

# Research Programme

## Key Findings 2017/18-2018/19

### INTRODUCTION

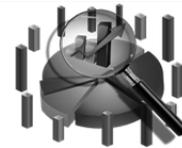
As the strategic housing authority in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive has a statutory responsibility to regularly examine housing conditions and need, and may also conduct or promote research into any matter relating to any of its functions. Research undertaken by the Housing Executive informs the organisation's corporate and business plans, provides an evidence base for decision making, assists in the evaluation and impact assessment of policies and strategies and feeds into broader collaboration with other research and housing organisations across the UK.

The Housing Executive's research programme is drawn up in consultation with key internal and external clients. These clients and other housing sector stakeholders are represented on the Research Committee, which meets quarterly to oversee the content and progress of the research programme. In keeping with the strategic and enabling role performed by the Housing Executive, the research programme looks at a range of issues including and beyond those relating to its landlord function, and seeks to inform data and evidence needs across all tenures.

As such, the research programme comprises both surveys and analysis carried out in-house and commissioned work undertaken by independent experts and social/market research companies, where a larger fieldwork resource is required. The various discrete projects can be grouped into four broad strands of work: strategic, customer, technical and supporting vulnerable people.

This document summarises the key findings of research projects completed by or for the Housing Executive during 2017/18 and 2018/19.

#### Strategic Research



#### Customer Research



#### Technical Research



#### Supporting Vulnerable People



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## STRATEGIC RESEARCH

### Mapping Segregation on Housing Executive Estates in Belfast and Outside Belfast

*Carried out for Community Cohesion (Housing Services; Housing Executive) and Strategic Planning  
Researchers: Ian Shuttleworth and Chris Lloyd, Queen's University, Belfast*

The availability of a new Northern Ireland Census Grid Square product in 2007 meant that it was possible, for the first time, to analyse residential segregation – and its changes through time – in individual housing estates. The Housing Executive therefore commissioned researchers from Queen's University (which developed the Grid Square tool) to analyse patterns of segregation based primarily on the 2001 Census.

The research team produced two reports, one for estates in Belfast and one for those estates outside Belfast that were of sufficient size to allow analysis. The more recent, 2011-based research again used the grid square tool to identify trends and general patterns based on changes between the 2001 Census and the 2011 Census, with findings presented separately for Belfast and estates outside Belfast.

#### KEY FINDINGS

##### Mapping residential segregation in housing estates in Belfast in 2011

- The overall picture was of population decline in Belfast, but relatively small shifts in the religious make-up of the population. However, changes in the religious demography of the city were clear in that it had become proportionately more Catholic through time, largely because Protestant population numbers had fallen further and faster than those for Catholics.
- A major demographic development had been the rise of immigrant communities across Belfast.
- For Housing Executive estates in Belfast, the index of dissimilarity fell from 0.94 in 2001 to 0.814 in 2011, indicating a reduction in the degree of segregation. This change could be due, in part, to migration and/or differences in the rate of stating a religion (e.g. changing numbers of people from either or both community stating that they have 'no' religious background).

##### Mapping residential segregation in housing estates outside Belfast

- The share of households and people that were more than 80% Catholic remained steady between 2001 and 2011, but over the same period the share of households and people in estates that were 80% or more Protestant fell.
- Results suggest that Housing Executive estates became less segregated over the decade in most district councils.
- It is not so much a story of Catholic increase, but one of Protestant decline, especially in those council areas in the east of Northern Ireland where there were large Protestant majorities in 2001.

#### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- Updated evidence enhances the time series data, tracking change in residential segregation patterns in Housing Executive estates since 1971.
- District and estate-level data assist targeting of resources and policy interventions at local level through the Community Cohesion Strategy.
- Key stakeholders on the Shared Housing Consultative Forum were briefed on the research findings in autumn 2018.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Shared-communities](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Shared-communities)

## Environmental Control Systems (Scoping Review)

*Carried out for Strategic Planning (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: RF Associates and Suzanne Martin*

This scoping study set out to review existing service provision and help determine how co-ordinated Health and Social Care (HSC)/housing service provision of home environmental control technology could support disabled people (both under and over 18) to live independently.

The work focused specifically on systems that enable co-ordinated control of the home environment by a person living with a physical disability, and was undertaken for the Housing Executive by RF Associates in association with Professor Suzanne Martin (Ulster University).

### KEY FINDINGS

- Relevant policy documents highlight a role for technology in supporting independent living as well as helping to address the housing and health needs of an increasingly aged population. However, the provision and implementation of environmental control systems into health and social care is complex, and is influenced by the legislation and policy of five Departments through a housing and health prism.
- One of the main benefits of such devices is that they enable the autonomy and independence of individuals, facilitating control over their environment (heating, lighting, security, entertainment) and thus have an important impact on overall wellbeing.
- Access to ECS for people with physical disability is achieved predominantly through Community Occupational Therapy Services. Within the Health and Social Care Trusts occupational therapists are the primary prescribers of ECS, working with a small number of commercial suppliers who make technology based recommendations. However, the approach, from assessment through to provision and maintenance, differs by HSC Trust area. In recent times innovation in technology has evolved some of the key legacy systems and increased the routine availability of useable software through mainstream devices such as tablets and smartphones. This opens a range of affordable possibilities, but means that it is difficult to gather a full picture of all the ECS technologies and devices that might be available to people with physical disabilities. It also raises questions about navigation of software provision and maintenance through devices owned by individuals.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The new evidence base will help policymakers and technical design teams make better use of assistive technology to improve future housing and support solutions for older people and those with a disability.
- It will provide guidance on transferring the evidence base to the future housing adaptations programme.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Health-and-welfare](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Health-and-welfare)

## Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT): North Lisburn (Meadowvale) Supported Housing

*Carried out for the Department for Communities*

*Researchers: RF Associates*

At Meadowvale Court, Lisburn, the Cedar Foundation works in partnership with Triangle Housing Association to provide an independent living solution for adults over the age of 18 who have a brain injury, physical, sensory or neurological disability. SMART assistive technology is available throughout the accommodation to maintain and promote independence and allows control over tenants' home environment, for example opening doors and windows and turning on lights.

R F Associates were appointed to provide an overview of the model of care and housing support used at the North Lisburn scheme. This included undertaking an evaluation of the role and impact of electronic assistive technologies in facilitating and enabling individuals to gain the optimum level of autonomy, control and independence in their own homes, and providing an overview of the capital, revenue and maintenance costs of the scheme.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The assistive technology at Meadowvale functions as an enabler of supported living. Tenants could not live in their own homes without elements of the technology such as door openers, fob access and ability to let visitors to let visitors in and out. The technology is focused on empowering and enabling day-to-day activities in a passive way, providing functions that an able-bodied person would take for granted.
- For those moving from a more 'institutionalised' model of care, the Meadowvale model offered a completely different living experience within a much more independent environment. Tenants have more choice in how they live day-to-day; they are *tenants*, rather than *residents*. As such, support is tailored to the individual to help them care for themselves and their own home.
- Due to the uniqueness of the Meadowvale scheme, there was no suitable data to enable meaningful comparisons of its relative costs and impacts. The costs for the assistive technology used at Meadowvale were higher than for two dementia schemes for which information was provided, but this appeared to be mainly due to the requirement for physical components such as door and window openers. When these costs are removed the scheme is less expensive than it might otherwise appear.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The research provides useful evidence of the ways in which technology can function as an enabler of supported living, enabling independence and control for people with a range of disabilities. .
- The study provides a useful baseline for any future comparative studies of similarly equipped homes.
- The findings will inform decision-making about funding for future assistive technology schemes.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Health-and-welfare](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Health-and-welfare)

## House Prices, Rents and Affordability

Carried out for Strategic Planning

Researchers: Ulster University

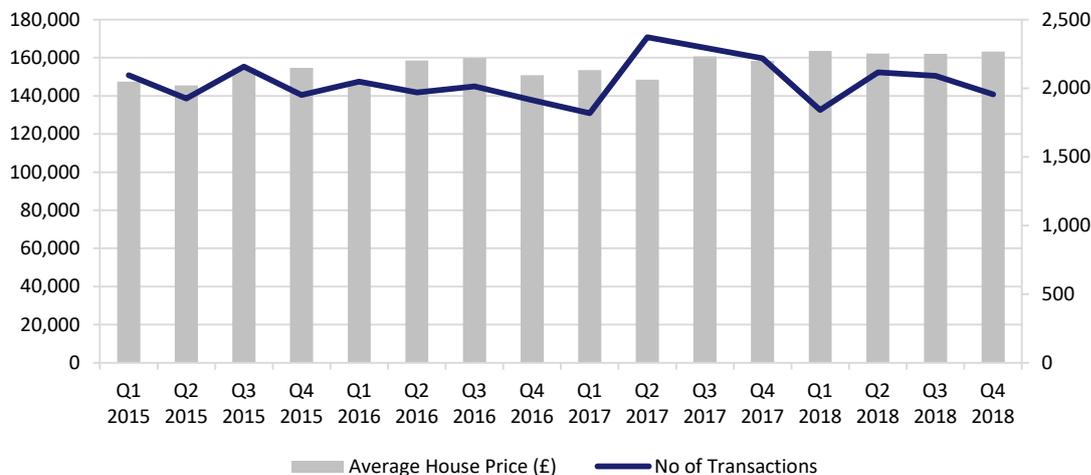
This suite of interlinked research projects was undertaken for the Housing Executive by Ulster University in partnership with *PropertyNews.com*. The Quarterly House Price Index is a major piece of research, which since 1984 has been the key source of longitudinal data on house price movements in Northern Ireland. In more recent years, the work has broadened to include the Private Rental Index, Asking Price House price Index and Affordability Indices. In 2015, the Housing Executive appointed Ulster University to undertake the project for a further period of three years.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Northern Ireland Quarterly Price Index

- While there was some variation from quarter to quarter, there was a general upward trend in average house prices between Q1, 2016 (£146,472) and Q4, 2018 (£163,165).
- The number of transactions captured in the sample survey varied around an average of 2,000 each quarter over the three-year period. This was in line with trends prior to the housing market downturn in 2007/08.
- Overall, the indicators have pointed to a healthy and stable residential property market over recent quarters. However, the outlook has been dominated by the uncertainty associated with the political vacuum at Stormont and the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

#### Northern Ireland Quarterly House Price Index: Key Statistics Q1 2015-Q4 2018



#### Affordability in the private housing market in Northern Ireland

This research uses data from the Quarterly House Price Index to provide indicators of trends in repayment and deposit affordability in 11 sub-regional housing markets across Northern Ireland. The most recent analysis was undertaken for 2017 and indicated that:

- On the basis of *repayment indicators*, affordability improved in Northern Ireland during 2017, consolidating the market improvements that had already occurred between 2015 and 2016.
- On the basis of *deposit indicators*, affordability deteriorated between 2016 and 2017; nonetheless, the evidence remains inconsistent across market areas.

Taking account of both repayment and deposit indicators, there was a marginal improvement in affordability between 2016 and 2017. While there continued to be variation in the indicators, the situation improved in nine of the eleven housing market areas.

### Asking Price Index

This report analyses the performance of the Northern Ireland housing market in terms of changes in the prices asked by home sellers, depicting market sentiment and performance. The most recent report covered the decade to 2017. Key findings from the research were:

- At £164,523, average asking price in 2017 was 0.8% lower than in 2016; this was the first annual decrease since 2012.
- The average asking price was down 2.1% over the second half of the year compared with the first six months of 2017.
- The decline in the Asking Price Index over two consecutive quarters mirrors the pattern in both 2015 and 2016, suggesting an element of seasonality in pricing structure.

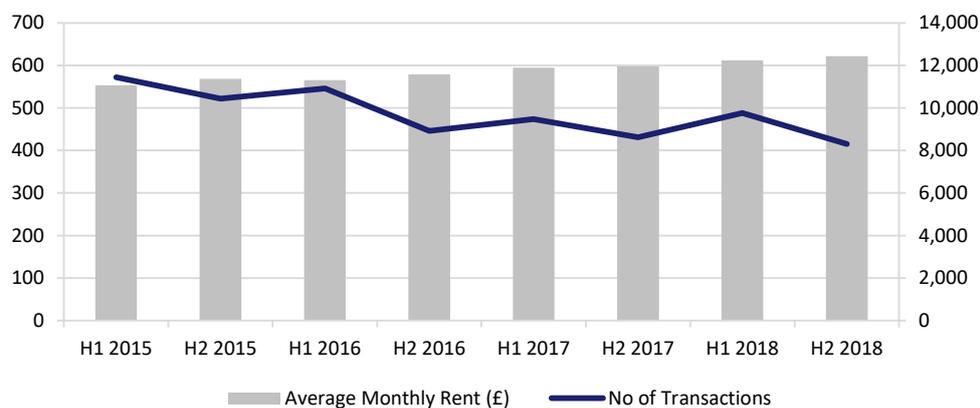
House Prices and Affordability reports are available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-prices-and-affordability](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-prices-and-affordability)

### Performance of the Private Rental Market in Northern Ireland

Rental data comprises properties advertised through PropertyNews.com and recorded by the Housing Executive for purposes of calculating Local Housing Allowance. Findings on this sample are reported on a half-yearly basis and indicated that:

- While there was a general downward trend in the number of transactions captured in the sample since 2013, the number of transactions analysed in the first half of 2018 (9,759) was the highest since the first half of 2016 (10,919). While the survey does not capture qualitative information, it has been suggested that the reduction in the number of transactions in the sample points towards a decreasing rate of churn in the sector.
- Average monthly rents increased gradually but steadily between the first half of 2016 (£565) and the second half of 2018 (£622).
- The highest average rents have consistently been in the Belfast, Ards & North Down and Lisburn & Castlereagh local government districts.

#### Performance of the Private Rented Sector in Northern Ireland: Key Statistics H1 2015-H2 2018



### Affordability in the Private Rented Sector in Northern Ireland

On the basis of the data collected to inform the private rental index, Ulster University produces a short commentary on rental affordability, calculated on the ratio of rent to income. The 2018 analysis indicated that:

- In line with the relatively stable rental market that has prevailed in Northern Ireland over the last few years, there were no significant changes in affordability trends across the 11 local government districts in Northern Ireland in 2018.
- Affordability issues in the private rental market have consistently been most pronounced in the Belfast City Council and Derry & Strabane District Council Areas.

- Rental affordability has also tended to be an issue – although not to the same extent – in the Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon and Antrim & Newtownabbey districts.

Reports on private rental analysis available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Private-rented-sector-and-rents](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Private-rented-sector-and-rents)

### **BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**

- The suite of research on house prices, rents and affordability provides a holistic view of trends and developments in the Northern Ireland housing market, which enables analysis over time and at regional and sub-regional level.
- The findings inform a range of Housing Executive activities, including housing market analysis and the production of Housing Investment Plans.
- The Private Rental Index is the single largest data source on trends in the private rented market in Northern Ireland, and its value has been recognised by the Office of National Statistics, which has entered into a Service Level Agreement with the Housing Executive to use the data for a number of indicators including the Consumer Prices Index.

## 2016 House Condition Survey

*Carried out for Regional Services and as part of the statutory requirement to regularly assess housing conditions and need*

*Field work and analysis managed by the Housing Executive Research Unit; technical support and modelling carried out by BRE*

House Condition Surveys have been conducted every five years in Northern Ireland since 1974 and Interim Surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2009. The surveys provide key information that underpins the development of housing policy, informs housing strategies and plans and guides the effective use of resources.

The House Condition Survey (HCS) gives a full picture of the condition of housing in Northern Ireland; all tenures and types of housing are included: owner occupied and rented housing, vacant dwellings, apartments, urban and rural properties. It provides the only reliable, consistent source of data for measuring energy efficiency, Decent Homes and fuel poverty across Northern Ireland.

The fieldwork stage of the HCS was completed in 2016/17. This was followed by a number of phases of data modelling during 2017/2018, which enabled production of updated key government measures including fuel poverty and energy efficiency, comparable with the English Housing Survey and Scottish model and consistent with previous Northern Ireland House Condition Surveys.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The dwelling stock in Northern Ireland in 2016 totalled 780,000. Owner occupation remained the largest tenure group (63%) in Northern Ireland and had remained stable since 2011; the private rented sector and social sector accounted for similar proportions of the stock (17% and 16% respectively), while just under four per cent of dwellings were vacant.
- Between 2011 and 2016 there was a decrease in the rate of unfitness of Northern Ireland's housing stock from 4.6% to 2.1%. In 2016, just over two fifths (44%) of dwellings had at least one fault (i.e. any fabric disrepair).
- The 2016 HCS estimated that approximately 22% (160,000) of households in Northern Ireland were in fuel poverty. This represented a significant improvement since 2011, when the figure was 42%.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The HCS provides updates in terms of key Government measures such as the Decent Homes Standard and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. This information is used to target spending to improve housing conditions in Northern Ireland.
- The survey also provides a reliable assessment of the level of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. This is used to meet the aims of the Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011, i.e. to target available resources on those vulnerable households who are most in need of help.
- The HCS is the primary data source for assessing progress towards improved energy efficiency (a key factor that impacts on fuel poverty). Northern Ireland has committed to reducing carbon emissions by 35 per cent from 1990 levels by 2025, which is consistent with the UK Government's international commitments.
- The data captured by the survey enables a range of further analysis on specific issues and policy areas. This analysis is published separately and summarised on pages 10 to 14 of this document.

Main and Summary reports available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey)

## Northern Ireland Fuel Price Ready Reckoner for Fuel Poverty

*Carried out for Regional Services and as part of the statutory requirement to regularly assess housing conditions and need*

*Researchers: BRE*

The 2016 House Condition Survey indicated that an estimated 160,000 households in Northern Ireland (21.5%) were fuel poor. Given that fuel price changes have a large impact on the level of fuel poverty, the prevalence of oil heating in Northern Ireland and the ongoing shift towards use of natural gas, this project used the base position of 2016 fuel poverty levels, with prices altered, to investigate how various scenarios would alter the number of households in fuel poverty.

A total of 35 price scenarios were created by applying price change of -25%; -10%; -5%, no change; +5%; +10%; +25% and +50% to mains gas, electricity, solid fuel, oil and all of these fuel types.

It should be noted that the fuel poverty calculation takes account of the expenditure required to heat a dwelling to a given standard as well as to power non-heating appliances.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The largest changes to fuel poverty can be seen in the scenarios with changes made to electricity and oil prices (Table 1). This reflects the dominance of these fuels within the fuel mix in Northern Ireland.
- Broadly speaking a 10% rise in *all fuel prices* implies a rise in the annual figures of 44,000 households in fuel poverty. However, in practice, fuel prices vary by type, depending on the individual markets.
- The scenarios only take into account changes in fuel price. It is probably more useful to think of the scenarios as ‘What if fuel prices were X% higher today?’ rather than relating to a point in the future. In reality, income and energy efficiency changes in future would occur in the context of changes to the fuel mix, household composition and the number of households.

Change in Price		Northern Ireland								
		-25%	-10%	-5%	BASE	5%	10%	25%	50%	
Fuel Type	Mains Gas	No.	153	158	159	160	161	163	170	178
		%	20.6	21.3	21.4	21.5	21.7	21.9	22.9	24
	Electricity	No.	121	145	154	160	172	181	214	273
		%	16.3	19.6	20.7	21.5	23.2	24.4	28.8	36.7
	Solid Fuel	No.	157	158	159	160	160	161	167	171
		%	21.1	21.3	21.4	21.5	21.6	21.7	22.4	23
	Oil	No.	112	140	154	160	171	181	213	262
		%	15.1	18.8	20.7	21.5	23.1	24.4	28.6	35.4
	All above	No.	73	118	141	160	186	208	281	387
		%	9.8	15.9	19	21.5	25.1	28	37.9	52.1

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The ready reckoner builds on the findings of the 2016 House Condition Survey, providing additional information that helps the Housing Executive and other policy makers consider the possible impacts on fuel poverty of fluctuations in fuel price subsequent to the 2016 estimate.
- The simplicity of the ready reckoner means that it is easy to interpret.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey) (or [Ready Reckoner Report](#))

## The Cost of Poor Housing in Northern Ireland 2016

*Carried out for Regional Services and as part of the statutory requirement to regularly assess housing conditions and need*

*Researchers: BRE*

In 2012 the Housing Executive published research produced by BRE based on the 2009 House Condition Survey, which indicated that if works were targeted to reduce the most serious health and safety hazards in poor housing in Northern Ireland (i.e. housing with at least one Category 1 hazard as measured by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)), there would be a benefit to the NHS of some £33 million per year.

Following completion of the 2016 House Condition Survey, the Housing Executive commissioned BRE to update the analysis using 2016 data and the revised annual NHS treatment cost methodology used for *The full cost of Poor Housing* (Roys et al, 2016).

### KEY FINDINGS

- In 2016, almost 70,000 dwellings in Northern Ireland (9% of the total housing stock) had any Category 1 hazard and were classified for the purposes of the analysis as 'poor housing'. The most common of these hazards were falls on stairs (3%), falls on level surfaces (2%) and excess cold (2%).
- The estimated average cost to reduce the Category 1 hazards in these homes to an acceptable level was £4,366 per home; a total cost of £305 million for the whole stock.
- If remedial works were undertaken 'up front' to mitigate the Category 1 hazards, it was estimated that there would be a benefit to the NHS of £39.5 million per year and, on this basis, the remedial works would pay for themselves in reduced NHS costs within eight years.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The findings provide an update that builds on the previous, 2009-based analysis, enhancing the evidence-base on the wider value of investment in housing and ensuring that the available data is as up-to-date as possible.
- The research will help the Housing Executive and other housing sector stakeholders argue the case that investment to deal with HHSRS hazards makes economic sense as well as improving the health and well-being of people who live in poor housing.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey) (or [Cost of Poor Housing Report](#))

## Carbon Dioxide Emissions: Northern Ireland's Housing Stock 2016

*Carried out for Regional Services and as part of the statutory requirement to regularly assess housing conditions and need*

**Researchers: BRE**

Under the Home Energy Conservation Authority Act (1995), the Housing Executive is Northern Ireland's sole Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA). In fulfilling this role, a key objective is to achieve a 34% reduction in the energy consumption of the dwelling stock against the 1996 baseline.

Following completion of the 2016 House Condition Survey, BRE was commissioned to use the data to produce updated estimates of progress against the HECA target. This report summarises the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Northern Ireland housing stock in 2016 and provides an updated time series back to 1996. It should be noted that, due to the 1996 baseline, the analysis of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions considers only those dwellings built prior to 1996.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The general trend since 1996 has been a reduction in energy consumption; this is consistent with improvements to the fabric energy efficiency of dwellings, in particular cavity wall insulation and heating system improvements;
- Measured in terajoules per year, the total energy consumption of pre-1996 occupied dwellings in Northern Ireland reduced from 78,860 in 1996 to 55,935 in 2016. Considering energy consumption associated with *space and water heating only*, the annual usage reduced from 73,034 to 47,714 terajoules over the same period.
- Similarly, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the pre-1996 occupied stock reduced from 7,597 kilotonnes per year in 1996 to 5,412 kilotonnes per year in 2016.
- Where the *space and water heating* requirements of occupied dwellings were concerned, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduced from 6,503 kilotonnes in 1996 to 4,244 kilotonnes in 2016.
- The overall improvement in energy efficiency, as measured by modelled standardised consumption, between 1996 and 2016 was 29.1%. By 2011, the degree of improvement had been 22.5%.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The research is an important benchmark for the Housing Executive in fulfilling its role as the regional Home Energy Conservation Authority, providing a means of measuring progress against the original target and assisting decision-making about future energy efficiency programmes and strategies.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey) (or [Carbon Dioxide Emissions report](#))

## Cost to make Dwellings in Northern Ireland Energy Efficient

Carried out for Regional Services and as part of the statutory requirement to regularly assess housing conditions and need

Researchers: BRE

In the context of emissions targets and the ongoing drive to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock and reduce fuel poverty, the Housing Executive asked BRE to model the estimated cost associated with improving the energy efficiency of dwellings in Northern Ireland using data from the 2016 House Condition Survey. BRE carried out analysis based on eight different energy efficiency improvement scenarios: three examined heating measures only, three examined insulation measures, one examined double glazing measures and one was a combination of all three scenarios (Table 2).

While there is no threshold over which a dwelling is considered “energy efficient”, a SAP rating of 65 is often used as an indication of an energy efficient dwelling. This report considered the proportion of the housing stock taken above this threshold by the various improvement scenarios, although it is worth noting that 60% of dwellings in Northern Ireland already achieve this level.

**Table 2: Improvement scenarios applied to 2016-based House Condition Survey data and the modelled outcomes**

Scenario	Description	Mean SAP rating	% of dwellings achieving SAP >65	Total cost of improvements applied (£'000s)
<b>Base</b>	Do nothing	65.8	61.8%	--
<b>Heating 1</b> (436,000 dwellings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dwellings with central heating given a condensing boiler if one is not already installed.</li> <li>Where a water cylinder is already present in the dwelling, a standard condensing boiler is installed; otherwise a condensing-combination boiler is installed.</li> <li>Where mains gas is available, a gas condensing boiler is installed; otherwise an oil condensing boiler is installed.</li> </ul>	71.3	84.2	1,483,902
<b>Heating 2</b> (21,000)	Dwellings with non-central heating are given central heating with a condensing boiler, on the same basis as above.	66.4	62.6%	102,984
<b>Heating 3</b> (457,000)	Combines <i>heating scenarios one and two</i> .	71.9	85.0%	1,586,885
<b>Insulation 1</b> (76,000)	Dwellings with unfilled cavity walls (partial or full) with a U-value of >0.6 W/m <sup>2</sup> K are given cavity wall insulation.*	66.3	63.8%	76,312
<b>Insulation 2</b> (218,000)	Dwellings with lofts and <=150mm of loft insulation are given 270mm of loft insulation	66.5	64.0%	49,072
<b>Insulation 3</b> (260,000)	Combines <i>insulation scenario one and two</i> , to give dwelling cavity wall and/or loft insulation where appropriate.	67.0	65.9%	125,385
<b>Double glazing</b> (455,000)	Dwellings with single glazing or pre-2006 double glazing, are improved to modern double glazing, with a U-value* of 1.6 W/m <sup>2</sup> K.	67.2	66.5%	731,615
<b>All</b> (632,000)	Combines <i>heating scenario three with insulation scenario three and double glazing</i> , to give dwellings all appropriate heating and insulation measures.	73.8	91.0%	2,443,885

\* The U-value is a measure of the thermal transmittance of a material. More information on this and other technical details of the calculations is available in the full report.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Based on these scenarios, more than 632,000 dwellings in Northern Ireland would receive at least one improvement measure. Double glazing would be the most commonly-installed single measure (455,000 dwellings), while the 'Heating 2' option would be the least utilised measure (21,000 dwellings).
- Including all appropriate improvement measures would result in an estimated increase in the mean SAP rating of eight SAP points, from 65.8 to 73.8. A SAP rating of 73.8 would fall within Energy Efficiency Rating band C.
- Applying all eligible improvements results in a significant increase in the number of dwellings achieving a SAP rating of more than 65, from 61.8% to 91%. Of the individual improvement scenarios, Heating Scenario 1 (installing a condensing boiler where central heating exists) accounts for most of this increase.
- The cost of applying all relevant improvements to the housing stock is around £2.4 billion. Of this, Heating Scenario 1 has the highest associated total cost of an individual measure, partly due to the high number of dwellings (56%) that would benefit from this measure.
- Overall, the figures indicate that investment of around £4,000 per dwelling in the homes that would benefit most from improvements would lead to a *mean* improvement of 10 SAP points.

## BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- This model uses the most up-to-date methodology for applying a cost to a variety of different improvement measures, which follows the EPC methodology of using indicative costs from the Product Characteristics Database (PCDB) maintained by BRE for the purpose of supporting UK building energy performance assessments (EPCs) that are produced using the National Calculation Methodologies for the energy rating of buildings. It therefore draws on robust, standardised information to apply cost estimates that helps inform policy development and decision-making by providing an indication of the type and cost of works that would be necessary to bring the housing stock across all tenures in Northern Ireland to an agreed standard of energy efficiency.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/House-Condition-Survey) (or [Cost to make energy efficient report](#))

## Private Rented Sector: Tenants' Perspective

*Carried out for Strategic Planning*

*Researchers: Housing Executive Research Unit*

The private rented sector in Northern Ireland has grown steadily since 1991, and accounted for 17% of the region's housing stock in 2016, providing a housing solution for many and playing an important role in the overall housing market.

The Private Tenants Survey (2016) was carried out as a follow-up to the House Condition Survey and provides an important insight into the views and experiences of tenants, covering issues including affordability, the landlord/tenant relationship, security of tenure and regulation within the sector. A total of 144 tenants were interviewed across Northern Ireland.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Reasons for renting privately included family/personal reasons, tenure reasons (difficulty accessing other tenures, length of waiting list for social housing) and reasons related to the home (size, cost, state of repair). Difficulty accessing other tenures was a recurring theme.
- The survey indicated that a high proportion of respondents (77%) paid an up-front cost for their accommodation. One in three had received help with these costs, mainly from family or friends.
- While the majority of respondents (88%) were responsible for paying all, or part, of their rental charge, three out of five received Housing Benefit. One third (34%) found it difficult to afford the rent, or shortfall between Housing Benefit received and total rent) that they had to pay.
- Generally high levels of satisfaction were reported with both the accommodation (83%) and the services provided by the landlord/letting agent (also 83%). However, a large proportion of respondents believed further regulation within the sector was needed.
- The majority of respondents (83%) expected to be able to stay in their property for as long as they wanted, with three out of five (64%) intending to remain in the private sector for the next five years.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- This survey provides a valuable insight into the experiences of private tenants, covering issues including affordability, the landlord/tenant relationship and regulation within a sector that provides a housing solution for many and plays an important role in the overall housing market.
- The Survey adds to the body of research on the sector, enabling further understanding and contributing to discussions and decision-making undertaken by stakeholders and policy makers.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Private-rented-sector-and-rents](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Private-rented-sector-and-rents)

## Housing Markets: A study of geographies (2018)

*Carried out for Land & Regeneration (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Newhaven Research*

In the last twenty years the need to understand housing markets and the spatial area over which they operate has become widely accepted as an important part of the housing planning and policy making process across the UK. The Housing Executive commissioned this study to enhance understanding of the concept of functional housing market areas and to update the suite of 11 broad housing market areas (HMAs) that were originally defined in 2009.

The overall aim of this research project was to prepare an updated set of functionally-based housing market area boundaries for Northern Ireland, taking account of 2011-based Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) and data that had become available since 2011, including Census data.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The final recommended boundaries for the 11 functional HMAs that operate across Northern Ireland showed some relatively modest adjustments to the spatial extent of some broad HMAs by comparison with the areas delineated in 2009. However there was no change in the number of broad HMAs that operate in Northern Ireland in the last decade in spite of the housing market downturn.
- The Belfast Metropolitan HMA remains the largest and most populous housing market, although its northern boundary no longer extends north of Larne town or to the rural wards at the southern east edge of Mid and East Antrim Local Authority (LA) such as Kells. Likewise, its southern boundaries no longer extend as deeply into two local authority areas: namely the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon LA and the Newry, Mourne and Down LA.
- Comparisons between the 2007 and 2017 based broad HMAs confirm that changes to the periphery are very gradual. In terms of keeping the HMA boundaries under review, the researchers suggest that the main focus should be to watch for evidence that the periphery of the Belfast Metropolitan HMA, or the spatial extent of its local HMAs, is changing.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The delineation of broad HMAs as the starting point for analysing housing systems is seen as a prerequisite for ensuring local planning and policy decisions are more responsive and sensitive to changing housing market conditions.
- The HMA report can be used by Council Planners and will help meet their requirement to consider cross-boundary issues within their LDP. The mapping report identifies Housing Market areas which are not coterminous to LGD boundaries, and therefore, this report will help determine housing market linkages and cross-boundary housing implications to be considered by Planners in the preparation of their local Development Plans.
- The Housing Executive plans to use the HMAs to produce revised and updated local housing systems analysis (LHSA), albeit that there may be challenges in terms of both data availability and the resources required to perform the task effectively.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Housing-Market-Analysis](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Housing-Market-Analysis)

## Impacts of Welfare Reform

*Carried out for Housing Services (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Housing Executive Research Unit*

A number of changes to the benefits system have been applied in Northern Ireland since 2008 and The Welfare Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 2015 set in motion the most wide-ranging changes to the benefit and tax credit system in more than seven decades. Many of the benefits that had been in place for people of working age will eventually cease to exist, and new benefits and payments systems are being introduced.

The introduction of Welfare Supplementary Payments (WSP) to reduce the impact of *most* (but not all) changes until March 2020 was a welcome mitigation for households in Northern Ireland. It also provided an opportunity to learn from experience in other parts of the UK and to plan for the period beyond WSP.

To inform the organisation's response to welfare reform and the planned end of mitigation, the Housing Executive's Housing Services division identified the need for a number of strands of research, including:

- a summary of the range of reforms that had been, or were due to be, introduced in Northern Ireland, along with an initial review of the evidence on actual and possible outcomes (*Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland: A Scoping Report*); and
- baseline research on Housing Executive tenants' perceptions, awareness and experiences of Welfare Reform to date, based on two waves of quantitative research carried out as part of the Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (*Tenant Perceptions, Awareness and Experiences of Welfare Reform, 2017*).

### KEY FINDINGS (Welfare Reform Scoping Report)

- Welfare reform impacts a variety of people across the housing market (social tenants, private renters, owner occupiers, landlords)
- Due to the online nature of Universal Credit, it is likely to present particular difficulties for those who are not IT literate, those who do not have access to the internet, those living in rural areas and the older working population.
- The lack of available smaller dwellings within Northern Ireland's social housing stock indicates that many tenants would be unable to move to a property with fewer bedrooms even if they were willing to do so.
- There are concerns about the impact of Welfare Reform if the mitigation budget expires as planned in 2020. It was estimated that the reduction in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit as a result of under-occupancy was likely to impact around 33,000 existing social sector claimants in Northern Ireland, and that tenants collectively stood to lose over £21 million in benefits each year if WSP ended as planned.

### KEY FINDINGS (Tenant Perceptions, Awareness and Experiences of Welfare Reform, 2017)

- Respondents felt poorly informed about welfare changes, and more than half (60%) stated that their main source of information was from a source other than a government or statutory body.
- Concern about welfare reform was low, but this was thought to be linked to the generally low levels of awareness.
- Only eight per cent of respondents were aware that the Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC) applied to their household, but administrative data suggested that closer to one third of tenancies were impacted, again suggesting low levels of awareness. There was evidence that tenants would face difficulties paying shortfalls in rent, if they were affected by SSSC.
- Respondents were not fully prepared for Universal Credit and would face difficulties with the application process and waiting times for first payments.

### **BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH**

- The reports on Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland provide:
  - a baseline position for further research on the impact of Welfare Reform on Housing Executive tenants and enable informed decision making within the organisation; and
  - an insight into the effects of Welfare Reform that will inform wider policy development and financial planning for other housing providers.
- The findings will be used to help ensure that both the Housing Executive and its tenants are better prepared to meet the challenges arising from Welfare Reform, in particular the scheduled ending of mitigation payments.

Both reports available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Welfare-reform](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Welfare-reform)

## Northern Ireland Broad Rental Market Areas: Scoping Study and Impact Assessment

*Carried out for the Department for Communities*

*Researchers: Economic Research and Evaluation*

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements were introduced throughout the UK in April 2008 and apply to Housing Benefit (HB) claimants in the private rented sector. The core feature of the LHA is the use of flat rates to calculate HB entitlement, depending on household size and the area in which the claimant lives. In Northern Ireland LHA rates are set for each of five property size categories within eight Broad Rental Market Areas ('BRMAs'), resulting in a total of 40 applicable LHA rates.

A BRMA is defined in legislation as:

*An area within which a person could reasonably be expected to live, having regard to facilities and services for the purposes of health, education, personal banking and shopping, taking account of the distance of travel, by public and private transport, to and from those facilities and services.*

A BRMA must contain:

- A variety of residential property types and tenures; and
- Sufficient private rented residential premises to ensure that the Housing Executive can determine local housing allowances which are representative of the rents that a landlord might reasonably be expected to obtain in that area.

The prescribed methodology for calculating the HB rate applicable to private sector claimants requires the Housing Executive to compile lists of private sector rents, in ascending order, within each BRMA for each property size category. From 2008, the applicable LHA rate was to be assessed as the *median* value from these ordered lists by property size category and BRMA. However, in April 2011 the median was replaced with the *30<sup>th</sup> percentile* value; the rationale being that HB claimants in the private rented sector should have access to the bottom 30 per cent of the market in their local area, having regard to their accommodation needs. It was subsequently announced that LHA rates would be frozen for four years from 2016 to 2020 at the lower end of the April 2015 LHA rate and the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rent.

Consequently, by 2018 LHA rates were no longer aligned with their corresponding 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rents, and an independent review was commissioned to assess the existing BRMAs, LHA rates and contracted rental data, provide scenarios of reclassified BRMAs based on updated data, and consider the impact of a number of potential revisions to LHA calculations.

In summary, three main sets of options were identified:

1. Retain the current set of BRMAs (the baseline or 'do nothing' option);
2. Merge existing BRMAs to produce a reduced number (the 'do minimum' options); and
3. Revise the existing BRMA boundaries (the 'do something' options).

Given the government emphasis in recent years on control of welfare spending, the options were assessed from a cost-neutral perspective, with the effects modelled so that total Housing Benefit expenditure remained unchanged from the baseline position (£3.8 million per week on private rented sector claimants subject to the LHA regime). The approach therefore focused explicitly on the disruption that would ensue from recalculated LHA rates in a reclassified set of BRMAs. Scenarios for reducing the number of BRMAs were tested to identify which performed best against two criteria:

<b>Sufficiency</b>	Measured by the number of list sizes for property lettings in excess of 100, distinguishing between lists in the range 50-99 and fewer than 50.
<b>Disruption</b>	Measured by the predicted portion of HB claimants who would see their benefit amount change by £5 or more.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Of the 40 LHA rates assessed for 2018-19, 25 were £5 or more below their 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rates.
- The existing BRMAs continue to meet the *access* and *diversity* criteria set out in the legislation, but the *sufficiency* requirement is challenging. The analysis showed wide disparity in the numbers of households living in privately rented accommodation across BRMAs, which suggests a rationale to consider the possibility of reducing the number of BRMAs to better meet the 'sufficiency' requirement. However, there was no strongly-expressed demand for change to the current set of BRMAs and a clear message from consultations that any proposed changes should be considered carefully.
- Changes to the existing BRMAs would lead to increased LHA rates in some areas and decreased rates in others. There was therefore a general wariness of any disruption that might accompany a re-drawing of the BRMA map, especially in terms of the potential impacts on tenants, including affordability and viability of tenancies.
- Across the range of scenarios considered within the 'do minimum' option, there was a trade-off between *minimising disruption* and *meeting the sufficiency requirement*. On this basis, the analysis indicated that the balance between minimising disruption and maximising sufficiency gains would best be met with a reduction to four or five BRMAs.
- Further analysis was carried out on five scenarios that performed best on the sufficiency and disruption metrics, based on reductions to five, four or three BRMA groupings. Within each variant, subsets of claimants were predicted to gain (receive an increased level of Housing Benefit) or lose (receive reduced Housing Benefit), with predicted *average weekly amounts lost* ranging from £1.42 to £3.11 and predicted *weekly amounts gained* ranging from £2.06 to £3.90.
- Among those predicted to experience a reduction in their Housing Benefit amount under the five scenarios examined in more detail, the *total annualised loss* ranged from £1.3 million in a five-BRMA variant to £4.2 million in the three-BRMA variant.
- In the context of risk to the viability of the tenancy, reductions in HB amounts would be a particular concern, especially given the above-average risk of income poverty among private rented sector tenants in receipt of HB. If reclassification was carried out to reduce the number of BRMAs, it would be necessary to manage the transition from the current configuration to minimise the impact on those predicted to experience a reduction in their HB.
- The analysis also considered equality impacts. As measured by the net expenditure effects in the reclassification variants examined in detail, the main predicted effect would be a reduction in shared accommodation rates in reconfigured BRMAs. As those aged under 35 account for 72 per cent of all claimants with shared accommodation entitlement, claimants aged 16-34 would be predicted to see the largest reduction on the net expenditure indicator. Similarly, those who are single with no dependants were predicted to experience larger net reductions compared with couples and claimants with dependants.
- As LHA rates differed to varying degrees across the existing set of BRMAs, the analysis indicated that predicted geographical patterns would also vary, depending on the combinations of BRMAs used to specify a variant.

## BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The BRMAs that have been in use since the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance were delineated on the basis of analysis carried out by the then-Department for Social Development's Statistical Research Unit and set out in the 2006 report, *Settlement Catchment Areas: Populations, Travel Distances and Travel Times*. The 2018 Scoping Study and Impact Assessment has drawn on updated and new datasets to provide an in-depth assessment of the ongoing relevance of the current BRMA structures, as well as evidence on the potential outcomes of various possible LHA and BRMA scenarios, which can inform future decision-making on policy in relation to payment of Housing Benefit/housing costs in the private rented sector.

Report available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Welfare-reform](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Welfare-reform)

## Designing for Life: new social housing in Northern Ireland post-occupancy survey

*Carried out for the Department for Communities*

*Researchers: Perceptive Insight Market Research (Fieldwork); Housing Executive Research Unit (Analysis)*

Through the Social Housing Development Programme, which is managed by the Housing Executive and delivered by housing associations, the Department for Communities invests around £100 million each year in new social housing in Northern Ireland. In order to ensure value for money and sustainability, it is important that this funding delivers new homes and communities that are high quality, liveable and meet tenants' needs and expectations, both now and in the future.

In 2018 the Housing Executive, in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC), commissioned a post occupancy survey of housing association tenants to obtain feedback on the quality and design of new homes funded through the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) that were completed between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. It was agreed that the two-year period between completion of the dwellings and carrying out the survey would allow sufficient time for most residents to make objective and informed judgements on how their home and the wider surroundings met the day-to-day needs of their household. Surveys were completed by respondents living in 455 of the 818 properties identified in the full sample.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents (59%) were aged between 25 and 44 and a further fifth (23%) were aged 45-59. Just over three fifths (62%) of households included one or more children under the age of 16.
- Almost one third (31%) of Household Reference Persons were working at the time of the survey, while one quarter (24%) were looking after family/home and one-fifth (20%) were permanently sick/disabled.
- The majority were living in a house (80%), 16% in a flat and five per cent in a bungalow.
- The vast majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the inside of their home, its overall comfort, their neighbourhood and their home overall.
- Inside the home, two features that were viewed less positively than most other aspects were provision for storage and provision for clothes drying inside the property (without having to use radiators).
- Outside the dwelling, respondents were generally satisfied with aspects within the curtilage of their own property, such as gardens and parking provision, and felt that their development was an attractive place to live.
- High proportions of residents felt that their streets were walkable and bike-friendly, and the majority also said that their street was child-friendly. However, more than one third of respondents felt that the streets in their development had not been designed to encourage cars to drive more carefully.
- Three quarters expected their current home to continue to meet their needs in future. Just over half were aware of 'Lifetime Homes' and, when the concept was described to them, the vast majority thought it was a good idea. Most favoured a design approach that allowed for installation of a future downstairs shower, even if it meant having a smaller living area or fewer hallways.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- This was the first comprehensive survey undertaken among residents of all new build properties constructed across Northern Ireland within a specified time period.
- The survey thus provides a baseline, with important insights on how well the existing guidance on the design of new homes constructed through the social housing development programme – and the developments in which they are located – meet the needs of residents by providing a quality and sustainable living environment.
- This evidence should inform future deliberations on the Design Standards for social housing in Northern Ireland.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Social-housing](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Social-housing)

## CUSTOMER RESEARCH

### Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey (2017)

*Carried out for Housing Services (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Perceptive Insight Market Research (fieldwork); Housing Executive Research Unit (analysis and report)*

This major survey continues to provide extensive and up-to-date information on the Housing Executive's tenant population and valuable insights into attitudes to and satisfaction levels with the Housing Executive's services. A total of 2,600 tenants were interviewed in 2017, randomly selected to represent households across the 13 area offices.

#### KEY FINDINGS

- In 2017 the Housing Executive had around 85,000 occupied properties, with a total of approximately 173,000 household members. Lone adult (26%) and lone older (19%) remained the most common household types in 2017, and almost one third (30%) of household reference persons (HRPs) were retired, while more than one fifth (23%) were permanently sick/disabled.
- There were high levels of satisfaction with a range of issues:
  - the overall service provided (89%; 87% in 2016);
  - value for money for rent (89%; 88% in 2016);
  - quality of the home (88%; 86% in 2016);
  - the repairs service (86% of respondents who had a repair completed were satisfied; also 86% in 2016); and
  - telephone contact (of the 69% who had contacted the Housing Executive by telephone in the 12 months prior to the survey, 91% were satisfied).
- More than three quarters of respondents were in receipt of Housing Benefit (77%; 80% in 2016).

#### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The CTOS provides up-to-date information on the Housing Executive's tenant population.
- It is a vital source of information for performance statistics and quality assessment and informs business planning, Key Performance Indicators (which allow the organisation to assess the extent to which it is 'Delivering Quality Services'), benchmarking, and the Customer Service Excellence assessment.
- The omnibus element of the survey allows flexibility to carry out research into specific issues without the delays and expense associated with commissioning individual small surveys.

Reports available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Attitudes-to-landlord-services](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Attitudes-to-landlord-services)

## Home Improvement Grants Survey 2017

*Carried out for Private Sector Improvement Services (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: IPSOS Mori (fieldwork); Housing Executive Research Unit (analysis and report)*

The Home Improvement Grants Survey is carried out at regular intervals to evaluate customer satisfaction with the private sector grants scheme delivered by the Housing Executive across Northern Ireland. The survey gathers customers' views on each stage of the grants process and the grants forms and associated literature, as well as providing satisfaction levels for individual grants offices. The research is concerned solely with the grants scheme which operated from 2009 to 2017 and was administered by seven Grants Offices throughout Northern Ireland.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The main grant type was the disabled facilities grant (76%); 16% of respondents had received home repair assistance grants and 8% renovation grants.
- The highest proportion of respondents (61%) was aged over 65 years and more than four fifths (84%) said that they or someone in their household had a long term illness or disability that affected their normal day-to-day activities.
- Around three fifths (61%) had found out how to apply through an occupational therapist and almost one fifth (18%) through family and friends.
- More than four-fifths (83%) of respondents said they had found the letters and documentation they received from the Housing Executive about their grant application easy to understand.
- The vast majority of respondents (92%) were satisfied with the grants scheme overall and 94% agreed that the work carried out had fully met the needs of the grant applicant.
- 96% agreed that the work carried out had improved the applicant's quality of life and that of others in the household.

### BENEFITS

- The research collated evidence on customers' views about the various stages of the grants process, including the associated forms and literature, and provided a measure of satisfaction levels by individual grants offices.
- The survey provided an update on research previously carried out in 2009, enabling monitoring and analysis of customer feedback and satisfaction over time and in light of changes to the administration of the grants process in the intervening period.
- Taken together, this information will help identify any problems in the service and areas for potential improvement.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Home-improvement](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Home-improvement)

## Affordable Warmth Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018

*Carried out for the Department for Communities and Private Sector Improvement Services (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Housing Executive Research Unit*

The Affordable Warmth Scheme was introduced in September 2014 and is funded by the Department for Communities and administered by district councils and the Housing Executive. Its aim is to improve domestic energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption among eligible households in the owner occupied and private rented sectors, and thus mitigate the impacts of fuel poverty.

The aim of the research project was to evaluate the scheme and measure levels of customer satisfaction with the overall process, including engagement with local councils, the timeliness of implementation and satisfaction with their contractor. Where possible, it also assessed the impact of the scheme on customers' lives. Questionnaires were issued by post in autumn 2018 to a sample of 500 addresses randomly selected from the 11 district council areas proportion to the total number of completions in 2017/18. A total of 292 completed surveys were returned to the Housing Executive.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Around three quarters (74%) of respondents were aged 60 and over and the majority were owner occupiers (90%).
- Almost one third of respondents (31%) had self-referred to the Scheme, almost one fifth (18%) had heard about it from a local contractor or energy advisor and 10% said they were targeted by a local council surveyor. More than a quarter (27%) had heard about the scheme from 'other' sources.
- Most respondents (92%) were 'very satisfied/satisfied' with the length of time from initial contact with council staff until contact with staff from the Housing Executive grants office.
- The most common measures carried out as part of the scheme were: new heating system/boiler replacement (82%); loft insulation (50%); windows installation (36%) and cavity wall insulation (27%) (applicants may receive more than one measure).
- The majority of respondents (86%) said they found it easy to find a builder or contractor to carry out the work and were satisfied/very satisfied with the quality of the work (92%).
- The vast majority of respondents (94%) were satisfied/very satisfied with the Affordable Warmth Scheme overall, and most (90%) stated that their home had changed for the better as a result of the installation of affordable warmth measures.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The survey findings provide a measure of customer satisfaction with various aspects of the Affordable Warmth Scheme, which helps the Housing Executive monitor performance in the delivery of the scheme and identify areas for improvement, where appropriate.
- Building on previous annual surveys, the findings provide evidence on the extent to which the objectives of the Affordable Warmth Scheme are being met. The findings enable the Department for Communities to develop and monitor benchmarks in relation to programme delivery and customer satisfaction.
- The findings of successive surveys will help inform any future review of the Scheme and inform decision-making about associated programmes and strategies.

## Housing Estates Programme

*Carried out for Housing Services (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Housing Executive Research Unit*

The Housing Executive carried out three estate-based surveys to inform delivery of the Building Relationships in Communities (BRIC) programme, which was implemented by the Rural Development Council, the Housing Executive and TIDES Training. BRIC was designed to encourage greater levels of social integration within Northern Ireland's housing sector and the aim of the surveys was to identify local residents' needs and their levels of satisfaction with their area.

These estate-based surveys (Dunclug, Ballymena; Model Farm, Downpatrick; and Manor Park, Lisburn) focused on attitudes to the physical environment, community relations, community safety and the facilities available locally.

### KEY FINDINGS (Model Farm, Downpatrick)

- Two-fifths (40%) of all respondents had lived in their present home for 15 years or more.
- At the time of the survey, more than three-fifths of respondents (61%) rented from the social housing sector.
- Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents were satisfied/very satisfied with their home.

### KEY FINDINGS (Dunclug, Ballymena)

- At the time of the survey more than two-fifths (42%) of respondents rented from the social housing sector, with 39% of respondents renting from the Housing Executive.
- Half of respondents (50%) stated they were satisfied/very satisfied with Dunclug as a place to live.
- The majority of respondents were satisfied with many of the services and facilities in Dunclug, such as street lighting (79%), car parking (75%).

### KEY FINDINGS (Manor Park, Lisburn)

- Almost half (46%) of respondents were owner occupiers, while almost two-fifths (37%) were renting from the Housing Executive.
- Three-quarters of respondents (75%) were very/quite satisfied with their home.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with Manor Park as a place to live.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Unit will use the survey findings to inform programme delivery.
- Residents will use the findings to shape a series of activities at the community level and to build better relations in their area.

Reports provided to internal clients.

## SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

### Bamford Review: The experience of learning disabled people resettled from long stay hospitals in Northern Ireland (Phase 2)

*Carried out for the Department for Communities*

*Researchers: North Harbour Research and Fiona Boyle Associates*

The Bamford Review set out a new vision for mental health and learning disability services in Northern Ireland, including a recommendation for the resettlement of learning disabled people living in long-stay hospitals. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive played a significant role in helping to deliver the post-Bamford resettlement programme. The focus of this research was to interview service users, their families and the support staff who work with them to establish the experiences of people who had been resettled and the effectiveness of the process from their perspective, their levels of satisfaction with the outcome and the impact on their lives that living in the community has had. Responses were obtained from 22 service users with learning disabilities who had been resettled from long-stay hospitals between April 2012 and March 2016

#### KEY FINDINGS

- The service users interviewed were broadly content with the way resettlement had been carried out. Their responses indicated that a staged approach had been adopted, with hospital patients visiting a resettlement scheme, then staying overnight and subsequently for a slightly longer period, before finally deciding to move permanently.
- Feedback from family members was also generally very positive about the resettlement process. In most cases family members felt the process of resettlement had been well handled by the housing support provider, the housing association, the HSC Trust and the hospital. They also indicated that they felt their family member's life had improved considerably as a result of resettlement.
- Some difficulties were noted in relation to: service users' assessed 'readiness' for resettlement; a perceived lack of compatibility between, and a poor mix of, tenants living together in a small number of schemes; and delays in resettlement arising from delays in the provision of suitable accommodation.
- In all 22 cases, service users' lives were viewed as better than their previous experience of life in a long-stay hospital. Examples of betterment included more privacy, access to food and drink when the individual wanted it, the ability to see visitors at any time and to have personal belongings and personal space, and to do things for themselves.

#### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The research contributes to a growing evidence base that guides future policy and good practice in addressing the housing needs of people with mental health issues and/or learning disabilities in long-term hospital settings by providing evidence on:
  - the institutional delivery of the resettlement programme and the role played by agencies involved in the planning and provision of housing, support and care services for learning disabled people;
  - the experiences of people who have been resettled;
  - the effectiveness of the process from their perspective;
  - their levels of satisfaction with the outcome; and
  - the impact on their lives of living in the community.

Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Supporting-people](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research/Supporting-people)

## Survey of Clients using Supported Lodgings

*Carried out for Supporting People (Housing Executive)*

*Researchers: Outcome Imps*

The Supporting People programme finances a range of housing-related services in the form of packages of support for vulnerable people delivered by the public, private or voluntary sectors. Following the effectiveness of the Supported Lodgings model in Britain in providing interventions for young people, it was identified as a viable housing option for young people leaving care and those at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Northern Ireland. At the time of the research there were two Supported Lodgings services for young people in Northern Ireland: the STAY project delivered by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the pilot *Opening Doors* service in the Northern and Western Trust Areas.

This project evaluated the *Opening Doors* pilot scheme, which aimed to help young people aged 16 to 21 who were leaving care or found themselves experiencing housing difficulties. The aim was to ascertain the extent to which the supported lodgings model achieves the objective of developing service users' capacity to move towards agreed goals and independent living.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Young people were seen to have benefitted from the scheme.
- The pilot project was most effective with young people who were referred with low-to-medium needs and who wanted to try this type of living arrangement to further develop their independent living skills.
- The model of supporting the young person in planned placements to develop independent living skills appeared to be most effective when the young people were at a suitable level of need and want to engage.

### BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

- The research provided evidence on the effectiveness of the supported lodgings model in Northern Ireland compared to similar services in the UK (including STAY, other models of supported lodgings and Nightstop) or the Republic of Ireland.
- Overall, the evaluation provides policy makers, service commissioners and strategic/operational managers with an insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of the development and service implementation of supported lodgings as piloted by the service provider.

Report provided to internal client.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 2019/20 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Work continued on a range of research projects during 2019/20. A summary of the key findings will be published in autumn 2020.

For more information on the research carried out by and for the Housing Executive, see the Research section of our website: [www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Working-With-Us/Research)

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