



HOUSING COMMUNITY NETWORK ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



**Housing
Executive**



**Supporting™
Communities**
Empowering Society



CENTRAL
housing forum

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Housing Executive Chief Executive Foreword



As you read this report, I trust you will agree that it not only reflects the significant achievements and great work taking place across our neighbourhoods but also highlights the passion and commitment of those involved in our Housing Community Network. I would like to extend my deepest thanks to every member of the Housing Community Network whose tireless efforts, invaluable contributions, and sustained support are fundamental to making true community involvement a reality and are clearly illustrated by the level of work and dedication presented in these pages.

A thriving community is, and always will be, the cornerstone of a successful housing organisation. By consistently fostering strong relationships and partnerships, we continue to not only improve the quality of life for our tenants but also actively create a more vibrant, resilient, and sustainable environment for everyone.

In October 2024, we launched our new Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy. This has been co-designed and currently being delivered with our Housing Community Network. It details the commitment to continue to support our communities.

This year's report specifically details the impact of the support we have invested across all areas of Northern Ireland. It features powerful case studies and real-world examples that demonstrate the many ways we continue to engage our communities to promote and strengthen involvement; enable our communities to influence, shape and improve our services and empower our communities to embrace community cohesion.

By continuing to work together and build on this momentum, we are confident we can create even stronger, more inclusive, and truly resilient communities in the year ahead.

GRAINIA LONG
Chief Executive

Housing Executive Chair Foreword



As Chair, it is with renewed pride that I present this year's Housing Community Network (HCN) report, which powerfully demonstrates the collective progress and significant impact achieved through our continued, vital partnership with voluntary and community organisations across Northern Ireland.

Over the past year, we have built on the strong foundations laid, witnessing first-hand how our shared efforts are contributing to stronger, more resilient, and cohesive communities throughout our estates and neighbourhoods.

Community engagement and involvement remains our central priority. We continue to deepen our collaboration with the HCN, other statutory bodies, and our voluntary sector partners to ensure a truly community-led approach remains at the heart of promoting positive, enduring relationships and mutual respect within and between all communities.

Building on the successes of our partnerships, I want to express my profound gratitude to the committed members of the Housing Community Network, Central Housing Forum, Disability Forum, Youth Forum, and Rural Forum for their tireless work and invaluable commitment over the past year. I am thankful for the unwavering support of all our partners, and I look forward with great confidence and determination to the vital work that lies ahead.

NICOLE LAPPIN
Chair

Central Housing Forum Chair's Foreword



The past year has been another active and productive period for the Central Housing Forum. Our members have continued to play a recognised and meaningful role in working with the Housing Executive to co-design and co-produce policies, procedures, and services that directly impact tenants and communities across Northern Ireland.

It's important to acknowledge that our work has taken place against a backdrop of ongoing challenges, including the cost of living crisis and limited progress on the Social Housing Reform programme. Despite these uncertainties, our partnership with the Housing Executive remains strong, ensuring that their services continue to evolve for the benefit of local communities.

Through our involvement, we have influenced significant issues such as Welfare Reform, the review of the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy, and various policy and service changes. Our Sub Groups have also made progress on key areas including Maintenance, Cohesion, the Fundamental Review of Allocations, Sustainable Development, and Adaptations.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all members of the Central Housing Forum for their dedication and hard work over the past year. Special thanks go to Alan Johnston, who recently stepped down, for his valuable contributions. We also warmly welcome our new members, Wendy Kerr and Robert Campbell.

Looking ahead, we recognise the need to review our Terms of Reference to further embed co-design and co-production in all aspects of our work—at Central, Regional, Area, and Local Housing Community Network meetings. We will once again seek the commitment and signature of the Housing Executive's Chief Executive to reinforce our shared approach of working 'with' communities, not 'on to' them.

Community representatives continue to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Central Housing Forum. We are both honoured to hold these positions and grateful for the support and input of our fellow representatives. We also wish to acknowledge the guidance of Supporting Communities and the ongoing support from Housing Executive staff, especially Jill Smyth, Gus Moore, Naoimh McArdle-McFall, and Paddy McConnell. Our best wishes go to Caroline Connor and Deirdre

Crawford, who have moved departments and retired. Deirdre, in particular, made a significant impact through her work with the Housing Community Network and her commitment to building stronger, more inclusive neighbourhoods.

In the year ahead, our goal is to strengthen every tier of the Housing Community Network. By building on our agreed Terms of Reference and striving for consistency across all areas, we aim to help create sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive communities—together with Supporting Communities and the Housing Executive.

LINDA WATSON, Chair

Central Housing Forum Report

Central Housing Forum Members 2024/2025

Mid & East Antrim	Jan Roscoe	Rural Residents Forum	Patricia McQuillan
South	Keith McCann	Disability Forum	Patricia Bray
West	Linda Watson	NI Youth Forum	Martin Kelly
South Antrim	Wendy Kerr	Housing Executive	Jill Smyth Gus Moore Naomh McArdle-McFall Paddy McConnell
North Belfast	Liam Wiggans	Supporting Communities	Colm McDaid Conor Flanagan Darragh O'Neill
South & East Belfast	Bernie McConnell		
West Belfast & Shankill	Renee Crawford Ian McLaughlin		
South-West	Siobhan McDermott		
Causeway	Sheila McWilliams		
Ards & North Down	Stephen Mills		
South Down	Valerie Rooney		
Mid Ulster	Karina Murray		

Central Housing Forum (CHF) Update - Overview of the last year

During the past year, the CHF have worked very closely with the Housing Executive across the organisation to influence, shape and improve services. In particular, the CHF have worked continuously with staff in the Community Involvement and Cohesion Unit. Below are some highlights of the year.

Review of the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy

Together, the CHF produced the new Community Involvement and Cohesion Strategy using a co-design approach. They actively listened to everyone's views throughout the consultations and included the opinions of the communities that make up the HCN and other important stakeholders who work in Housing Executive communities. Thanks to the dedication of the CHF members, the consultation process was interactive and meaningful, culminating in the successful launch of the Strategy at the Community Conference in October 2024.

Annual Community Conference

Members of the Community Conference Working Group were also incredibly active. They planned, participated in, and spoke at the Community Conference, held in the Tullyglass Hotel. This conference was a huge success, thanks to the hard work of all members and the volunteer hours that was attributed to it. We even saw the NIYF take a place on stage to present for the first time, which helped the Housing Executive with succession planning with young people – a truly inspiring moment. Building on previous themes such as Community Wealth Building and the Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy, this year's conference focuses on 'Sustaining Communities'.

Adaptations Working Group

The Adaptations working group, another vital part of the CHF's community effort, successfully helped develop user-friendly adaptation leaflets through co-design with both public and private sector grants. This collaborative effort contributed to compliance plus being awarded for CSE – a huge achievement for all involved.

Review of sub-groups

In 2023, Central Forum members undertook a review of existing sub groups and identified additional areas for focus. Members continued to make a positive impact across these groups, with the next comprehensive review scheduled for 2026.

Engagement with the Housing Executive Board and Senior Executives

The Forum maintained regular engagement with the Housing Executive's Chair, Board, Tenant & Customer Services Committee, Chief Executive, and Directors. Members provided updates on sub group activities, shared achievements, and discussed opportunities for further improvement to benefit local communities.

Online HCN Member's Forum

Forum members have been proactive in reviewing and enhancing the Online HCN Member's Forum to ensure it is as user-friendly as possible. The platform has now been extended to other levels of the Housing Community Network, making it easier for members to access meeting documents and information.

Customer Service Excellence

The Central Housing Forum, alongside other tiers of the Housing Community Network, played a key role in supporting the Housing Executive's efforts to maintain and improve its Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation. The organisation achieved its best ever CSE result with 29 Compliance Plus points, an increase of four from the previous year.

Race relations

The entire CHF was instrumental in the co-production of the Migrants Housing Myths Leaflet. This journey began in April 2024 when the leaflet was first shared with the CHF. Members provided comments and constructive criticism, understanding how vital this leaflet would be for our communities. The leaflets were sent back to the CHF for a final review before being printed and distributed in February 2025. Without the invaluable feedback provided by CHF members, this would simply not have been possible.

ABRI Housing Association Best Practice Visit

In September 2024, several members of the CHF, along with members of the Community Involvement & Cohesion team travelled to Southampton for a best practice visit to ABRI Housing Association. The CHF were inspired by the social value work being undertaken there and brought back some wonderful suggestions that they believe can be adapted and used to benefit the Housing Executive. The findings from this valuable visit were presented to the Directors and Chief Executive in October 2024, and the CHF are very much looking forward to a return visit when ABRI are in a position to do so.

It has been a year filled with hard work, dedication, and significant achievements across various areas of community involvement and cohesion. These successes are a testament to the commitment and passion of everyone involved. Thanks to the CHF for your continued efforts and your unwavering dedication to making Housing Executive communities a better place.

Categories of Work:

The Central Housing Forum continued to meet on a monthly basis, a hybrid option is available for those who could not attend in person. Members continue to utilise the benefits of a hybrid set up in the Housing Executive's Boardroom to ensure important input.

The Central Housing Forum came together 13 times over the year and received updates with presentations on the following:

Information:

- COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/COHESION STRATEGY REPORTS
- FIND YOUR SILENCE (Damp & Mould Action Plan)
- ASSET MANAGEMENT / CONTRACTS UPDATE
- ARTES UPDATE
- COMMUNITIES STRATEGIES
- SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES: IMPACT 2023/24
 - SUPPORTING THE HOUSING COMMUNITY NETWORK
- CHF MANIFESTO
- NET ZERO UPDATE
- HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY- DOMESTIC ABUSE ACTION PLAN
- CORPORATE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT
- FUNDAMENTAL REVIEW OF ALLOCATIONS PROJECT UPDATE
- SUSTAINING TENANCIES DRAFT STRATEGY
- COMMUNITY SAFETY AND RACE RELATIONS
- PATCH MANAGER REVIEW
- TUATH HA TENANT ENGAGEMENT
- SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC PLAN
- RESPONSE MAINTENANCE AND CSE UPDATE
- SUCCESSION OF TENANCY
- STREETS AHEAD PUBLICATION
- DAMP-MOULD/CSE UPDATE
- REMOVAL OF INTIMIDATION POINTS UPDATE
- DRAFT SOCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION
- COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & COHESION STRATEGY 2024-2029

On behalf of the Central Housing Forum Members, Patricia and I very much look forward to another

busy and interesting year for the Central Housing Forum. We especially look forward to helping deliver the Housing Executive's Community Involvement & Cohesion Strategy.



LINDA WATSON
(Chairperson CHF)



PATRICIA MCQUILLAN
(Vice Chairperson CHF)

Belfast Region

North Belfast



Community Grants

£14,659.28



Community Cohesion Funding

£54,473.78



Community Safety Funding

£55,000



Community Lets

15



Social Enterprise

£20,000



David McErlean, Patch Manager, and Dr Sean Brennan, Good Relations Officer, Housing Executive, are shown a new mural displaying helplines by Sam Cochrane at Midland Boxing Club in north Belfast.

Midland Boxing Club

The coaches wanted to promote health and wellbeing to the members of the boxing club, and to give them advice or help if they needed to talk. They had an idea to have murals painted in both the changing facilities to highlight groups and information for the members to contact. As this was the boxing champion, Carl Frampton's first gym, he was contacted to help launch the initiative, for which he was only too happy. The coaches and members see these murals as the first step for people who might be too embarrassed or afraid to ask for help. It was a great cross community project to design the artwork and install it, with funding help from the Community Cohesion Unit at the Housing Executive, giving all who see and use it knowledge that they are not alone and help is always available 24 hours a day.



Dr Sean Brennan, Good Relations Officer, Housing Executive, with the Chinese lion and some of the performers at the festival at Wolfhill Centre.

Ligoneil Improvement Association

North Belfast held a showcase of music, dance, and food from across the world in a multicultural celebration. People from Poland, the Philippines and the Middle East were among those who provided a spectacular backdrop at the extravaganza in Wolfhill, Ligoniel. Dancers from ArtsEkta also entertained the crowds who attended, helping the project reach its aim to improve community relations. As well as entertainment and food, we held workshops to test their own skills in Chinese fan dance, Chinese Lion dance and some South Asian dance workshops. From a local perspective we had some Bohran and Dhol drummers. This one-day event supported by the Housing executive in the form of a Community Cohesion Grant, encouraged shared participation in diverse community activities, highlighting what we all have in common as well as celebrating differences in culture.



Housing Executive Good Relations Officer Dr Sean Brennan with some of the players and organisers of the Belfast Super Cup which involved 300 local youths.

22nd Old Boys

The group ran a diversionary cross community football tournament in July and August 2024. Over 300 young men from across Belfast were kicking around in the Belfast Super Cup. The games were played in the Marrowbone Millenium Park and Claredon Sports Complex, which are centrally based to cover the catchment areas of Ardoyne, Lower Old Park, Woodvale, Shankill and Ballysillan and New Lodge, this was facilitated by Community Football Company in conjunction with cross community partners 22nd Old Boys football club and Shamrock football club. The event was run using the same format as the Champions League, with the help of Housing Executive funding. The whole event helped to develop opportunities to bring communities together, fueling a spirit of unity and passion through football.

Photography organisation Belfast Exposed received a grant from the Housing Executive for a cross-community project, See Our Voice, to help people in north Belfast improve their wellbeing. Housing Executive Good Relations Officer Sean Brennan (back left) is photographed with some of the participants.

Belfast Region

South and East Belfast



Community Grants

£18,742.47



Community Cohesion Funding

£52,513.95



Community Safety Funding

£78,830



Community Lets

11



Social Enterprise

£20,000



Santa, and Elf and Rudolph welcoming two young children to Santas grotto as part of the Holiday Harmony event hosted by Belfast South Community Regeneration.

Belfast South Community Regeneration

Holiday Harmony, a community centred initiative designed to bring families, children, and diverse cultural groups in the Sandy Row area for a series of festive educational and inclusive events. The project promoted safety, community cohesion and cultural celebration during the Christmas and Halloween periods. Focus was set on fostering a sense of unity, improving race relations, and strengthening community ties. The activities provided educational opportunities and fun for all while promoting inclusivity. Some of the key features of the event

where: enhanced community cohesion by the bringing together of different ages, backgrounds, and cultural groups. A safer celebrations and anti-social behaviour workshop to target safety education, particularly around fireworks, the use of and minimising the likelihood of injuries and disturbances.



Housing Executive Good Relations Officer Lisa Hull with some of the artistes who took part in the Féile na hAbhann - Festival of the River.

Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group

With the help of a community cohesion grant from the Housing Executive, the residents of the Lower Ormeau had an array of sights and sounds on display at last year's Feile na hAbhann with an attendance of 1,000's along the Lagan Rivers sidewalks, participating or just enjoying the celebrations. On show there was a vibrant feast of colour, music, and food from all around the world. It was a great collaboration between the local council, Feile an Phobhal and other organisations. The festival showcased the fantastic work of minority ethnic groups and what they bring to our area, creating a vibrant buzz and vibe, bringing about conversations and interactions that promote good relations. With so much to see and do, it was a real feast for the senses, bringing art, melodies, and recipes from many different and exotic parts of the world together. It allowed the group to add artists and acts from cultures all around the world living in Belfast and bring that culture to the festival. This project gave people the opportunity to engage and try something new and developed key friendships and partnerships between established communities and newcomers.



Lisa Hull, Housing Executive Good Relations Officer, Mayor of Derry and Strabane Lilian Seenoi-Barr, Jahswill Emmanuel BEM, Chairperson and Founder of MSCNI, Belfast Lord Mayor Micky Murray, Anthony Clarke, Race Relations Officer, Housing Executive, and players from the All-Nation Junior Team, Somalia Junior Team and Iraq Junior Team.

Multi-Ethnic Sports & Cultures Northern Ireland

Young footballers from across Belfast attended the event, and were glad to have Belfast Mayor, Micky Murray there to launch the proceedings. A wide range of ethnic backgrounds took part in a 7-a side tournament to help build relationships between different cultures and backgrounds. A workshop in good relations was hosted by South Belfast Alternatives for all minority groups, asylum seekers, refugees and those from social housing. With funding from the Housing Executives Race Relations stream, twelve teams took part in the six week event over August and September of 2024, these included, Iraq NI Youth, Syria NI Youth, Somalia NI Youth, All Nation Youth, Zimbabwe NI Youth, Ghana NI Youth, Eritrea NI Youth, Donegal Pass Youth, East Belfast Giant Youth, Sudan NI Youth, Avoniel Youth and Southern Africa Youth, with the main aim to provide a welcoming safe space while fostering positive inter racial and local community cohesion.

Belfast Region

West Belfast



Community Grants

£19,732.87



Community Cohesion Funding

£67,576.86



Community Safety Funding

£88,000



Community Lets

6



Social Enterprise

£14,500



Ciarrai Reilly, Housing Executive, Micheal Donnelly, from Upper Springfield Development Trust.

Upper Springfield Development Trust

The Trust's specialised community safety team is supporting residents who want to report crime and anti-social behaviour in the area directly to the Housing Executive, PSNI, Belfast City Council and other statutory organisations. The group want every resident to feel safe in their home, enjoy living in their neighbourhood and feel confident when reporting anti-social behaviour to the relevant authorities. Areas covered by the project include Castle Street and Divis Street areas in the city

Belfast Region

centre, stretching to the outskirts of west Belfast, including Suffolk Road, Poleglass, Twinbrook and Lagmore. By supporting people to report incidents of crime, our different programmes help people act against wrongdoing, fostering a sense of security and control within the community.



Participants from the Shankill tracing their roots with help from the Ulster Historical Foundations Gillian Hunt.

Greater Shankill Community Council

Two groups of participants took part in this 8 week programme, funded by a community involvement grant, that was held in their newly refurbished premises. A genealogist from the Ulster Historical Foundation facilitated the course and covered topics such as an introduction to family history, 1901-1911 census, Ulster Covenant and births, deaths and marriage records. The project gave the attendees and increased knowledge of what research entails, further basic I.T skills, a reduction in social isolation and an increase in the interest of those seeking information on their family History. People became involved in the project after commemorating the first World War during 2014-2018. 5,500 men from the Shankill area left to fight, and less than 4,000 returned. Most only knew they had a relative that fought or died in the war, this project helped them to discover more about what they already knew or heard, and give them the background and impact it had on the community.



Workers from the Falls Residents Association hand out selection boxes to children from a nearby school as part of the Seasonal Gatherings programme.

Falls Residents Association

The Falls Residents Association seasonal project included a number of activities across three seasons, Autumn, Winter and Spring. The project had a number of elements including cross community, intergenerational and cross-sectoral groups. These were delivered by the Falls Residents Association and partner organisations from both the community and youth sectors. The project provided activities for people from all walks of life to join a fit for purpose programme of events that caters to all needs and abilities, that included: outdoor movie nights, senior and junior bake off, name but a few, and special events around Halloween, Christmas and St Patricks day. The last number of years have seen the programme go from strength to strength and the numbers of participants have grown each year. It was an opportunity for the community to come together to enjoy social interactions and with support stands and services installed during the events, giving advice on such things as benefit and housing, which the attendees availed of this valuable addition. This widely diverse project, funded with a Housing Executive Community Involvement Grant, has given the Falls area an uplifting boost and a chance to see how the Falls Residents Association is working on their behalf.

Belfast Region

Lisburn Castlereagh



Community Grants

£18,696.98

Community Cohesion Funding

£31,851.46

Community Safety Funding

£6,000

Community Lets

19

Social Enterprise

£18,255

The Respect Programme teaches teenagers about the consequences of anti-social behaviour and crime, including hate crime, on communities and themselves.

Children's Safety Education Foundation

Almost 1,000 students from four different schools took part in the Respect Programme funded by the Housing Executive's Community Safety fund. Developed by the Children's Safety Education Foundation, the programme taught teenagers about the consequences of anti-social behaviour and crime, including hate crime, on communities and themselves. By funding new text books, e books, worksheets and student surveys, the foundation encouraged young people to challenge stereotypes, think about citizenship issues and consider opposing viewpoints. This helped the students to deal with problems they might encounter in everyday

life such as peer pressure, bullying and personal safety. This is the 7th year this programme has run and the four schools that participated, Fort Hill Integrated College, Lisnagarvey High School, St Patricks Academy and Laurel Hill Community College. The project helped their pupils to get to grips with anti-social behaviour issues in a constructive way.

Attendees at an Irish language event at the Lisburn Féile with Andrew Charles, from the Housing Executive, and Lisburn Féile Chairperson, Gerry McClory.



Four adults standing on the steps of Lagan Valley Civic Centre, smiling and enjoying the weather.

Lisburn Féile

This event was held at Lagan Valley Civic Centre, in Lisburn, thanks to funding from the Community Cohesion team, to highlight the array of cultures within our communities. The Feile was able to showcase a variety of foods from around the world at different locations in the city, as well as dance displays from Irish, Arabic and Brazilian groups, and provided a chance for people to learn or brush up on the Irish or Ulster Scots languages. The event also held two roller discos for all ages, and for those who remember their childhood, regardless of where you came from, this is a worldwide activity to keep with the theme, this helped with the promotion of good relations in our estates. The Feile provided an ideal opportunity to grow this important work and encouraged everyone to take part to help develop a more cohesive community.



Housing Executive Good Relations Officer Andrew Charles with organisers of the Halftown family festival.

Halftown Resident's Association

The Halftown Residents Association held a summer festival, with the Lower Maze Hall being the central hub, which included a hectic agenda for all ages to enjoy. During the week of activities, which was funded by a Housing Executive community grant, the group put on arts and crafts, a tea dance, games night and a walking tour of the former Maze Prison. To keep a wide and varied schedule there was also bingo, a gardening competition and a scavenger hunt. This was concluded with a family fun day, the residents attend in numbers to take part in the fancy dress competition, they brought food from their own community garden, there was a BBQ, stalls and various activities for the younger members to enjoy. The residents were keen to create a stronger sense of community and aimed to achieve a sustainable environment in which they were all proud to live, learn, play and work.



Members of the Lisburn SAFE steering group at a meeting.

Lisburn People's Support Project

A commendable community safety project called Lisburn SAFE was created. 100 highly trained volunteers took part in the project which helped to make communities in the city safer and where people could be proud to live. Local volunteers worked to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour, crime, drugs misuse, environmental damage and public disorder. The initiative was managed by Lisburn People's Support Project. The project was supported by the Resurgam Community Development Trust programmes including Healthy Living, Youth Initiative and Early Intervention Lisburn. The aim was for every resident to feel safe in their home, enjoy living in their neighbourhood and feel confident when reporting anti-social behaviour to the relevant authorities.

South Region

Ards and North Down



Community Grants

£18,335.76



Community Cohesion Funding

£72,098.56



Community Safety Funding

£18,000



Community Lets

28



Social Enterprise

£21,377



Eileen Thompson, Area Manager, Housing Executive along with members of the Ards Peninsula Villages Partnership and Mayor Alistair Cathcart launching the kite festival

Ards Peninsula Villages Partnership

This joint Ards Peninsula festival brought together the eight villages of Ballywalter, Carrowdore, Cloughey, Greyabbey, Kircubben, Millisle, Portaferry and Portavogie. Together they organised and staffed the Peninsula Kite Festival during the summer of 2024, with the help of a Community Cohesion Grant. The event was established to encourage relationships between the villages and to share their knowledge and skills. Through this family event, the east coast of the Ards Peninsula became the showcase through its beaches and family friendly locations. Kite flying and sand sculptures provided activities everyone could join in with and proved to be a wonderful way to show off the coastline. Food and craft stands were installed with other family and children's entertainment. Over 5,000 people attended the festival.



Ken and Glenn from Blaze FX with leaders and participants from the Glen Ward Community Development Association .

Glen Ward Community Development Association

After the welcomed success of the phase 1 reimagining project, painting the gable wall of a shop, another wall was identified at the back of the shop carpark which was used for graffiti and an area for anti-social behaviour. With the help of a Housing Executive Community Cohesion Grant, the local community, under the instruction of Ken and Glenn from Blaze FX, were able to produce a more aesthetically pleasing area which has deterred anti-social behaviour and random graffiti. By involving the youth this gave them a greater sense of pride in their area. A clean up of the carpark was also carried out to increase the aesthetics. The youth that participated learnt new skills and took part in workshops that educated them about keeping their community tidy and have respect other residents.



Sarah Harkness-Robinson, Davy Thompson, Davy Milligan, Billy Sproule West Winds Development Association (WWDA), Julie McGowan (WWDA), Councillor Steven Irvine standing beside one of the reimagining panels in the area.

West Winds Development Association

The group had a long-standing interest in the removal of paramilitary murals and emblems within the estate. They have worked hard and engaged with the community and others including Newtownards Cultural Society and Councillor Steven Irvine to help progress in this positive step, as part of a wider reimagining programme and this coincided with the removal of other threatening signage towards the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI), presence in the estate. With a Community Cohesion Grant, from the Housing Executive, the proposed artwork was installed in Canberra Gardens and Blenheim Drive depicting an aeroplane to reference with the street names and the second would depict the world-famous flautist, James Galway and his links to the area. The project's objectives included the removal of three paramilitary murals and a more positive perception of the estate for non-residents, including passing traffic.

South Region

South Down



Community Grants

£18,665.67



Community Cohesion Funding

£42,431.29



Community Safety Funding

£13,800



Community Lets

3



Social Enterprise

£20,000



Quiz teams from Killyleagh battle it out for the coveted prize of “Quiz Champions” which was held as part of the Killyleagh Summer Festival in July 2024 which was organised by the Killyleagh Community Association.

Killyleagh Community Association

Killyleagh Community Association organised a Summer Festival which ran between 15/08/2024 to 18/08/2024 which was funded under the Housing Executive Community Involvement Funding Stream. This community event delivered a wide range of activities and events with something on offer for everyone in the community. Activities included a cake baking competition with each team providing one cake, judged by local celebrities with the competition open for everyone to enter,

a free Shakespeare play on Saturday night put on by Off the Ground Theatre in the courtyard of Killyleagh Castle which catered for all ages, a host of games for the younger children of the village, an afternoon on the water of Strangford Lough with kayak and paddleboarding racing between the teams for the 18+ age range and a quiz evening on the Friday night with 8 mixed teams competing for points, (open to 16+). The event was a resounding success which was very well received by the local community.



A young girl in dressed as Red Riding Hood, has the big bad wolf lurking behind her at the Halloween festivities in Downpatrick.

For the past 11 years this public event has been delivered from the town centre, as a shared space that welcomes every community member and resident with in the Downpatrick area. This single event on Halloween night, funded by a Housing Executive Community Safety Grant was developed so everyone could come and enjoy a safe family friendly environment. The event originally came about to address the high incidents of anti-social behaviour around the Halloween period. Working in partnership with representatives from a variety of local groups that first came together in 2012, and joined by statutory bodies such as the Housing Executive, PSNI

and Council Staff. These representatives planned, managed and delivered the first event with a complete buy in from all the local communities. This had an immediate effect of reducing anti-social behaviour. The 2024 event was again successful and continued to build community confidence, reduces anti-social activities and the fear of crime amongst our vulnerable and older residents.



Three-year-old Lexi Madine shows no fear of snakes as she holds onto a boa constrictor, a native species of central and south America.

Drumaness & District Community Association

Drumaness & District Community Association received Community Involvement funding from the Housing Executive to put towards a Summer Fete and Clean Up. A brilliant day was had at the cross-community event at Dan Rice Hall - which included children's activities such as Petting Farms, boat races, balloon sculpting and magic shows. Showcasing campfires, a country-themed disco with a Bucking Bron-co, the country themed night was also funded as part of this joint initiative with the Housing Executive. Open to all ages, the Community Clean Up was also organised by the group, aiding in fostering awareness, appreciation, and a sense of responsibility for preserving the local area.

South Region

South West



Community Grants

£16,967.53



Community Cohesion Funding

£30,986.76



Community Safety Funding

£4,150



Community Lets

20



The community fun day was a hit with families: Darryn and Terri Bradley with children Sophia and Sé.

Shandon Park Residents Committee

At the community fun day, families came together for an afternoon of free activities and food. Volunteers from three local estates, Shandon Park, Strule and Centenary, and Lammy who united together to organise the event, were thrilled when over 300 people from different communities participated. They hoped to engage with residents and encourage more people to get involved with local groups and learn about the work that gets done. They were able to facilitate a range of activities including a magic show, bouncy castles and food. Due to the amazing partnership and response, they are already planning our next event. The participants were proud to foster a sense of community spirit and good relations between the three estates.



Father and daughter enjoying the festivities during the Christmas party held by the Culmore and O’Kane Residents Association.

Culmore and O’Kane Residents Association

The programme started with a family fun day held in August 2024, with a Community Cohesion Grant from the Housing Executive, the group was able to set out a range of activities that ran through to December 2024. To avoid anti-social behaviour coming up to Halloween, the group took parents and children to the Ulster Folk Museum Folk Park in Omagh. On the back of this the resident’s association held a four-week project prior to the community children’s Christmas party. This involved all the groups that attended the community centre, helping to bridge the divide between Culmore and O’Kane. It brought together the young and old with in the community, with an aim to encourage disengaged residents to get involved. With Santa making a guest appearance and other activities to take part in, the group were able to build a sense of community and pride.



Six young people sit on a banana boat enjoying one of the many activities put on by the Devenish Partnership Forum.

Devenish Partnership Forum

With a focus on promoting health and well being and community engagement through a variety of outdoor activities, the participants had the opportunity to engage in kayaking, fishing, banana boating and hydro biking, with the hope of encouraging a love of nature and promoting physical fitness. With funding from a Housing Executives Community Cohesion Grant, the group were able to offer additional tailored cooking sessions for older men that focused on nutritious and delicious meals to support their health goals. Further recreational sports such as tennis, pickleball and golf provided avenues for social interaction and friendly competition, enhancing mental well-being. Gardening activities, such as pot planting and garden décor arts and crafts nurtured a sense of community and further connection to nature. This was promoted by showcasing the groups allotments during an open day.

South Region

South



Community Grants

£24,717.86

Community Cohesion Funding

£103,386.78

Community Safety Funding

£116,273

Community Lets

37

Social Enterprise

£10,000

Children in Armagh are getting active this Autumn with a free programme of sports coaching which is bringing young people from all communities together. Armagh Harps GFC are running the 26-week programme after receiving one of our Community Cohesion grants.

Armagh Harps Gaelic Football Club (GFC)

This project was designed to encourage a wider range of people to come together in a common interest through sport, in the newly refurbished facility at Abbey Park. These facilities include a large indoor sports hall which was used to play

basketball, indoor football and netball. This programme will help to improve cohesion and good relations throughout a widely deprived area that is also a local Neighbourhood Renewal Area, it also includes a number of ethnic minority communities who encouraged the Armagh Harps to look at other sports. From this, a further range of sports and recreational activities were organised to help bring the local community closer together.



Young people attend Armagh's Athletic Grounds with (L-R) Paul Kelly, Kerry-Lee Kerney, the Housing Executive's Michelle Hazlett and Barry McCrory

Edgarstown Residents Association

This cross-community youth project continues to foster friendships through sports after their initial visit to Armagh's Athletic Grounds. A joint project, Interlink Youth Initiative, with Drumgor Detached Youth Project and Edgarstown Residents Association offered 3 months of sports tournaments and cultural visits with the help of a grant from the Housing Executive. With both groups working closely together, the project helped to nurture positive relationships between the young people that will last far into the future. This was achieved by bringing the groups together through regular sports activities including football, darts and basketball. This help to forge friendships and develop a strong sense of unity between our communities and the young people involved. The comprehensive programme also included a series of cultural visits, like the one to Armagh's Athletic Grounds and other sports grounds. There were also visits to peace walls, to encourage a cultural exchange and a chance for participants to learn from each other.



Longstone Residents' Association members Cathy-Ann Morris, Terry McCann, Mary Crossan with the Housing Executive's Michelle Hazlett and children Louglann, Darcy Louise, Eve and Jack

Longstone Resident's Association

Longstone Resident's Association had an idea to champion better physical health and mental wellbeing in the community. The group wanted to supply sports equipment for the whole community to use. The association already had its multi-use games area that opened in 2019, but they had no equipment to make full use of its potential. Now they have a wide range of equipment, with help from a grant from the Housing Executive, including hockey sticks, skipping ropes, multi-use nets and rebounder nets. Participants made great use of the new equipment with a six-week sports programme for children in the area; and the Longstone Resident's Association continue to give more opportunities to people of all ages to improve their health and be as active as possible.

South Region

Mid Ulster



Community Grants

£18,228.62



Community Cohesion Funding

£33,689.40



Community Safety Funding

£33,184.50



Community Lets

3



(L-R) The Housing Executive's Good Relations Officer Anne Marie Convery and Area Manager Sharon Crooks join in the fun at Soul Resort's youth summer scheme

Soul Resort

Last year's Soul Resort Youth Summer Scheme was a week-long event of fun filled activities. The group started the week with a BBQ and followed this up daily with a range of fun events including Zorb Football, a games night, a ninja wall and even a rodeo bull. Through the project the group engaged with the young people in building new relationships to help improve their confidence and wellbeing. We all know that the holidays can be a difficult time for families and we were able to offer all of our activities free of charge.



Teresa Pearson getting creative at recent pottery painting class

Dungannon West Recycled Teenagers

The decision by the group, Dungannon West Recycled Teenagers, to combat social isolation and loneliness among senior citizens proved to be a great success. Since its establishment in 2007 the group has been a beacon of hope and connection for older adults, fostering inclusivity in the area. They regularly held classes and networking events, but with the arrival of COVID-19 we found this particularly challenging for many members in terms of extreme isolation. As restrictions eased, they had to rebuild connections, renew friendships and provide a supportive environment for both long standing and new members. Initiatives they have completed this year have included partnerships with St Elizabeths Group from Moygashel and Caledon Open Door Club, who facilitated workshops in mindfulness, gardening and pottery, activities designed to nurture both creativity and companionship while always creating connections in the community.



Anne Marie Convery, Housing Executive Good Relations Officer, with some of the people involved with the project.

Fairhill Youth Centre

At Fairhill Youth Centre the group are dedicated to empowering the youth of Maghera by fostering social inclusion, promoting health and enhancing overall wellbeing within the community. To enforce these attributes the local youth will capture, on film, a snapshot of life in the town. By making the short film, the group enabled the young people to form relationships, build life skills and develop a sense of respect, and stability with the wider Maghera community. As expected, this project helped to focus on the youth of the area in positive ways and helped to reduce anti-social behaviour. The group hope that this project serves as a catalyst for future projects. A Presentation Night allowed the youth to present their survey findings and film aiming to raise awareness of the underlying fundamental principle that all children are equally important and valued contributors to and members of the local community.

North Region

South Antrim



Community Grants

£20,000



Community Cohesion Funding

£123,650.20



Community Safety Funding

£67,512



Community Lets

20



A happy group of community members who were among the 800-strong crowd attending the All About Us Community Engagement and Fun Day in Greystone, Antrim

All About Us

All About Us wanted to raise awareness of vital services available to young people and adults with additional needs in the community. With a Community Involvement Grant from the Housing Executive, they group were able to host an event as a way of building community relations and raising awareness of vital services available to all. Over 800 people flocked to the community engagement day in Greystone, Antrim. The event helped to effectively promote inclusion and skills for isolated people, their families and anybody who attended. The event proved to be a great way to bring the communities of Greystone and Antrim together and promote good relations throughout South Antrim.



Newtownabbey Arts and Cultural Network put on a rendition of “Shrek” in St Johns Parish Church, Whitehouse.

The project delivered a number of key issues that were identified through consultations with the local community, key stakeholders and in line with multiple government strategies both local and national. The group were involved in offering support to the younger generation in 3 key areas:

- 1 Mental health and well-being by building confidence and resilience.
- 2 Digital skills and digital inclusion.
- 3 Digital mental health project.

Working with 15 young people across a 6 session programme, funded by a Community Cohesion Grant, with the objective to empower the participants to be able to take control of their emotional health and well-being so they had a more confident and positive input into their own lives and the community.



The carefully selected group of participants eager and ready to start a long programme with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council on the Holocaust.

With help from a Housing Executive Community Cohesion Grant, Antrim and Newtownabbey council were able to launch its Holocaust Programme that aimed to promote a greater understanding of the impact of identity-based discrimination and violence. The programme focused on the Holocaust during the Nazi occupation of Germany and the Genocides that took place in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. With 16 places open to participants, the final cohort was made up of 5 elected members and 11 community leaders, 5 of whom were the Housing Executives Young Rural Housing Network members. The programme had an extensive and intense series of workshops that included the Holocaust, the Genocides in 4 countries, local visits to relevant sites, and an international visit to Podgorze, Schindler's Factory and Auschwitz and finishing with a workshop on reflections.

North Region

Mid & East Antrim



Community Grants

£14,762.00

Community Cohesion Funding

£30,386.17

Community Safety Funding

£30,386.17

Community Lets

31

Social Enterprise

£15,000

Marking sixty years of Ballykeel: (LR) The Housing Executive's John Read and Sabrina Mark with Rosemary McCrory and Area Manager Carolyn Crawford.

Residents recently celebrated the thriving Ballykeel community with a special tree planting ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the estate in Ballymena. Working alongside Ballykeel 1 Moving Forward Community Group we donated the

Horn Beam tree which has become a welcome addition to the area's community garden. The symbol of the tree will celebrate this special anniversary, but it will also be a tree of remembrance for all casualties of conflict. Planting the tree near our mural commemorating the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings has really enhanced the area and we're looking forward to seeing it grow and flourish alongside our wonderful community.



Housing Executive Good Relations Officer for Mid & East Antrim, John Read (left), joins Michael Clarke (middle), Chairman of Sunnylands and Woodburn Community Development Group in Carrickfergus and Edward Hanna (right), from Utopian Training with the young participants in the Arise and Shine development programme, delivered with Housing Executive Community Cohesion funding.

Sunnylands and Woodburn Community Development Group

Sunnylands and Woodburn Community Development Group delivered a special wellbeing project. It gave them the opportunity to support local young people in developing themselves mentally, emotionally and physically through different activities. This gave the young people the knowledge in how to demonstrate self-development that can be used as a bedrock to becoming economically active and to assist the young people to make the best out of current employability opportunities. The first stage was the Personal Development and Wellbeing programme that was accredited through the Open College Network Level 1, then the group were able to offer an OCN Level 1 on Employability Skills and rounded the project up with a community tidy-up.



Two girls enjoy one of the activities on show at Portglenone Big Splash Festival.

Portglenone Enterprise Group

The Big Splash is a village festival which has grown out of a community tradition that spans back to the 1960's. The event lasted four days, that brought together the entire community. Activities included water sports on the river Bann, vintage rally, teddy bears picnic, movie night and a multi activity fun day with various stalls showcasing the work of the many local interest groups in the village, this was accomplished with the help from a Community Involvement Grant from the Housing Executive. The Big Splash was an opportunity to nurture cohesion and wellbeing on an annual basis. Most events and activities were free of charge, and this was very important at this time of financial difficulty. This long running event has continued to encourage and strengthen community development and participation and promoted good relations, which is very important to a rural village.

North Region

Causeway



Community Involvement Grants

£19,938.88



Community Cohesion Funding

£36,818.86



Community Lets

18



Woodvale residents Isobel Cully and family enjoy the activities at the opening of Bushmills and District Community Association's community garden in Bushmills.

Bushmills and District Community Association

Bushmills and District Community Association celebrated its 50th anniversary birthday, with the help from a Housing Executive Community Involvement Grant, by opening a new community garden. The Sowing the Seeds project formed part of the intergenerational launch event alongside the official ceremony. The garden project involved community group volunteers, local businesses and from residents from Bushmills, Portballintrae and surrounding areas. Volunteers from these areas have also kept up the maintenance since the official opening.



*Standing - Gareth Doran/ Sandra Quigg (NIHE), Mayor Ciaran Mc Quillan, Maude Anderson (Chair of Coleraine Borough 50+ Forum) Nuala Mc Goldrick (NIHE)
Sitting - Rosemary Mc Caw (Secretary Coleraine Borough 50+ Forum) Sally Mc Donald (Treasurer Coleraine 50+ Forum)*

Coleraine 50+ Forum

The morale of all in attendance was boosted at the Coleraine's 50+ Forum's information day and tea dance. A broad range of agencies set up stalls offering vital re-sources and information in the beautiful surroundings of the Lodge Hotel. The group has strived to empower older members of the community by highlighting and making them aware of the activities that are available to them, this was practically demonstrated on the day. After enjoying a delicious lunch, the participants danced the afternoon away accompanied by music from Francis Faulkner. The project, funded by a Community Involvement Grant, recognised that connection is vitally important in any community and every year this event brings people together and forges lasting relationships across the Causeway area. Transport arrangements were made for vulnerable residents who look forward to this event every year, and organisers, stakeholders and funders feel a real sense of achievement to see residents enjoying themselves so much.



Pictured during the Millburn Community Association Fun Day (from left) Bronagh McCambridge, Millburn Community Association volunteer, Billy Ellis, Millburn Community Association Outreach Worker, Kerri Chapman, Millburn Community Association Volunteer and Emay Ellis, Millburn Community Association Outreach Worker

Millburn Community Association

Making happy memories was at the heart of a Coleraine community summer project funded by The Housing Executive. The project gave local families peace of mind knowing their children have a safe environment, with quality activities to keep them active throughout the summer months. Activities on offer boosted residents physical and mental well-being, tackled social isolation, and helped build relationships. The Coleraine community summer project offered fun and inclusive family event with help from a Community Involvement Grant. The numbers of people who turned out to the fantastic events in Ballysally to enjoy projects such as the Hawaiian Day was a testament to a brilliantly run and fully inclusive scheme.



Full of chat....Delighted members of the Moneydig community gather to try out the new chatty bench funded by The Housing Executive and celebrate winning two Best kept Council Amenity Awards. Seated (left to right) Patricia McQuillan MBE, Secretary, Moneydig Rural Network, Thor the dog, Jean Henderson, Housing Executive tenant and Mary Gibson, Chair of Moneydig Rural Network. Standing is Ian Henderson, Housing Executive tenant. Ian and Jean Henderson have planted all the flowers in Moneydig

Moneydig Rural Network

The double award-winning hamlet of Moneydig has always been a close community and has recently been acknowledged by winning the best kept small housing area award and the Ellen Magowan Award, both of which are on display at the entrance of Moneydig Park. In an effort to make all of its residents feel welcome and cared for, they have recently installed a chatty bench as part of our new patio area. Anyone can sit on the bench if they are feeling lonely or isolated and it wouldn't be long before one or more of the residents will come and connect and start a conversation. People from around the world are living in Moneydig, from as far away as Portugal, South Africa, Australia and most recently the Bahamas. The chatty bench was installed to boost health and wellbeing by encouraging people of all ages to come sit on the bench for fresh air or engage with the locals. They enlisted the expertise of David Keys, a Moneymore based sustainable woodworker, who carried out workshops with residents to help with the construction and assembly of the bench giving them a full sense of ownership. The bench has only enriched the environment of Moneydig and has created a more cohesive community, thanks to a community cohesion grant from the Housing Executive.

North Region

West



Community Grants

£24,870.93



Community Cohesion Funding

£166,850.98



Community Safety Funding

£46,665



Community Lets

15



Social Enterprise

£35,062.50



Pictured with Dene Harley (back, middle), Housing Executive Neighbourhood Warden at the newly transformed Bligh's Lane site are, (from left) Tina Burke, Caoimhe Cooke, Rachel Mullan, Kevin Campbell and Gareth Stewart, Triax Neighbourhood Management Team.

Triax Social Economy project

Triax Neighbourhood Team received funding from the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Fund for paints and other materials to help clean up and reimagine Bligh's Lane, an anti-social hotspot at the heart of Creggan. The walkway has been transformed by the community from an eye sore into a vibrant walkway. This project involved young people working alongside artist Donal Doherty, from the artist col-lective, Peaball to transform the area and showcase local creativity. The

reimaging project has had a positive social impact for the surrounding residents, while in-creasing community pride in the area. We hope that all involved feel a sense of ownership and will keep the pathway free from antisocial behaviour, as well as creating a more welcoming atmosphere along the pathway.



Enjoying some football mania at Sion Mill Summer Scheme are, back row (left to right), Elaine Griffin (leader) Andrew and Salome Preston (Leaders). Front row (left to right), Sharelle, Kiazer, Casey, Olly, Grace and Aston.

Sion Mills Community Association

The Sion Mills Community Association project which has been going strong for over 20 years received a Community Involvement Grant towards their summer event. The popular village event also gave children at risk of boredom and disengagement a focus during the summer months as well as the chance to make new friends and learn new skills. The project also offered a lifeline for parents during the cost-of-living crisis. Many families were able to benefit from the days away, giving them the opportunity to interact and make new connections and friendships with others. The successful intergenerational scheme was enjoyed by so many families and children, it was a testament to the organisation and inclusivity of the project.



Cricket connects community... The adults joining the children at Strabane Ethnic Community Association's summer project are (from left) Andrew Mullan, Housing Executive Good Relations Officer, West area, Jamie Dalzell, Kamini Rao, Richard Dalzell, Bobby Rao, Katie Guy, Darren Guy, Deputy Mayor of Derry Strabane District Council and David Guy.

Strabane Ethnic Community Association

With help from a Housing Executive Community Cohesion Grant, Strabane Ethnic Community Association put on an action-packed race relations summer project that broadened the horizons of many young people at risk of isolation in Strabane. Bringing together families of many different nationalities, cultures and religious backgrounds in a friendly neutral venue. Social interaction among parents and children was encouraged through creative, fun activities facilitated by qualified instructors and off-site visits. Some of the activities on show were art, music, dance, food from around the world, horticulture, virtual reality, photography and safety online. They also visited the local police station, Strabane Health Improvement Project, and a few days were spent with Newbuilding's Cricket Club where the participants took part in cricket coaching. By opening these new ventures to these vulnerable young people it helped them learn to approach those from different backgrounds in a positive way.

Impact Report:

Housing Executive Youth Forum

Overview

This report outlines the key achievements of young people involved in the Housing Executive Youth Forum to date and highlights the impact these experiences have had on their personal and professional development. The activities, training, and support provided have helped empower participants to become confident, capable, and community-focused individuals

Key Achievements

- **Team-Building & Collaboration**

Young people participated in a variety of team-building activities that strengthened their communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. These exercises laid the foundation for more effective group work and mutual support.

- **Residential Program Participation**

The residential program offered participants an in-depth understanding of Housing Executive structures, sub-groups, and decision-making processes. This experience enhanced their awareness of housing systems and increased their confidence in engaging with civic institutions.

- **Well-being & Self-Care Training**

Through dedicated sessions focused on mental health and emotional well-being, participants learned essential self-care techniques. These strategies have helped them build resilience and maintain a positive mindset.

- **Leadership Development**

Focused training sessions enabled participants to build leadership and decision-making skills. Many have since taken on more active roles within their communities and peer networks.

- **Workshops on Housing Rights & Participation**

Specialized workshops equipped young people with in-depth knowledge of housing rights and policies. Participation sessions also taught them how to advocate effectively and engage meaningfully with local initiatives.

- **Gratitude & Resilience Practices**

Exercises in gratitude encouraged a positive and optimistic outlook among participants. These practices were instrumental in reinforcing emotional stability and enhancing personal growth.

Impact on Participants Young people have reported significant benefits from the program:

- Increased self-confidence and public speaking skills
- Stronger leadership capabilities and decision-making confidence
- Enhanced understanding of housing policy and social justice issues
- Improved teamwork, communication, and problem-solving abilities
- Greater emotional resilience through self-care and gratitude practices

Wider Community Impact Participants have emerged as advocates for housing rights and social justice. Their involvement has:

- Encouraged youth-led community initiatives
- Fostered a new generation of socially conscious and proactive leaders
- Helped bridge the gap between young people and civic engagement opportunities

Conclusion

The Housing Executive Youth Forum has played a vital role in empowering young people and supporting their growth. Their achievements reflect the value of continued investment in youth development opportunities. As these young leaders continue their journey, they are contributing meaningfully to society and creating lasting, positive change in their communities.

We extend our gratitude to funders and stakeholders for their support in making this work possible and look forward to further progress in the months ahead.

Rural Residents Forum

Annual Summary Report 2024–2025

Amplifying the Voice of Rural Communities through Strategic Action and Policy Engagement

Throughout 2024–2025, the Rural Residents Forum (RRF), supported by RCN, advanced its commitment to housing justice, energy equity, and social protection in rural Northern Ireland. This report reflects the strategic milestones, advocacy efforts, and lived experiences that shaped our collective impact.

1. Advancing Rural Housing Priorities

- **Influencing Housing Needs Assessments**

- o Collaborated with NIHE Rural Unit on publicising assessments and streamlining processes
- o Held discussions on timeframe reviews and flagged derelict public land issues

- **Championing Affordable Housing Models**

- o Engaged with Mid Ulster Council's Housing Forum and contributed to DfC's barriers to new build in rural areas analysis
- o Presented to DAERA Minister, Rural Affairs Team, and AERA Committee

- **Partnering with Housing Associations and Policy Forums**

- o Hosted a major engagement event in Nov 2024; secured commitments in follow-up meeting (June 2025)
- o Raised new build urgency in direct discussion with Minister Muir

- **Highlighting Development Barriers**

- o Participated in NIHE Programme Advisory Group and Interim Regional Planning Commission
- o Delivered evidence on planning delays to Infrastructure Committee
- o Shared local wealth-building strategies at DTNI seminar

- **Celebrating Rural Housing Achievements**

- o Co-hosted Rural Housing Awards with RHU of NIHE at Heaney Homeplace (March 2025, 80+ attendees)

2. Tackling Fuel Poverty and Energy Inefficiency

- **Raising the Alarm on Cold and Unfit Homes**
 - o Shared lived experience stories with NIHE, councils, and environmental health officers
 - o Provided evidence on sub-standard adaptations affecting disabled residents
- **Promoting Energy Support Schemes and Local Solutions**
 - o Delivered resources on affordable warmth schemes and coordinated warm hub rollout
 - o Welcomed National Energy Action's input and promoted funding collaboration with National Lottery
- **Leading Community-Led Transitions**
 - o Advocated alongside Age NI against removal of winter fuel payments
 - o Developed district wide Cost of Living guide now published on the RRF website

3. Monitoring and Influencing Social Protection Policy

- **Universal Credit and Welfare Reform Advocacy**
 - o Submitted formal feedback to DfC and other agencies
 - o Highlighted rural transport and UC migration impacts through BBC media appearances
 - o Engaged the Living Wage Foundation and Department for Economy on financial exclusion
- **Ensuring Rent Affordability and Allocations Reform**
 - o Co-developed tenancy assignment flowchart with NIHE
 - o Monitored rent arrears related to UC and cost-of-living trends
- **Expanding Forum Membership and Participation**
 - o Welcomed new members: Laura Rooney, Louise Wallace, and Bronagh Kearney
 - o Increased accessibility with hybrid meetings
 - o Convened rural tenant meeting (Oct 2024); next scheduled for Sept 2025
- **Collaborating on the 'Supporting People' Programme**
 - o Integrated rural housing into UK-wide Rural Health Toolkit research
 - o Raised key issues: carer recruitment, digital inclusion, rural-proofing

Statistics for your Visual Impact Statements

Achievements	Count
Forum Meetings	12
Consultation Responses	11
Engagements with Statutory Agencies & Departments	14
Represented at Regional Conferences and Events	8

Closing Reflections

From committee rooms to council chambers, media interviews to community halls, the Rural Residents’ Forum has worked hard to elevate rural voices and press for equity for rural dwellers and those who are in need in rural regions. Together, we continue to work to transform lived experience into lasting change for those who live in rural social housing communities. We are very keen to have others join us at our monthly meetings. If you are interested in being part of the RRF please contact kelly@ruralcommunitynetwork.org

Disabled People's Housing Rights Take Centre Stage: The Disability Forum's Year of Advocacy

Over the past year, the Disability Forum has emerged as a leading voice championing the housing rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland. Through a sustained programme of advocacy, civic engagement, policy input, and partnership working, the Forum has ensured that housing remains firmly on the political, civic, and policy agenda. This has all been delivered in partnership with the Housing Executive.

From April 2024 to March 2025, Forum representatives were present at more than 50 strategic meetings, consultations, and civic events. Across these platforms, they amplified the message that housing is a core human right that is vital to the participation, safety, and well-being of disabled people.

"Housing is the foundation of independent living and equality. Without accessible, affordable, and safe housing, disabled people face exclusion at every level — from employment to education to civic life."

Patricia Bray, Member of the Housing Forum

The Forum's work has been guided by the objectives of its 2024–2025 Action Plan, which focuses on engaging disabled people in policy development, strengthening partnerships, influencing public policy, and tackling structural barriers to housing equality.

Housing at the Heart of Policy Engagement

Over the course of the year, the Disability Forum played a key role in shaping thinking on housing issues. Members were represented at critical policy consultations, including:

- The Move to Universal Credit forums, where they raised concerns about the impact of welfare reform on housing security, highlighting how delays, deductions, and affordability challenges disproportionately affect disabled tenants.
- The Disability Strategy engagement process, where Forum input helped secure commitments to prioritise accessible housing adaptations, inclusive design standards, and support for independent living.
- The DfC Fuel Poverty consultations, where they demonstrated the intersection between poor-quality housing, rising energy costs, and poverty among disabled households.

- The Anti-Poverty Strategy consultation, where housing was positioned as a fundamental requirement for addressing economic disadvantage.
- Civic roundtables and working groups on Brexit and the Windsor Framework, where they addressed the potential erosion of housing rights protections and called for strong Article 2 compliance.

Through these interventions, the Forum ensured that the lived experience of disabled people shaped government policy on housing, welfare, and equality.

Civic Engagement and Peacebuilding

Beyond formal policy processes, the Disability Forum was active in civic society and peacebuilding work throughout the year.

Members were represented at the Women Peace Builders Programme and the All-Island Women's Forum, where they advocated for accessible housing to be recognised as essential to gender equality and post-conflict reconciliation.

They contributed to the NI UK-EU Civic Working Group and Brexit-related civic discussions, highlighting housing insecurity risks for disabled people and linking housing rights to broader peace and equality protections under the Windsor Framework.

Working alongside partners such as the Human Rights Consortium and the Equality Coalition, the Forum helped integrate housing advocacy into campaigns on human rights, peacebuilding, and social justice.

"Our work has been about ensuring that disabled people's housing rights are not an afterthought. We've made the case that housing must be part of any serious plan for peace, equality, or recovery."

Gerry Maguire, Member of the Housing Forum

Direct Housing Impacts

This sustained engagement resulted in tangible housing-related outcomes over the year. Forum representatives influenced:

- The NIHE's Community Involvement Strategy review, contributing recommendations to strengthen tenant voice, including that of disabled tenants, in housing decisions.
- Government commitments to improve accessible housing design standards and increase funding for housing adaptations.

- Greater visibility for housing issues within the emerging Disability Strategy, Anti-Poverty Framework, and peacebuilding programmes.
- Political awareness of the links between housing insecurity, gender-based violence, and hate crime against disabled people.

Forum advocacy also contributed to the recognition of housing as a key factor in tackling fuel poverty and promoting independent living.

Strengthening Partnerships

Throughout 2024–2025, the Disability Forum deepened its partnerships with civic and statutory organisations to drive change. Working relationships with the Women’s Budget Group, the Human Rights Consortium, the Equality Coalition, and various statutory agencies allowed the Forum to position housing rights at the centre of wider social justice campaigns.

Through these alliances, the Forum helped ensure that housing was recognised not only as a service or welfare issue, but as a structural equality and rights matter.

Building Internal Capacity

Alongside its external advocacy, the Forum focused on strengthening its internal structures.

Quarterly oversight committee meetings ensured accountability and progress tracking against the Action Plan’s objectives. Regular management team meetings co-ordinated the Forum’s advocacy, civic engagement, and consultation input.

Strategic planning sessions at Disability Action HQ and in partnership with Ulster University allowed the Forum to align its housing advocacy with wider equality, peacebuilding, and rights frameworks.

The Forum’s reporting mechanisms were enhanced to ensure transparency and compliance with funder and stakeholder requirements, supporting its role as a credible and effective voice for disabled people.

The Year in Numbers

- 50+ strategic meetings, consultations, and civic events attended
- 10+ formal consultation responses shaped
- 5+ peacebuilding and civic programmes engaged
- Multiple partnerships strengthened across civic society and statutory sectors

Looking Ahead

As the Disability Forum prepares for 2025–2026, it is clear that the foundations laid over the past year will be critical in shaping future advocacy.

Key priorities for the year ahead include:

- Ensuring that housing commitments within the Disability Strategy are fully implemented.
- Monitoring the impact of Brexit and the Windsor Framework on housing rights protections.
- Continuing to advocate for housing investment as part of anti-poverty and equality strategies.
- Strengthening the voice of disabled tenants within housing governance structures.

Supporting Communities 2024-2025

HCN Annual Report

Supporting Groups

This year, we provided support to **566** community groups, including:

- **2,065** instances of support by phone and face-to-face meetings with community groups
- **39** new groups identified & developed in under-represented areas
- **36** Charity Commission registration support sessions
- **155** AGM support sessions
- **192** Housing Executive community service contracts in place

Facilitating Partnerships

Last year, we convened 208 meetings of the Housing Community Network, including Central, Regional, and Area-level meetings.

- **15** Central
- **49** Working Group Meetings
- **70** Instances of support to members

We facilitated **154** Inter-agency/Housing Forum meetings addressing and improving housing and environmental issues in estates, leading to a sense of pride, well-being, and increased ownership among the residents.

We facilitated **135** Estate Inspections across all 13 Housing Executive Areas, supporting residents to ensure their communities are well-maintained and looked after.

We also sent out **383** sets of minutes to keep the wheels moving and ensure everything gets done.

We helped groups access a total of just over **£1.2 million** pounds in funding last year, money that goes straight into your communities.

We also held or attended **five** funding fairs across the country where groups could meet the funders and discuss their projects face-to-face.



Additional Funding Support Provided:

319 Grant Finder searches

12 Funding Bulletins produced

13 NIHE Assessment Panels for Community Involvement Grants

Training

We delivered **60** training courses to **622** people, plus **5** OCN-accredited courses to **53** learners, with a 98% satisfaction rate.

With our support, membership on the **HCN online digital forum** has increased to **420** users over the past year.

Raising Our Profile

We have continued to grow our social media presence organically, without any paid advertising. In a world of fickle algorithms, we are pleased to report growth across social media channels.

Facebook	7.6%
Instagram	6.8%
LinkedIn	31%
Website users	4.7%

These figures show a percentage increase in followers/users for 2024-25 from the previous year.

Our popular E-Zine newsletter is published fortnightly to over **1600** recipients and reaches even more in its online version.

PAYE Support

14 Groups provided PAYE support

The biggest users are the North Region with **9** groups totalling **137** employees on the payroll.

What our customers are saying:

“Staff really care and are always ready to give extra time.”

“Your support changed our group and our lives.”

“Supportive, knowledgeable, reliable.”

“Supporting Communities is a valuable resource for our community groups, with a strong relationship with the local Housing Executive office. Our CDO is professional and approachable and has a wealth of knowledge, which she brings to the role with passion and enthusiasm.

To discuss or comment on this document,
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