

**Northern Ireland House Condition Survey - 2021**  
**1<sup>st</sup> User Group Meeting (via web-ex)**  
**22 October 2020**  
**MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

Karly Greene – NIHE (Chair)	Jahnet Brown – NIHE
Donna McLarnon – NIHE	Gerard Jervis – NIHE
Claire Kennedy – NIHE (Minutes)	Andy Kennedy – NIHE
David Moore – NIHE	Avril Hiles – DfC
Stephen McGonagle – DfE	John McMullan – NIHE
Katie Fulton – DfC	Michelle Bamford – DfI
Sharon Jeffers – NIFHA	Catherine Blease – NIHE
Helen McAdam – DoF	Siobhan McCauley – NIHE
Andy Frew – NIHE	Lesley Curry – DfC
Denise Conlon – NIHE	Claire Shortt – BCC
Aidan Campbell – Rural Community Network	

**Apologies:** Robert Clements, Aileen Gordon, Claire Patton, Catherine McFarland, Andy Clement, Martin McDermott, Sinead Collins, Colm McQuillan, Ciara Cunningham, Oliver McHugh, Pat Austin, Erin Savage, Kim Smyth, Susan Wilken, Hugh McVeigh, Paul Isherwood

		Action for:
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and introductions</b> K. Greene welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. K. Greene informed the group she is leaving the Housing Executive at the beginning of November.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background and objectives of the NIHCS</b> K. Greene gave a brief overview of the background and objectives of the NIHCS.	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>The role of the User Engagement Group</b> The Terms of Reference were sent to the group prior to the meeting. Members were content with these. K Greene explained that the value of the survey is enhanced through regular engagement with users, and the user group will help the HCS team to meet the needs of users. The user engagement group will meet on a quarterly basis, or more regularly if needed. Engagement will also take place digitally if there are any updates.	
<b>4.0</b> <b>4.1</b>	<b>Progress report</b> <b>2016 NIHCS update</b> The last user engagement group meeting was held in October 2017. K. Greene highlighted the progress since that time in relation to the survey and the reports.  Fuel poverty workshops had been held and the feedback was positive. K. Greene emphasised that modelling work and reports were client led. The HCS ad-hoc reports are available on the Housing Executive’s website and can also be accessed through the link included in the meeting invite.	

	<p>The 2016 NIHCS was awarded National Statistic status. Any ad-hoc reports based on the NIHCS are classed as official statistics and are subject to pre-release access rules. The upcoming publication of a report is announced on <a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>.</p> <p><b>4.1.2 Private Tenants Survey</b> The 2016 NIHCS provided a sample for research into the private rented sector. The report was published in March 2018.</p> <p><b>4.1.3 Cavity wall insulation</b> The 2016 NIHCS provided a sample for research into cavity wall insulation. This was led by Asset Management, and the Research Unit provided guidance. The report was published in 2019.</p> <p><b>4.1.4</b> S. Jeffers asked if there were any learning points from the 2016 NIHCS. K. Greene reported that there was a need to increase the sample size to allow for more granular analysis and for analysis of smaller groups such as Housing Associations; she welcomed the approval to increase the sample to 7,000 addresses for the 2021 survey. J. Brown added that the national statistics assessment in 2016 had led to improvements in the main report and also a more user-friendly infographic report.</p> <p>S. McCauley noted that the increased sample will help inform Local Development Plans.</p> <p><b>4.2.0 Preparations for the 2021 NIHCS</b> K Greene informed the group that the HCS team is seeking the views of users in relation to: how to proceed in relation to Covid-19, changes to the questionnaire, and the HCS outputs (particularly modelling requests). Members were invited to share their views during the meeting, or to forward feedback by e-mail to the HCS team by 30 October.</p> <p><b>4.2.1 Covid-19</b> K Greene updated the group on the progress of other national House Condition Surveys during the pandemic and also the progress of other NI surveys (from the HCS Steering Group). The impact of Covid-19 has led to surveys moving away from face to face interviews in-house to telephone and response rates have reduced, in some cases to approximately 20%.</p> <p>K Greene outlined the risks identified due to Covid-19, and the possible options for how to proceed. Mitigations for the risks will be explored and will be presented to the Steering Group in early January, along with the views of users.</p> <p>The group discussed the issues facing the 2021 HCS, and shared their views/experiences: The NIHCS involves at least a one hour technical survey within a dwelling. NI, unlike England and Scotland, carries out the technical and social survey at the same time. There is a large amount of preparatory work required before fieldwork begins, including recruiting surveyors and obtaining a sample.</p>	
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	<p>S. McGonagle highlighted that many surveys are moving to telephone or online and this affects comparability with previous surveys. This would need to be acknowledged if the 2021 survey goes ahead.</p> <p>K. Greene advised that participation in the NIHCS is voluntary, and noted that response rates may be lower than usual because of Covid-19, as householders may not feel comfortable having a surveyor in their home. As fieldwork takes place between May and September to take advantage of the longer days, any delay would be for one year. This would have implications for users as data would not be available until a year later.</p> <p>A. Frew raised the possibility of accessing existing EPC datasets if there are issues accessing dwellings. However it was acknowledged that quality assurance, timeliness, representativeness and gaps in this data may present problems. Admin data collected for a particular reason may not fit with the purpose of the HCS. K Greene will liaise with A Frew to get more information.</p> <p>A. Kennedy advised that the HE's stock condition survey is currently restricted to external and communal areas inspections due to Covid. A. Kennedy will provide further information on risk assessments to HCS team. It was noted than even before Covid-19 there were difficulties gaining access to private sector dwellings during the BBA's CWI survey.</p> <p>S. McCauley will ask D. O'Reilly to provide information about risk assessments for accessing dwellings to complete boiler replacements.</p> <p>J. McMullan suggested using covid testing, and reviewing plans for the 2021 NI Census. It was noted that unlike the Census the NIHCS is not compulsory for householders.</p> <p>Use of incentives was discussed. The HCS team will contact the Market Research Society to check any guidance on ethical issues around offering money when finances may be constrained due to Covid-19.</p> <p>H. McAdam noted that the latest results from NISRA's Covid-19 Opinion Survey had been published and may give feedback on how safe/anxious people felt about allowing someone into their home. HCS team to check.</p> <p>J. McMullan highlighted that that face-to-face interviews are valuable but it is important to make these as safe as possible.</p> <p>The group discussed EPC and SAP methodology. Using data outside of HCS would cause issues around comparability in terms of longitudinal analysis and comparisons with other nations and may have an impact on the National Statistic status.</p> <p>C. Shortt asked about the possibility to postpone the survey for a year, and carrying out a smaller survey in the interim to help with government targets, fuel poverty and Co2 emissions and also possibly linking data to the HCS. Issues would be sampling, availability of local</p>	<p>KG</p> <p>AK</p> <p>SMcC</p> <p>HCS team</p> <p>HCS team</p>
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	<p>level data and budgeting. However, this will be explored and included in the list of options.</p> <p>C. Blease suggested the possibility of delaying the NIHCS by a year. This would break the cycle of doing the NIHCS in a Census year, and would allow for more up to date information.</p> <p>The group was asked to send any additional responses by e-mail. In addition, the HCS team will conduct an online survey to get the views of other users of HCS statistics.</p>	HCS team
<b>4.2.2 The sample</b>	<p>There is an extensive sampling exercise for the NIHCS to ensure it is representative. The sample is drawn from a subset of the Pointer database held by NISRA. It considers a number of factors such as Council areas and second homes. The data is weighted and grossed to NI level.</p>	All
<b>4.2.3 Modelling work and reports</b>	<p>K Greene outlined the proposed modelling requirements for 2021. The group was asked to forward any additional modelling requirements.</p>	All
<b>4.2.4 National Statistics</b>	<p>It is anticipated that the 2021 NIHCS will undergo a compliance check by OSR. If there is a considerable change in methodology the HCS team will liaise with OSR.</p>	HCS team
<b>4.2.5 User requirements: outputs</b>	<p>A separate user group meeting will be set up to discuss the format of the HCS reports.</p>	HCS team
<b>4.2.6 Questionnaire consultation</b>	<p>K. Greene asked members to send through any requests/feedback they may have in terms of the questionnaire. Suggestions put forward at the meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J. McMullan: how people use their homes, internet usage, working from home, use of transport etc.</li> <li>• A. Kennedy: overcrowding/under occupancy. J Brown confirmed collection of this in the NIHCS.</li> <li>• S. McGonagle: data for 'corner house'. This is collected as 'end terrace' in the NIHCS. Also, renewable heating, renewable technology and fuel use for cooking, lighting and heating. Consumers' attitudes to energy efficiency in the home. There are some questions already collected. Additional questions can be considered. S. McGonagle will send BEIS link to the HCS team.</li> <li>• C. Shortt: electric vehicles and charge points.</li> <li>• A Frew: heating regime and fire lighting in homes.</li> </ul>	S. McG

<p><b>4.2.7 HCS modelling work &amp; Reports</b></p> <p><b>4.2.8 Proposed timetable</b></p>	<p>All requests will be reviewed. K. Greene noted that consideration has to be given to the budget and the length of the survey form. Where possible questions will be included in the HCS or if more appropriate a separate follow up survey or ad-hoc analysis may be carried out.</p> <p>K. Greene invited the group to forward any requests for modelling to the HCS team. The group discussed the following:</p> <p>A. Kennedy asked about analysis at parliamentary constituency level. J. Brown explained that because the sample design is at council level it cannot be disaggregated below this level as there are boundary issues.</p> <p>A. Campbell asked about urban/rural outputs. The larger sample in 2021 should permit more analysis.</p> <p>S. McGonagle asked about costs to improve the energy efficiency ratings in a dwelling. J. Brown explained that BRE is currently looking at scenarios using 2016 NIHCS data and a report will be completed in December. This model can be replicated using 2021 data.</p> <p>The group discussed the proposed timetable and noted that a decision on how to proceed will be made in early January 2021.</p>	
<p><b>5.0</b></p>	<p><b>Key actions - summary</b></p> <p>Members are asked to forward their feedback in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire themes</li> <li>• Covid-19</li> <li>• Modelling requests</li> </ul> <p>S McGonagle to share information from BEIS on energy consumption</p> <p>S McCauley &amp; A Kennedy to provide information on risk assessments</p> <p>K Greene to liaise with A Frew about EPC data.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>SMcG</p> <p>SMcC/AK</p> <p>KG</p>
<p><b>6.0</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>K. Greene thanked the group for their support.</p> <p>S McCauley thanked K Greene for her work on the NIHCS.</p>	
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>January 2021. Date to be agreed.</p>	