that it was not possible to include all additional energy questions requested by users, however we hoped to have an energy focused follow up survey. A Mawhinney will follow up with U McNulty about this survey.	
3.6.3	No other comments were made by group. U McNulty asked the group if they have any further comments on the questionnaire to contact the NIHCS Team as soon as possible, but to note that the questionnaire is in the final stages and any changes/suggestions should be kept to an absolute minimum.	User Group
3.7	BRE U McNulty advised that since the fieldwork was postponed in February 2022, BRE has continued to work on modelling and preparations for the 2023 survey.	
3.8	Timetable U McNulty went through the provisional timetable for the next HCS, up to March 2023.	
3.9	National Statistics U McNulty advised that the NIHCS Team are liaising with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) to determine if a compliance check will be required for the NIHCS 2023.	

4.0	Fuel poverty modelling Discussed previously	
5.0	Any other business The NIHCS Team will consult with the group at a later date about the format of the report(s) for the NIHCS 2023.	
6.0	Date of next meeting Date to be agreed	