

First Quarterly Report (2025/2026) on the Implementation of the Equality Scheme

1.0 Compliance Issues

1.1 Equality Screening/Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) Screening

From 1st April 2025 – 30th June 2025 the following policies have been screened:

- Grants Policy Manual
- Emergency Response Plan
- Housing Need Assessment Manual

Screening reports are available on request.

EQIA

No Equality Impact Assessments were initiated.

1.2 Training

Safeguarding Training

There were 3 Safeguarding training courses held during 1st April – 30th June 2025.

Equality Awareness Training

There were 3 Equality Awareness training courses held during 1st April – 30th June 2025.

1.3 Access to Information and Services Communication Support (Translation & Interpreter Services)

A total of 6,098 telephone based interpreting sessions were held from 1st April to 30th June 2025. The top 3 most requested languages are listed below:

- Arabic
- Somali
- Tigrinya

Translation tasks totalled 89 and face to face interpreter sessions (including Sign Language) totalled 28. There were 5 requests for alternative formats and 138 calls were made using the Video Relay Service (VRS).

1.4 Monitoring

Equality Monitoring waiting list and allocations data is available up to the 30th June 2025.

1.5 Consultation

The Housing Executive's full Consultative Forum on Equality was held on 19th March 2025. The next meeting is due to be held on 18th November 2025.

2.0 Key Equality/Good Relations Programme

2.1 Community Cohesion Team:

Flags, emblems, sectional symbols - Re-imaging

Community groups continue to find creative ways to engage with their local areas to deliver reimagining projects with the Housing Executive's support in South & East Belfast, West Area and Ards & North Down Area. Local engagement and partnership working has supported the removal of graffiti, restoration of community murals and a programme supporting emerging artists to produce a series of artworks to reflect their local towns heritage from the period of April – June 2025 replacing graffiti. Further details are available upon request.

Estate Based Cohesion Funding

The Housing Executive's Community Involvement and Cohesion Unit continues to support community-based projects across 13 Housing Executive areas, working closely with local communities to support and assist them. There have been 54 estate-based projects funded in the first quarter of 2025/26. Further details available on request.

Interfaces

Housing Executive Interface sites

The Housing Executive continue to work with our partners in the Department for Justice to reimagine and reimage interfaces. This is done by taking a people centered, community led approach and working with key stakeholders in each of the areas in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.

We currently have 26 sites over 21 locations:

- 21 locations works are completed

- 3 locations currently operational
- 2 locations where there has been no community agreement to pursue at present

Communities in Transition - Areas at Risk

The Community Cohesion Unit continues to manage the Areas at Risk programme in both Greater Whitewell and Glenbank areas in North Belfast on behalf of Department for Communities (DfC). Details on this scheme are available on request.

Race Relations

Race Relations is an important part of the Housing Executive's work.

The Community Involvement and Cohesion Unit's Race Relations Officer works closely with BME Sector, our Good Relations Officers and Area Offices to support work on the ground promoting integration and supporting the development of race relations programmes. We have delivered 17 Race Relations projects between April to June 2025 with a view to raising awareness and promoting integration across and between our estates.

There are many other projects in the pipeline and still in development across Northern Ireland including 6 projected projects in Belfast region, 13 projected projects in North region and 10 projected projects in South region. Details are available on request.

Strategic Involvement and Cohesion Forum (SICF)

An initial meeting took place in May 2025 to discuss the areas of work the group will focus on in the coming months. A Terms of Reference has been agreed.

The purpose of this group is:

- Provide input to the Housing Services Division in matters relating to Community Involvement & Cohesion, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Provide evidence from lived experience of the services - policies/processes/procedures. Identify where changes can be made to those services to maximise the benefit for service users.
- Actively embrace a co-design* and co-production* approach to working and
- Act as a lobbying and influencer Forum by providing a collective voice for Cohesion issues, proactively promoting Community Cohesion and Involvement, informing thinking for other statutory bodies and positively influencing, supporting and promoting communities in transition
- To be consulted on an annual basis on the Housing Executive's Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy, for members to provide oversight and to monitor delivery of the Action Plan.

Membership of group is currently being reviewed, identifying additional potential group members (external and relevant).

In advance of above a very short survey will be issued seeking members' "lived experience" in terms of WG priorities to help identify gaps. The group will also

look at geographical gaps & level of involvement / interest in specific themes, i.e. race relations etc.

2.2 Housing For All:

The 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme currently supports 85 shared schemes (2,925 homes), working with 11 Housing Associations and 37 local Advisory Groups across the shared housing communities.

The benefits of shared housing however extend far beyond those 2,925 homes as the Housing Associations work on delivery of the programme with the Local Advisory Groups across the shared housing communities. The HAs manage and administer the local Advisory Groups to support the development and delivery of pre-Handover and five year Good Relations Plans.

A key support mechanism to the delivery of the Good Relations Plan is the establishment of an Advisory Group to inform the plan. The Advisory Group is made up of local stakeholders from the Housing Executive, Council, Political representatives, Community and Voluntary organisations and other statutory bodies working in the area.

The Good Relations Plan is managed by the Housing Association developing the shared scheme and includes 'bonding' programmes which are delivered to residents in the new shared neighbourhood and 'bridging' programmes which are delivered within and between new and surrounding communities. The 'bridging' enables benefits to communities and individuals who live, work and socialise within a five-mile radius of each of these developments.

Community Cohesion

The next Irish Traveller update will be in the 2nd Quarterly Report 2025/26.

2.3 Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group and Workstreams

EDI Steering Group / EDI Workstreams

The EDI Steering Group last met on 27th March 2025 and is scheduled to meet again in September 2025. The following EDI workstream meetings were held between 1st April and 30th June 2025:

- Race workstream: April and June 2025
- Disability Workstream: May 2025
- LGBTQ+ Workstream: May 2025
- Gender Workstream: June 2025

EDI Outreach Activity

The EDIS and Human Resources Teams met with the Department for Communities (DfC) Employment Team on 14th April to discuss employment pathway opportunities post Job Start Scheme. DfC also provided a schedule of job and careers events for the coming months. The EDIS and HR Teams also met with King's Trust on 7th May to explore some partnership working on jobs and work experience.

The EDI Outreach Manager and ARTES Manager are working together on a series of events to promote the construction industry to under-represented groups. A site visit of the CITB training facility took place on 16th April, with initial plans agreed for a construction skills event for schools planned to take place there in autumn. Trade events have also been confirmed in partnership with Women's Tec, with 4 events to take place across regions in 2025/26 including an event for Special Education Needs (SEN) students. The annual Work Inspiration Programme has been postponed to October and will take place in the Derry/Londonderry area in line with Affirmative Action Plan's outreach objectives.

EDI Events and Awareness Raising

Just A Minute (JAM) Card Face to Face Training, May-June 2025

JAM Card training for customer facing colleagues commenced in May 2025 with sessions being delivered in offices across the region including in Antrim, Belfast, Ballymena, Cookstown, Coleraine, Lisburn, Omagh, Derry/Londonderry and Newtownards. Over 300 colleagues have now been trained, with further sessions planned for post-summer months.

EDI/Health & Wellbeing (H&WB) Events, May 2025

Following on from the success of the Men's Health Event in November 2024, the Gender Workstream and H&WB Team came together again to collaborate on a series of events as part of Mental Health Awareness Month. Health events were held for colleagues in Omagh, Cookstown and Craigavon with external speakers and panel discussions, as well as sharing of info on our H&WB offer. Around 80 colleagues were engaged through the events with volunteers coming forward to join the Mental Health First Aiders and EDI Workstreams.

Learn at Lunch Sessions

A series of lunchtime learning events took place including:

- Employers for Disability NI Disability Case Law Session on 18th April
- BSL Sign Language Virtual Session on 9th May during Deaf Awareness Week
- Africa Day Event on 29th May

Refugee Week, 16-22 June 20

The EDIS Team supported a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Event at the Whitla Hall in Queen's University Belfast on 18th June as part of Refugee Week. Members of the Race Workstream also attended the Great Refugee Week Picnic on Saturday 21st June which was part funded by the Housing Executive.

2.4

Key Documents

The following documents can be viewed and downloaded by accessing the links below:

NIHE Equality Scheme

Housing Executive Equality Scheme

NIHE Disability Action Plan

Housing Executive Disability Action Plan

4th Comprehensive Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey

Irish Traveller Accommodation Survey 2018/19 Report and Tables

If you require any further information on any of topics discussed in this report or if you require the report in an alternative format please email your request to EDISTeam@nihe.gov.uk