

**HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY
1st USER ENGAGEMENT GROUP MEETING
WEDNESDAY 2ND MARCH 2016
LIBRARY MEETING ROOM
THE HOUSING CENTRE**

1.0 Present:
Joe Frey – NIHE (Chair)
Jahnet Brown – NIHE
Donna McLarnon – NIHE (minutes)
Sharon Jeffers – NIFHA
Jennifer Doak – ABC Council
Suzanne Bagnall – DOE
Claire Shortt – BCC
Noel Rice _ NIHE
John Downey - DSD

Apologies: Aidan Campbell, Ciara Cunningham, Maryann Dempsey

		Action
2.0	Welcome and introductions J Frey welcomed the group and introductions were made.	
3.0	The role of the User Engagement Group The terms of reference for the User Engagement Group were agreed.	
4.0 4.1 4.2	Background and objectives of the NIHE J Frey explained the UK Statistics requirement to engage with users of statistics to ensure that they meet the needs of users and provide value for money. J Frey outlined the history of the NIHCS including differences with the English Housing Survey, and informed the group about the preparation for the 2016 Survey. - Recruitment of surveyors is underway - The Steering Group recommended a sample size of 4000, however for budgetary reasons the Board has approved a sample size of 3000. This will allow reasonably robust figures at the new council level (if a response rate of approximately 70% is achieved) - The lower sample size will have minimal impact on sample error at Northern level, but there will be larger confidence levels at council level (and other sub group level). The Steering Group agreed that choosing a sample size is always a compromise and the larger confidence levels will have to be lived with.	

4.3	J Frey confirmed that the smaller sample size will provide reasonably robust figures relating to fuel poverty at District Council level (which will enable a number of AQs to be answered).	
4.4	Similarly he confirmed that although it will not be possible to produce fuel poverty figures by age group and LGD, they will be produced by wider geographical area eg. N,S, E, W (NI).	
4.5	The group discussed the possibility of producing figures at constituency level. J Frey explained that the constituency boundaries don't always match the LGD boundaries and therefore robust figures cannot be produced.	
4.6	J Frey gave an overview of the key government measures produced by the NIHCS. It was noted that the 2011 increase in unfitness was due in part to the introduction of the payment of rates on vacant properties, which brought previously excluded properties on to the LPS database.	
5.0	Changes to the questionnaire	
5.1	It was noted that there is limited scope for changes to the physical survey (as a lot of the data is used for key government measures), however it would be possible to amend the social survey.	
5.2	Group members had completed a questionnaire feedback form in advance of the meeting, and the suggestions made were discussed: • The impact of grants – the type of grants available has changed, this needs to be clarified with Grants department • Methods for paying for electricity to be updated • Benefits information to be updated • Heating types – include renewable sources • Include biomass boilers • Rents, rates and service charges • Collect capital value in owner occupied sector • Income bands to be shortened • Adjust incomes by geography to line up with Family Resources Survey • Collect information about presence of street lighting and security lights • Fitness outcome – look at bands • Settlement types – discuss definitions with Rural Unit • Carers allowance is paid to the person who provides the care (this is treated as income in terms of	JB/DM

	affordable warmth - Occupational pension to be included as in income Questions which need to stay in the social survey are: - Marital status – required under Section 75 - Cavity wall insulation & smoke alarms – these are duplicated from the physical survey as quality assurance checks. - Local area questions – used for Deprivation Index	
5.3	Further suggestions for changes to the questionnaire are welcome, they are needed asap to allow time for changes to be made to the tablet. A copy of the finalised questionnaire with amendments will be sent to group members.	All DM
6.0	AOB - Cavity wall insulation J Frey outlined the issue relating to cavity wall insulation. A recent survey discovered problems with the quality of cavity wall insulation in NIHE properties, and as a result further investigation is required. This will be carried out using a sample of addresses selected from the NIHCS sample. Historically the NIHCS has been a non intrusive survey but the cavity wall insulation research will require a boroscope survey. NIHCS surveyors are not qualified to do this type of survey so it will not be carried out as part of the NIHCS. Instead it will be procured as a separate survey. The group discussed how the sample could be selected. It was agreed that: - it will be across all tenures as the issue is not isolated to the social sector. - NIHCS surveyors will identify properties with cavity walls and will ask householders if they would like to take part in further research - There are problems with cavity wall insulation in newer properties as well as those built pre 1980 so there should be no cut off date when selecting properties to survey The group discussed the possibility of single tender action because of the question of the impartiality of suitably qualified companies in Northern Ireland. This will be discussed with DSD. J Frey will raise the issue of the cavity wall insulation survey with the Research Committee, and will inform the Committee	JF JF

	about the letter from the Chairman to the Minister (regarding the issues).The Committee will also be made aware that following the results of the survey there is likely to be an expectation that something will need to be done to address the problem.	
7.0	Date of next meeting The next meeting will be held mid June. Date to be finalised.	DM