



# **NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020**

**Evaluation Report  
March 2022**

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Key Achievements, 2015-2020 .....	6
Section 1: Introduction and Context.....	8
1.1. Introduction.....	8
1.2. Purpose of the Report .....	8
1.3. Report Structure.....	9
Section 2: NIHE and the Community Cohesion Strategy .....	10
2.1. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive .....	10
2.2. What is Community Cohesion? .....	11
2.3. The Housing Executive and Community Cohesion.....	12
2.4. NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020.....	13
2.5. NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy Governance .....	15
2.6. Strategy Delivery Structure .....	16
Section 3: Evaluation Methodology.....	19
3.1. Introduction.....	19
3.2. Data Collection .....	19
3.3. Data Analysis .....	19
3.4. Limitations.....	20
Section 4: Setting the Cohesion Strategy in Context .....	21
4.1. Introduction.....	21
4.2. Northern Ireland Executive: Together: Building a United Community Strategy (T:BUC)	21
4.3. Programme for Government.....	23
4.4. Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT) Report.....	25
4.5. Fresh Start Agreement .....	26
4.6. The Executive Office Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025.....	27
4.7. Urban Villages Initiative .....	28
4.8. Socio Political Context.....	28
4.9. Peace IV and Interreg VA .....	30
4.10. Community Planning .....	31
4.11. NIHE Strategies and Policies.....	32
4.11.1. Race Relations Policy.....	32
4.11.2. Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023 .....	33
4.11.3. Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023 .....	33
4.11.4. A Good Practice Guide To Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols .....	34
4.12. Summary .....	34
Section 5: Strategy Delivery .....	35
5.1. Introduction.....	35
5.2. Headline Achievements.....	36
5.3. Residential Segregation/Integration .....	38

5.4. Race Relations .....	41
5.5. Communities in Transition .....	43
5.6. Interface Areas .....	44
5.7. Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols.....	45
Section 6: Consultation Findings.....	47
6.1. Introduction.....	47
6.2. Survey Findings.....	47
Demographics .....	47
Good Relations and Cohesion Related Outcomes .....	48
Importance of Community Cohesion Strategy Funding .....	50
Relevance of Community Cohesion Themes .....	50
Other Priorities and Actions.....	50
6.3. Thematic Analysis.....	51
6.4. Cohesion Theme 1: Residential Segregation/Integration .....	51
Shared Housing Programme .....	53
Good Relations Plans .....	54
Poverty as an Underlying Factor .....	55
6.5. Cohesion Theme 2: Race Relations .....	56
Race Relations Outputs.....	56
Good Relations Outcomes and Race Relations.....	57
6.6. Cohesion Theme 3: Communities in Transition .....	58
Social and Economic Transition .....	58
6.7. Cohesion Theme 4: Interface .....	61
Increasing Priority .....	62
6.8. Cohesion Theme 5: Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols.....	62
Reimaging.....	63
Flags .....	63
Positive Cultural Celebrations.....	63
Section 7: Analysis.....	65
7.1. Introduction.....	65
7.2. Overall Analysis .....	65
7.3. Evaluation of the NIHE 2015-2020 Community Cohesion Strategy.....	65
Extent to which the strategy delivered as intended at the level intended .....	66
What Change Occurred as a result of these outputs.....	67
7.4. Critical Success Factors.....	69

7.5. Relevant Government Policy.....	70
7.6. Considerations for a Future Strategy .....	81
Cohesion is Multi-Faceted .....	81
NIHE Structures.....	82
7.7. SROI Compatability.....	83
Section 8: Recommendations .....	86
8.1. Introduction.....	86
8.2. Architecture of Future Strategy .....	86
8.3. Data Collection & Impact Measurement .....	87
8.4. Networking and Engagement.....	88
8.5. Additional Recommendations.....	89
Appendix 1: Documents Reviewed .....	92
Appendix 2: Consultation Participants .....	94
Appendix 3: Achievement of Commitments.....	95
Appendix 4: Draft Programme for Government/ Good Relations Indicators .....	98

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the willing participation and support of a number of people and groups, without whose input this research would not have been possible:

- internal (Housing Executive) and external stakeholders who gave their time to take part in interviews and focus groups;
- grant recipients, representatives of the Housing Community Network and tenants, who provided survey feedback;
- the Project Advisory Group, which provided support and guidance throughout the project; and
- various members of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Community Cohesion team.

We also appreciated the research support provided initially by Charlotte Bradley and subsequently Aisling Boyle (Research Officers), and other members of the Research Unit team throughout the research project.

*The content of this report does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Housing Executive. Responsibility for the information and views expressed lies with the authors.*

---

*“Our group has benefitted greatly from the Cohesion Fund; it has abated heightened tensions during summer periods and helped our communities to strengthen social bonds and respect for each other’s differences.” – Group Feedback*

---

---

*“The funding went into an event which developed relationships with all ethnic minority groups and encouraged local groups to engage with them in capacity building around cultures and respect for their traditions. The outcome was achieved as many community groups took active part in the events such as Irish, British, Polish, Indian, and Russian speaking.” – Group Feedback*

---

---

*“Our groups have grown and brought everyone together within the community.” – Group Feedback*

---

*“The funding delivered our Re-Engaging with the Community project, which allowed families from the estate and surrounding areas to engage in a community orientated project for the first time in over a year. It also gave the participants a focal point for the community to bring a positive and constructive understanding at a time when tensions were rising and a few weeks previously we had witnessed riots and disorder on the street due to a vacuum caused by the NI protocol and perceptions surrounding this.” – Group Feedback*

*“The funding delivered music tuition and brought together several children from the local area; lessons were held in small groups. As we are a rural community, all the children attend different schools. The music tuition found a commonality between them through playing the same instruments.” – Group Feedback*

*“The NIHE's Cohesion fund has assisted us to develop and enhance projects during the summer months which helps reduce tensions and alleviate anti-social behaviour levels which are inherently high within the area.” – Group Feedback*

---

**It was felt that the work across all the cohesion themes has enabled a “desegregation of mindset and attitude” which has opened conversations and communication channels among people and communities that were unimaginable a decade ago.**

---

## Key Achievements, 2015-2020



**Residential  
Segregation/Intergration**

**1,480 new social housing units** developed in **45** schemes through Housing for All (997 units in 35 schemes) and the T:BUC Shared Neighbourhood Programme (483 units in 10 schemes)

**45 shared neighbourhood schemes** supported overall, including **10** T:BUC and **35** Housing for All schemes delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme

**18 Good Relations Plans** supported through the Shared Housing Programme

**10 Advisory Groups** established through the Shared Housing Programme

**60 estate groups** supported across 13 Housing Executive Areas, through BRIC 2

**£206,182** invested in communities across Northern Ireland through BRIC2



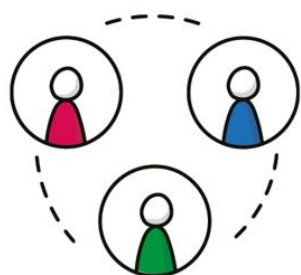
**Race  
Relations**

**£132,346** invested in **69** race relations projects over the life of the strategy, engaging more than **3,000** participants per year

Engaged with **44** Minority Ethnic organisations

**Community Welcome Pack** reviewed with stakeholders

**12 Interagency Partnerships** established with a range of statutory, voluntary and community sector partners



**Communities  
in Transition**

**455 Estate-Based Cohesion projects** allocated to organisations across **13** Areas to progress good relations outcomes

**Six major programmes** secured under Peace IV and Interreg VA, with a total value of more than **£12m**, engaging **6,000** residents

**£261,000** invested in **166** projects through the Areas at Risk programme in Glenbank/ Whitewell



**Interface  
Areas**

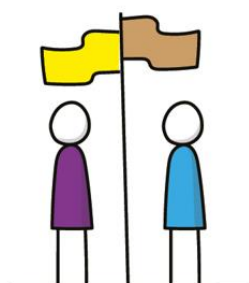
**One peace wall removed**

**One peace wall remodelled**

**£365,000** invested in delivery of barrier removal and interface normalisation programme

**Two environmental works programmes** delivered

**10 dwellings** accessed interface aftercare supports



**Flags, Emblems  
and Symbols**

**Comprehensive and up-to-date database** of all sectional symbols on Housing Executive land and property developed by NIHE GIS team

**134 Reimaging projects** delivered in communities across Northern Ireland

**Flag protocol** to be reviewed by the Strategic Cohesion Forum

**24 Positive Cultural Celebrations** supported through small grants

**11 fewer bonfires** on Housing Executive lands by 2021, facilitated through provision of support for communities interested in making the transition from bonfires to beacons

**43 Community Groups funded** through the Positive Expressions of Culture initiative (PEOC), formerly the Bonfire Management Programme.



# Section 1: Introduction and Context

## 1.1. Introduction

This report sets out an independent evaluation of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's (NIHE) Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020.

S3 Solutions was commissioned by NIHE in October 2021 to undertake an evaluation of the Community Cohesion Strategy: 'Engage, Enable and Empowering communities 2015-2020'. Launched in January 2016, the Community Cohesion Strategy made an explicit commitment to promote good relations. Through implementation of this strategy, the NIHE has sought to involve and inspire communities to shape their housing service by providing a framework to give its tenants, residents, and leaseholders a real say in the decision-making process, helping to make their neighbourhoods better places to live.

The information presented in this report was gathered by the evaluators during the period November 2021 to March 2022.

## 1.2. Purpose of the Report

As set out in the terms of reference, the overall aim of this research project is to produce data and insights which will assist the NIHE in developing its new Community Cohesion Strategy. The central objectives of the study were:

1. to evaluate the Housing Executive's 2015 - 2020 Community Cohesion Strategy;
2. to discover more about the key issues facing communities across Northern Ireland in terms of community cohesion;
3. to provide detail on relevant government policy which may influence work around community relations;
4. to provide insight and suggestions for future community cohesion plans; and
5. to assess the feasibility of carrying out an analysis of Social Return on Investment (SROI), or else an alternative cost-benefit analysis, for the future Strategy by examining current information recording processes and by offering guidance.

### 1.3. Report Structure

The following section provides an introduction to NIHE and an overview of the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020. Subsequent sections explore the extent to which the strategy has delivered against its intended outcomes and provides an overview of project context and delivery. This report includes the following:

- **Section 2:** Overview of the Community Cohesion Strategy and its delivery structure
- **Sections 3:** Evaluation methodology including approach to data collection, data analysis, and limitations
- **Section 4:** An overview of the strategic, policy and socio-political landscape within which the strategy was developed and delivered
- **Section 5:** Summary of the key deliverables and achievements over the period 2015-2020
- **Section 6:** Overview of the consultation findings
- **Section 7:** An analysis and summary of the key learning and considerations for future iterations of the strategy
- **Section 8:** Recommendations

## Section 2: NIHE and the Community Cohesion Strategy

### 2.1. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The NIHE is a non-departmental public body which was originally established by the Housing Executive Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. Assuming the housing responsibilities of some 65 separate authorities, it became Northern Ireland's Regional Housing Authority. NIHE's functions (which are made up of duties and powers) are laid down by statute. They are to be found primarily in the various Housing (Northern Ireland) Orders from 1981-2003. The strategic role of NIHE is coordinated from its headquarters in Belfast, with the main customer services delivered through a network of 3 Regional Offices, 13 Area Offices, a network of Local Offices throughout the Province, and 6 Grants Offices.

The Department for Communities (DfC) has policy responsibility for the NIHE. The broad policies and related procedures of the NIHE are agreed by DfC with the actions and decisions taken within policies and procedures the responsibility of the NIHE's Board. DfC also has approval of the NIHE budgets and the payment by DfC of Housing Grant to the NIHE is conditional upon the NIHE's compliance with the terms set by the DfC. The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order from 1981 requires the NIHE to act in accordance with such directions.

The NIHE mission statement is:

*Working in partnership to ensure that everyone has access to a good affordable home in a safe and healthy community.*

The NIHE vision for housing in Northern Ireland:

*Everyone is able to live in an affordable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe and attractive place<sup>1</sup>.*

The central goal of NIHE is that everyone has access to decent, affordable housing and the organisation works with communities and other organisations to meet the housing needs of existing and future generations. The key strategic objectives are:

- Delivering better homes
- Supporting independent living

---

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the NIHE Corporate Plan 2019-2021, this may change during ongoing planning cycle

- Building stronger communities
- Delivering quality services

## 2.2. What is Community Cohesion?

The concept of community cohesion was established in the United Kingdom following a number of riots and disturbances in the north of England in the summer of 2001. Although the term had been used in different contexts previously (in Canada, for example), the first report to employ the term and to propose a new policy framework around it, was *Community Cohesion: The Report of The Independent Review Team*<sup>2</sup>. The Report considered the national and wider dimensions of community relations and reviewed both those areas that had not suffered disturbances, as well as those that had. The Report's findings represented a major challenge to the then multicultural model and became best known for identifying the parallel lives of minority and majority communities, but also proposed a wide range of new policies which were subsequently adopted by government and other agencies. The Cattle Report was supported by three local reviews of the three towns most affected by the riots. These were: for Bradford, the Ouseley Report (2001); for Oldham, the Ritchie Report (2001); and for Burnley, the Clarke Report (2001). The Government responded with Building Cohesive Communities, a Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order (The "Denham Report")<sup>3</sup> which set out a wide range of proposed actions.

Central government, local government, public services, and voluntary agencies embraced the new policy direction, many establishing community cohesion officers and teams to develop strategies and implement the new approach. There was some evolution in the definition of community cohesion in the period up to 2015, with increased emphasis placed on the need for strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds, tackling inequalities and acceptance and embracing of different opinions to support diversity.

The NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 is built around the definition in the Cattle and Denham reports but framed in a local context, outlining what a cohesive community involves, namely:

- creating a common vision and sense of belonging;
- valuing and appreciating people from different backgrounds and circumstances;
- providing similar life opportunities for people from different backgrounds;
- developing strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods; and

---

<sup>2</sup> [Community Cohesion: The Report of The Independent Review Team – Ted Cattle](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Building cohesive communities, report of the ministerial group on public order and community cohesion \(The Denham Report\) | European Website on Integration \(europa.eu\)](#)

- brokering good relations between groups, communities and key government stakeholders such as The Executive Office (TEO), DfC Shared Housing, Department of Justice (DoJ) and local authorities.

## 2.3. The Housing Executive and Community Cohesion

From 1971, the Housing Executive assumed responsibility for housing and was working in the areas most acutely impacted by the Northern Ireland conflict, which had led to widespread segregation. By the time of the 1994 ceasefires, there remained no official internal guidance on how to deal with Troubles-related issues, but the changing political situation, alongside the challenges associated with delivering housing and associated services in a segregated context, saw promotion of good relations become a key Housing Executive objective at around the same time that community cohesion was becoming a more prominent issue in Britain.

Following the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the Northern Ireland Act (1998) was passed ‘to make new provision for the government of Northern Ireland for the purpose of implementing the agreement...’<sup>4</sup> As a public authority, the NIHE is subject to Section 75 (1) of the Act and therefore has statutory obligations to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, and persons with or without a disability or dependents. Furthermore, Section 75 (2) requires that, in carrying out their functions, public authorities should have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.<sup>5</sup>

The Housing Executive also has a duty to ensure that housing is provided on the basis of need. Recognising that segregation places pressure on the best use of existing housing and land, the Housing Executive made the promotion of good relations a key objective, and its first Community Cohesion Strategy was published in 2004, when the Community Cohesion Unit was also established, in order to take the strategy forward.

Publication of the first Community Cohesion Strategy signaled a commitment to promote equality and good relations and – in particular – mixed housing, where practicable, desirable and safe. Successive strategies have followed and prior to the 2015-2020 strategy a wide range of work had already been undertaken, including:

- The Housing Executive’s Shared Neighbourhood Programme, a three-year pilot which ran between 2008 and 2011 and was funded by the International Fund for Ireland and the

---

<sup>4</sup> [The Northern Ireland Act \(1998\) | Northern Ireland Assembly Education Service \(niassembly.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

then Department for Social Development, and supported and encouraged 30 shared neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland.

- The Housing Executive's Shared Communities Programme, which commenced in 2011 at the request of the DSD who wished to see a mainstreamed programme based on the successful Shared Neighbourhood Programme. The Shared Communities Programme was based on the same principles as the pilot programme and set out to deliver a further 20 Shared Neighbourhoods in a three year period.
- The Building Relationships in Communities (BRIC) programme, which was launched in 2010 and funded under Priority 2, Theme 2 of the EU Peace Programme. BRIC was designed to develop the good relations capacity of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and to develop good relations plans and programmes for 88 Housing Executive estates. Delivered through a public private partnership involving the Rural Development Council (RDC) (lead partner), the Housing Executive and training consultancy TIDES, the programme facilitated an institutional capacity building process, providing a lasting legacy towards a shared society within the largest provider of social housing in Northern Ireland.

## 2.4. NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020

The organisation's updated Community Cohesion Strategy: 'Engage, Enable and Empowering communities', was launched in February 2016 to cover the period 2015-2020. The context and drivers of the 2015-2020 Strategy were set out in full in the published strategy document; some of the key drivers included the *Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC)* strategy<sup>6</sup>, the Department of Justice Community Safety Strategy, *Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities*<sup>7</sup>, and the 2014-2020 Peace IV programme, which are described in greater detail in Section 4. The Community Cohesion Strategy was extended in October 2020 to March 2022, whereafter a new five year strategy will be developed. The scope of this evaluation is of the 2015-2020 Cohesion Strategy and the findings herein may help shape and inform the direction of the next strategy, alongside public consultation.

The Strategy made an explicit commitment to promoting good relations and was managed and promoted by the NIHE Community Cohesion Unit. The overarching aims of the strategy were to:

- contribute to the creation of more stable, safer, and cohesive neighbourhoods;
- work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society;

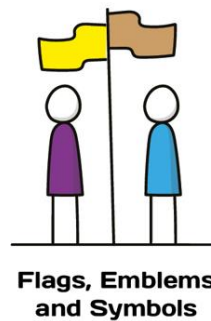
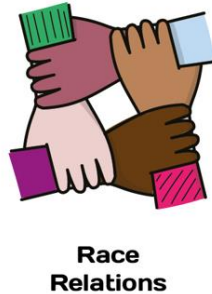
---

<sup>6</sup> [Together: Building a United Community \(T:BUC\) | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities \(justice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

- respond quickly and effectively to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict; and
- facilitate and encourage mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.

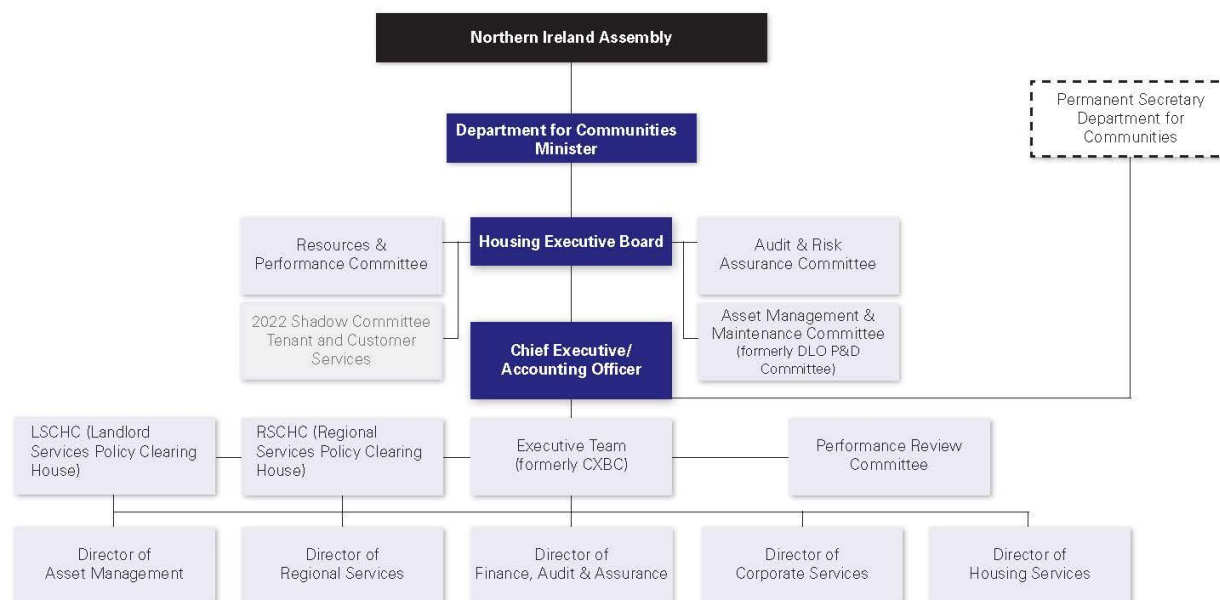
The strategy was delivered across 5 key themes:



## 2.5. NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy Governance

The corporate governance structure of the NIHE is set out in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Housing Executive Corporate Governance Structure (January 2022)



**Housing**  
Executive

The Community Cohesion Strategy is managed by the NIHE Cohesion Unit, which falls under the Director of Housing Services. An additional governance framework specifically concerning Community Involvement and Community Cohesion activities exists within the governance structure within the NIHE, in the form of the Housing Community Network (HCN). This framework has a recognised and meaningful role in the governance, monitoring and decision-making process of the Housing Executive and influences decisions affecting tenants and communities. The Strategic Cohesion Forum is representative of the HCN and key Good Relations Practitioners and has a critical role in scrutinising policies and procedures, while operating as a quality assurance to the Housing Executive Board with whom they meet on a regular basis. The delivery of shared



housing initiatives under the Residential Segregation theme creates a synergy under this Directorate. However, there is also considerable alignment with the Regional Services Directorate, given that:

- (i) responsibility for management of the Social Housing Development Programme – which includes a target for delivery of 200 shared new social housing units per year through the Housing for All programme<sup>8</sup> – is part of its remit and we understand that responsibility for the Shared Housing Programme, which at the time of writing sits with the Communities team in the Housing Executive’s Housing Services Division, is due to transfer to the Regional Directorate in 2023: this may have implications for delivery of the Cohesion Strategy and Shared Housing Programme, which would need to be taken into consideration when formulating future iterations of the Community Cohesion Strategy, and
- (ii) staff within the Regional Services Directorate’s Regional Place Shaping teams act as the key Housing Executive interface with Community Planning.

## 2.6. Strategy Delivery Structure

The delivery structure for the 2015-2020 Community Cohesion Strategy evolved considerably during its lifespan. At its inception, the Cohesion Unit and thus the strategy implementation team was made up of 10 staff comprising:

- One x Level 7 Managerial Post
- One x Level 6 Assistant Manager Post
- Five x Good Relations Officers (GROs)
- One Race Relations Officer
- One Interface Officer
- One Finance and Administrative Officer
- One Senior Administrative Officer

As the strategy developed and to deliver on its ambition, additional external resources were required to ensure adequate impact and engagement across all of the Housing Executive and shared housing estates in Northern Ireland. The Cohesion Unit therefore set about developing partnerships and connections with a range of organisations and pursuing external funding to advance its objectives under the strategy. This resulted in increased funding from sources such as International Fund for Ireland and Peace III, for example, which covered the initial costs of

---

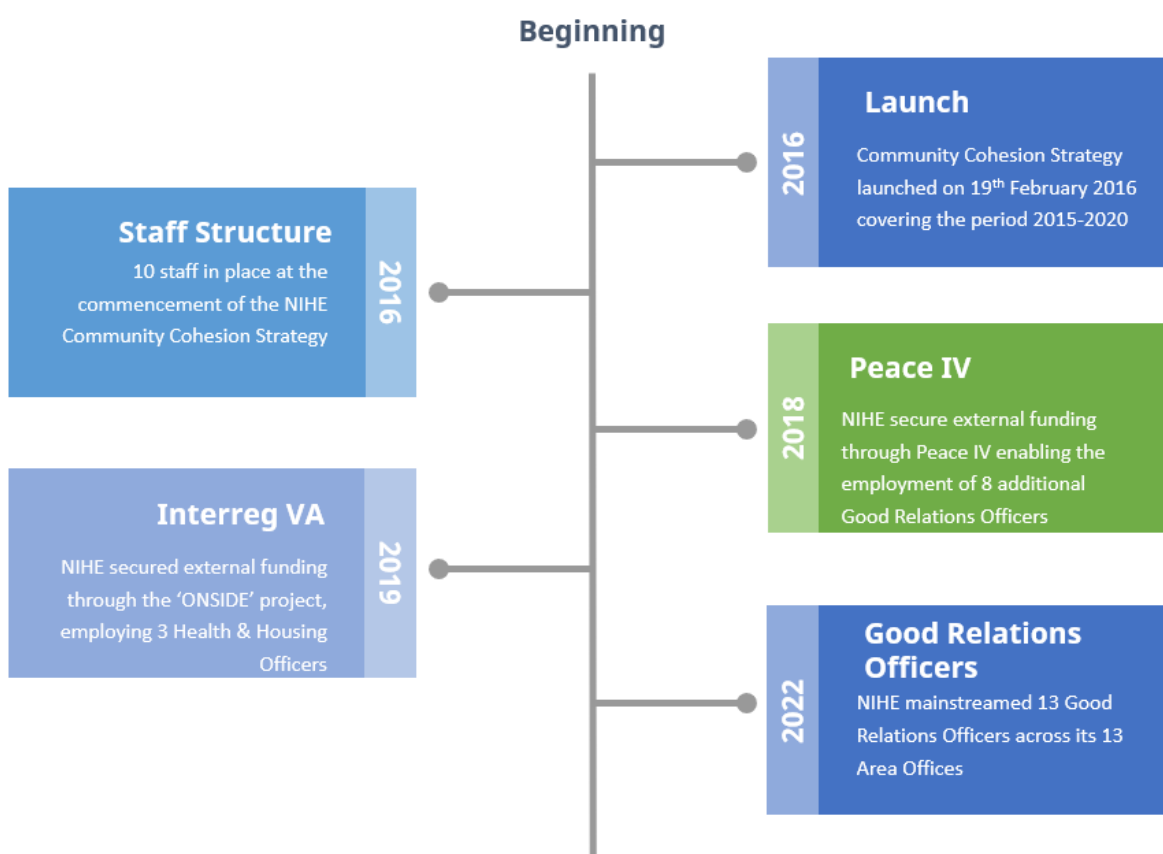
<sup>8</sup> [Shared Housing Programme | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

additional GROs as well as the projects and programmes they managed. The timeline set out in Figure 2 captures the evolution of the Cohesion Unit during the life of the 2015-2020 Strategy.

By the end of the Community Cohesion Strategy (2020), the team had increased from 10 to 23, including the introduction of eight GROs (Peace IV Funded) and three x Health & Housing Officers (Interreg VA Funded), as well as additional finance and administrative support.

In 2022, the Housing Executive approved the mainstreaming of thirteen GROs as permanent posts across Northern Ireland. GROs were based in 13 Area offices as the Cohesion Strategy gained momentum and developed. The purpose was to ensure the strategy was embedded into Area offices and to ensure a legacy for the strategy. This approach represents a demonstrable commitment by the Housing Executive to continue to meet the need and demand for good relations and cohesion based support for local communities.

Figure 2: Evolution of the Community Cohesion team and associated Officers, 2015-2022



To support the implementation of the strategy, a Strategic Cohesion Forum was established in 2016, comprising representation from across the Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise and

statutory sectors, and Good Relations Practitioners. The forum met on a quarterly basis throughout the lifespan of the strategy and its purpose was to provide ongoing oversight and strategic guidance on the implementation of the various themes and objectives within the strategy and to provide ongoing advice on emerging good relations and cohesion related trends.

## Section 3: Evaluation Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

The Housing Executive commissioned the independent and objective evaluation of the Community Cohesion Strategy: ‘Engage, Enable and Empowering communities 2015-2020’ in October 2021. The following sets out the methodology used to inform the evaluation including approaches to data collection and analysis as well as some limitations impacting on findings.

### 3.2. Data Collection

A mixed method and multi layered approach to primary data collection was used. Overall, our approach was a qualitative descriptive approach complemented by a review of strategy based data and outputs. The evaluation is informed by the following activity:

- Desk review of annual reports, monitoring reports, evaluations and minutes of meetings to develop an aggregated and cumulative set of deliverables for the Cohesion Strategy.
- Desk review of the strategic, policy and socio-political context within which the Cohesion Strategy was developed and delivered.
- 25 Qualitative semi structured interviews and/or small group focus groups with internal NIHE staff and external stakeholders.
- An online survey distributed to 127 NIHE grant recipients which attracted 37 responses.
- Internal consultation comprising a HCN survey (67 responses), and Tenant survey (21 responses) was carried out and analysed by the evaluation team.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using both thematic and narrative approaches. Categories were developed, coded, and reduced. Survey data, output data and thematic data from interviews was cross referenced to identify emergent themes and issues and to explore the relationships between issues. Participant sampling and data collection continued until no new conceptual insights were generated and the research team felt they had gathered repeated evidence for the thematic analysis, thus reaching theoretical saturation.

### 3.4. Limitations

Efforts have been made to enhance the reliability and validity of findings through multiple method consultation. However, we note the following limitations:

- The evaluation team reviewed approximately 100 documents in an attempt to create an aggregated and cumulative overview of the strategy outputs (a full list of the documents reviewed is provided at Appendix 1). A more streamlined and consistent recording and storing of output data would assist with efficacy and accuracy (see Section 8.3).
- As with any survey data, errors due to question non-responses may exist. The number of respondents who chose to respond to a survey question may be different from those who chose not to respond, thus creating bias. 37 responses to the online survey represents a 29% return rate, a higher response rate would have increased the reliability of results.

## Section 4: Setting the Cohesion Strategy in Context

### 4.1. Introduction

This section sets out a summarised policy and literature review relative to the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy. Several key policies and strategies are synthesised and reviewed in this section which reflect the context within which the Cohesion Strategy was developed and delivered. In addition, this section takes account of the macro socio political environment within which the Cohesion Strategy was delivered given its relevance to good relations.

Several other policies and strategies emerged or were updated during the lifespan of the 2015-2020 Cohesion Strategy and have implications for the future of the strategy; these are also considered.

### 4.2. Northern Ireland Executive: Together: Building a United Community Strategy (T:BUC)

The 'Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy, published on 23 May 2013, reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society. It outlines a vision of:

*“A united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”*

The four key priorities together with the shared aims and respective strategic outcomes are shown in Table 1 overleaf<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup> Together: Building a United Community (T:BUC) Strategy Priorities and Outcomes (<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/tbuc-key-priorities-and-outcomes.pdf>)

Table 1: Key priorities, aims and strategic outcomes of the T:BUC strategy

Key Priority	Aim	Shared Objectives
1. Our Children and Young People	Aim 1: To continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations	1.1 Improving attitudes of children from different backgrounds. 1.2 Young people engaging in bringing the community together
2. Our Shared Community	Aim 2: To create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone	2.1 Increased use of shared space and services 2.2 Shared Space accessible to all
3. Our Safe Community	Aim 3: To create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety	3.1 Reduce the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation. 3.2 A community where places and spaces are safe for all
4. Our Cultural Expression	Aim 4: To create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity, and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced	4.1 Increased sense of community belonging. 4.2 Cultural diversity is celebrated

The 2015-2020 Cohesion Strategy was developed under an alignment to T:BUC which was the seminal good relations policy document at that time. The connection between T:BUC and the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy is clear, principally the concentration on cultural expression within T:BUC which is of particular importance under the ‘Race Relations’, ‘Interfaces’ and ‘Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols’ themes of the Cohesion Strategy.

In addition, T:BUC posits a focus on shared and safe communities; this is reflected in the Cohesion Strategy themes of *Residential Segregation/Integration*, *Interfaces* and *Communities in Transition*, and the Housing Executive is tasked with delivering key elements of the *shared community* and *safe community* priorities within the Strategy. One of the original headline actions of the T:BUC strategy was the establishment of ten new shared housing schemes; with these schemes delivered at a range of locations across Northern Ireland, the delivery of shared housing was incorporated as an action in the Draft Programme for Government 2016-2021 and the Department for Communities committed to delivering approximately 200 shared social

housing units per year, badged ‘Housing for All’, as part of the Social Housing Development Programme.<sup>10</sup>

### 4.3. Programme for Government

The Programme for Government (PfG) is the leading strategic document of the Northern Ireland Executive, focusing on the major societal outcomes that the Executive wants to achieve, and provides a basis for all sectors to contribute to the development of plans and actions. The NIHE Cohesion Strategy was developed and delivered under the auspice of the 2016-2021 Draft Programme for Government. The PfG comprised 14 strategic outcomes which, taken together, the Executive believed best described the society we wish to have. The outcomes are supported by 42 indicators which are clear statements for change<sup>11</sup>. There are a number of outcomes which are relevant to Good Relations and therefore to the NIHE Cohesion Strategy. In particular:

We have a more equal society

We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other

We are a shared society that respects diversity

We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society

Whilst the NIHE contributed across a broad range of indicators (i.e. improve the supply of suitable housing), as this evaluation will set out, the NIHE Cohesion Strategy made a significant contribution to the 2016-2021 Programme for Government, specifically to the following indicators:

- Increase respect for each other (measured through a respect index)
- Increase shared space (Percentage who think leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are ‘shared and open’ to both Protestants and Catholics)
- Increase reconciliation (Percentage of the population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society)
- Improve cultural participation (Percentage engaging with arts/cultural activities in the past year)

Subsequently, the NI Executive has set out a new draft strategic, Outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG) which aims to deliver real, lasting, and positive change in people’s lives. The new PfG will replace its predecessor (2016-2021). The delivery of a new Programme for

---

<sup>10</sup> [Shared Housing Programme | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/shared-housing-programme)

<sup>11</sup> Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021

(<https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>).



Government is a key priority of the Northern Ireland Executive, as established in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA)<sup>12</sup> agreement which restored the government of the Northern Ireland Executive in 2020, after a three-year hiatus.

The new draft PfG proposes a framework of nine Outcomes – these are statements of societal wellbeing which, taken together, are intended to capture the range of things that experience and research suggest matter most to people. Each outcome is supported by a range of ‘priority areas’, several of which align with the work of the Housing Executive’s Community Cohesion Strategy. The outcomes which focus largely on good relations and community cohesion are presented in Table 2 below:

*Table 2: Good relations and community cohesion related outcomes of the draft Programme for Government*

Outcome	Priority Area	Description
<b>We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect</b>	Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage	Tackling the issues that lead to inequality and disadvantage in terms of welfare and poverty and providing support where it is needed in both urban and rural communities.
	Rights and Equality	Promoting and protecting the rights of individuals to ensure we are recognizing and respecting diversity, ensuring everyone feels included.
	Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity	Tackling the issues of the past and ending sectarianism. Promoting, protecting, and providing education on the rights of individuals across our public services to ensure different values and identities are respected and welcomed in society.
<b>Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other</b>	Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity	Supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing integrated and shared education, addressing hate crime, tackling sectarianism, ending paramilitary activity and addressing the harm and vulnerabilities caused by it.
<b>People want to live, work, and visit here</b>	Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity	Supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing shared/integrated education, tackling sectarianism, ending

<sup>12</sup> [New decade New approach.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Outcome	Priority Area	Description
		paramilitary activity and addressing the harm and vulnerabilities caused by it.

The architecture of the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy and the Draft PfGs demonstrates a discernable congruence between priorities and highlights the cross-cutting contribution of the Community Cohesion Strategy with a concentration on equal and inclusive society; safe communities; and shared societies where people want to live, work, and visit. This resonates with the five key themes of the Community Cohesion Strategy, reinforcing its strategic policy position and helping to shape a future iteration of the NIHE Cohesion Strategy.

#### 4.4. Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT) Report

The FICT report<sup>13</sup> builds on the priorities of the Draft Programme for Government and seeks to contribute to a process whereby issues of flags, identity, culture and tradition are no longer contentious, but become a means by which respect is fostered, developed and embedded. The FICT report outlines an extensive series of recommendations which provide a basis for work towards an improved society, for the common good of all. Each recommendation centres on Good Relations and therefore synergises directly with the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020, with both the Race Relations and Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols themes delivering on the priorities of the report's recommendations. Key examples of alignment include the Commission's recommendations that:

- The delivery of Good Relations interventions has reductions of sectarian and race hate incidents as key outcomes.
- The NI Executive, political parties and civil society consider how to increase positive attitudes towards British culture and heritage; Irish language, culture and heritage; and Ulster-Scots language, culture and heritage; and towards the cultural identities of other communities within our society in a manner that is appropriate to a society emerging from conflict.
- The NI Executive considers the inclusion of a programme to support positive expression of cultural heritage and commemoration [incorporating] elements on better bonfire management and alternatives to bonfires such as beacons.

<sup>13</sup> [Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition - Final report | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/Commission-on-Flags-Identity-Culture-and-Tradition-Final-report)

- The NI Executive devises an appropriate way of supporting communities to address the continued presence of murals that advertise and lend support to proscribed organisations through a process of re-imaging that would remove or replace murals.

Annex A of the published FICT report details a series of recommendations in table format. NIHE produced a detailed and robust summary of how Community Cohesion demonstrates relevance to the FICT recommendations.

## 4.5. Fresh Start Agreement

Published by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2015, the Fresh Start Agreement<sup>14</sup> set out the outcomes of talks between the five main parties in Northern Ireland and the governments of the UK and Ireland to address the legacy and impact of paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement. The agreement sought to *‘consolidate the peace, secure stability, enable progress and offer hope’*.

The Fresh Start Agreement included the reaffirming of the Northern Ireland Executive and UK and Irish Government commitment to several good relations-linked outcomes:

- The partnership government that underpins the forward trajectory of a peaceful society.
- Giving full effect to the principles of peace and democracy set out in previous agreements including the growth of mutual respect and equality of treatment that forms the basis of a united and stable society.
- Supporting law and order and the justice system.
- North South and East West cooperation for mutual benefit.
- Maximising for citizens the political cohesion of our society, political inclusivity, and participative democracy.
- The achievement of a comprehensive peace.

The Agreement aimed to provide an extensive framework to address some of the most challenging and intractable issues that impact on the community of Northern Ireland and thus, clearly synergises with the delivery and overarching aims of the Community Cohesion Strategy, particularly with regard to the creation of safer, cohesive neighbourhoods and responding to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict. The inclusion of priority actions under the themes of *Interfaces* and *Communities in Transition* within the NIHE Cohesion Strategy reflect an alignment with the aspirations in the Fresh Start Agreement.

---

<sup>14</sup> [A Fresh Start - The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan | Northern Ireland Executive](#)

## 4.6. The Executive Office Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025

The Racial Equality Strategy<sup>15</sup> is a framework for action for government departments and all sections of Northern Irish society to tackle racial inequality, open opportunity for all, and eradicate racism and hate crime. It was developed to be positioned alongside the T:BUC Strategy to promote good race relations and social cohesion. The strategy has seven aims which relate to Good Relations and the table below showcases the contribution of the Race Relations theme to these outcomes, particularly given the Community Cohesion Strategy's commitment to improved race relations at a strategic and operational level and to continue to deliver the Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme (HIPA)<sup>16</sup> scheme.

Table 3: Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025 - good relations aims

Aim	Description
<b>Elimination of racial inequality</b>	To eliminate racial inequalities and promote equality of opportunity in all aspects of economic, social, cultural, political and public life, for people of different ethnic backgrounds.
<b>Combatting racism and hate crime</b>	To combat racism and race hate and to provide effective protection against all manifestations of racism and racist crime. To provide redress and to have a victim-centred approach.
<b>Equality of service provision</b>	To ensure that people from a minority ethnic background access and benefit equally from all public services.
<b>Participation</b>	To increase the participation, representation, and sense of “belonging” of people from minority ethnic backgrounds in all aspects of public, political, economic, social and cultural life.
<b>Social cohesion</b>	To strengthen social relations and interactions between people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds, both long standing within Northern Ireland and recent arrivals to these shores.
<b>Capacity building</b>	To support minority ethnic communities in developing leadership and collective capacity at local and regional level.

<sup>15</sup> Racial Equality Strategy 2015 - 2025 | The Executive Office ([executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](http://executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk))

<sup>16</sup> The Housing Executive - The Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme (HIPA) ([nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk))

<b>Cultural identity</b>	To safeguard people’s rights to maintain their cultural identity and to pass it on to subsequent generations.
--------------------------	---

## 4.7. Urban Villages Initiative

The Urban Villages Initiative<sup>17</sup> is a headline initiative of the Together: Building a United Community strategy. The Initiative seeks to improve good relations outcomes and allow places where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension, to thrive. The five core delivery areas are:

- Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast)
- Bogside, Fountain and Bishop Street (Derry-Londonderry)
- Colin (West Belfast)
- Newtownards Road, Grampian Avenue to Bridge End (East Belfast)
- Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets (South Belfast)

The initiative has three central and interconnected aims:

- To foster positive community identities by creating places where people feel safe and connected, regardless of religious or ethnic background so that trust and relationships can develop, and pride and confidence is enhanced in the urban village.
- To build community capacity to participate in local and regional networks and encourage and support communities to express their views to influence what happens in their area.
- To improve the physical environment by creating thriving places for residents and visitors, improving internal and external access to the urban villages, and encouraging shared spaces.

There is an innate synergy between the Community Cohesion Strategy and Urban Villages Initiative given that both relate to the T:BUC Strategy and therefore improving community relations. This is evident in the correlation between fostering positive community identities and the Residential Segregation/Integration and Race Relations themes of the Community Cohesion Strategy as well as the alignment between improving the physical environment and encouraging shared spaces with the Interface and Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols themes.

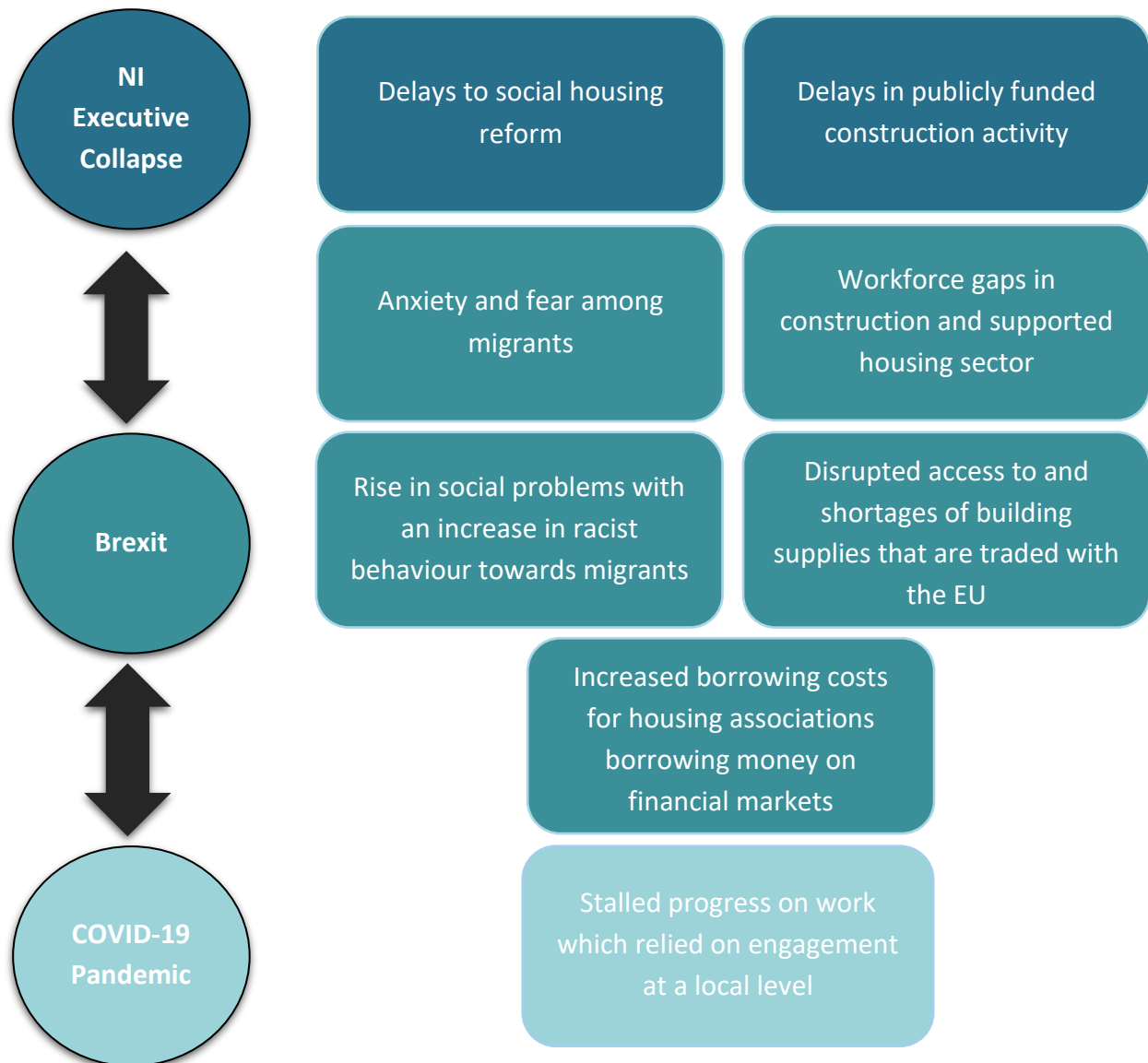
## 4.8. Socio Political Context

The delivery of the NIHE’s Community Cohesion Strategy between 2015 and 2020 coincided with three major events which affected the social, political, and economic environment of Northern

<sup>17</sup> [Urban Villages Initiative | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/urban-villages-initiative)

Ireland. The combination of these three events created a challenging macro environment within which to deliver the objectives and outputs of the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Socio-political context of the 2015-2020 Community Cohesion Strategy



Published in 2019, an NIHE commissioned report on the effects of Brexit on the housing sector highlighted that Brexit would likely increase borrowing costs for housing associations who borrow money on the financial markets; cause a workforce gap in construction and the supported housing sector in line with curbs on EU immigration; and disrupt access to and cause shortages

of building supplies that are traded with the EU<sup>18</sup>. Brexit also created a level of anxiety and fear among migrants, including those living in NIHE estates or social housing, and NI migrant organisations reported a rise in social problems with an increase in racist behaviour towards migrants and a rise in low-level harassment in workplaces and schools in the lead up to and following the Brexit vote. The effects of Brexit contributed to a challenging environment for the NIHE and the Community Cohesion Strategy but also reinforced the need for Community Cohesion at a time of social upheaval.

After its collapse in January 2017, it was three years before the Northern Ireland Executive reformed in January 2020<sup>19</sup>. With public services maintained by the civil service, many important issues were stalled, social housing reforms were delayed, and publicly funded construction activity declined creating a deterioration in social housing<sup>20</sup>. During the period of collapsed Government, the NIHE and DfC created detailed plans and proposals which would restructure the public housing sector and would allow funding for housing investment to be drawn from a variety of sources, but these plans could not be implemented without Ministerial approval. Despite the Fresh Start Agreement in 2016 committing the Executive to progressing significant structural reform of social housing provision, three years of collapsed Government created a difficult environment for the NIHE, and for the delivery and realisation of the Community Cohesion Strategy.

Finally, the fifth year of the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy was carried out largely in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite making good progress across the five themes of the Community Cohesion Strategy, progress on work which relied on engagement at a local level was negatively impacted by Governmental pandemic restrictions.

## 4.9. Peace IV and Interreg VA

The Peace IV and Interreg VA programmes 2014-2020 were implemented during the lifespan of the NIHE Cohesion Strategy.

Originally created in 1995 as a direct response to the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994, the PEACE programme was a unique initiative of the European Union, which aimed to support peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. While significant progress

---

<sup>18</sup> NIHE (2019) *Brexit and the Housing Market: A report for The Northern Ireland Housing Executive by RSM Consulting*. [www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Brexit/Brexit-and-the-Northern-Ireland-housing-market.aspx?ext=](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Brexit/Brexit-and-the-Northern-Ireland-housing-market.aspx?ext=).

<sup>19</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-46392952](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-46392952)

<sup>20</sup> [www.tughans.com/latest-news/ni-construction-sector-the-uks-least-optimistic/](http://www.tughans.com/latest-news/ni-construction-sector-the-uks-least-optimistic/)

was made during the initial PEACE programme, successive iterations, including Peace IV, which ran from 2014 to 2020, recognized the need to improve cross-community relations and, where possible, further integrate divided communities.

The content of the €270m Peace IV programme included a focus on Shared Education initiatives, Support for marginalised Children and Young People, the provision of new Shared Spaces and Services, and projects that Build Positive Relations with people from different communities and backgrounds. Additionally, the €283m INTERREG VA Programme (also 2014-2020) was one of 60 similar funding programmes across the European Union, designed to help overcome the issues that arise from the existence of a border. These issues range from access to transport, health and social care services, to environmental issues and enterprise development.

It had four core objectives in terms of **Research & Innovation** for cross-border enterprise development; **Environmental** initiatives; **Sustainable Transport** projects; and **Health & Social Care** services on a cross-border basis. Good Relations is weaved into the construct of Interreg VA and as this evaluation will report, NIHE had a key role to play in the delivery of programmes across both Interreg and Peace IV. The implication for the NIHE was to ensure a complementary approach to these significant investment programmes which offer a clear connection and synergy across the outcome areas and themes of the Cohesion Strategy.

#### 4.10. Community Planning

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 enshrines in legislation the commitment of Northern Irish Departments and local councils to the promotion and encouragement of community planning. Community planning is defined as involving<sup>21</sup>:

- The identification of long-term objectives for social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.
- The identification of long-term objectives for the achievement of sustainable development.
- The identification of actions and functions to be performed for the purposes of delivering the objectives for social, economic, and environmental wellbeing and sustainable development.

Social wellbeing here includes *“promoting equality of opportunity in accordance with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and, without prejudice to this, having regard to the desirability of promoting good relations”*.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2014/8/part/10/crossheading/general/enacted>



Community Planning was introduced in NI following Local Government reform and brought together a wide range of partners, including representatives from the statutory partners such as NIHE. Therefore, NIHE is responsible for the same commitment to community planning as Northern Ireland Departments and councils. The first of the local authority community plans began to emerge in 2017, around the midpoint of the NIHE Cohesion Strategy. Local authorities consulted widely with local and regional stakeholders and NIHE participated in the various consultation processes. Community plans typically include and reaffirm commitment to the development of inclusive, cohesive communities and therefore offer a strong alignment with the work carried out under the Cohesion Strategy.

Now that community plans are embedded, they represent the seminal policy and strategy documents for local authorities across NI and will be an important factor and consideration for a future iteration of the NIHE Cohesion Strategy.

## 4.11. NIHE Strategies and Policies

The NIHE has developed a range of additional policies and strategy documents either prior to, or during the lifespan of the Cohesion Strategy to reflect its evolving remit and commitment and to ensure its alignment with the evolving socio political context. Four key documents are considered below:

### 4.11.1. Race Relations Policy

The NIHE Race Relations Policy is a recognition of the changing role of the NIHE in delivering housing to an increasingly diverse community and draws together the responsibilities of the NIHE which contribute to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds in Northern Ireland. The policy is built around ten outcomes and five key themes with a central aim:

*“To ensure that all Black and Minority Ethnic People in Northern Ireland can enjoy full and fair access to housing services and employment opportunities within the Housing Executive. It aims to support the promotion of good relations between and within ethnic groups and communities.”*

The key themes of the policy are:

1. Mainstreaming black and minority ethnic issues in policy development
2. Racial harassment and intimidation
3. Promoting black and minority ethnic social inclusion

4. Community participation and development
5. Migrant worker issues

The Race Relations theme of the Community Cohesion Strategy is a realisation of the commitment made in the NIHE Race Relations Policy to mainstream ethnic community issues in policy development and to promote BME social inclusion, contributing to the achievement of this Strategy's key aims and outcomes.

#### **4.11.2. Community Involvement Strategy 2018-2023**

The Community Involvement Strategy was developed to deliver the Housing Executive's objective of fostering vibrant and stronger communities. The vision of the policy is:

*"To work in active and meaningful partnership with our communities and to give residents, tenants and leaseholders a real say in making their neighbourhoods better places in which to live."*

The strategy has two central objectives, to promote community involvement across all communities, which involves developing new groups in underrepresented areas and targeting resources to underrepresented groups; and to enable communities to challenge, influence, and shape the housing service. There is clear alignment between this Strategy and the Community Cohesion Strategy, particularly through the themes of Segregation/Integration, Race Relations, and Communities in Transition given that these themes seek to bring communities closer together and promote the integration of those from different backgrounds.

#### **4.11.3. Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023**

The NIHE Community Safety Strategy commits the NIHE to making a difference by improving the quality of life for residents in NIHE estates and recognises that community safety is a quality of life issue which impacts on all of society, individually and collectively. Through the promotion of community safety, the Strategy has associated effects on good relations and ultimately aims to "empower communities, build greater community confidence, raise community safety awareness, and improve support to those who are vulnerable within our communities".

The Community Safety Strategy has three central themes:

- Building community confidence
- Ensuring local solutions to local issues (Prevention/interventions/resolutions are designed to respond to the needs of communities)

- Working together (With partners across statutory, voluntary and community sectors to achieve best outcomes for tenants and communities)

There is evident synergy between this strategy and the Community Cohesion Strategy. Both focus on creating improved environments for individuals and neighbourhoods. There is alignment here with the themes of Race Relations, Communities in Transition, Interfaces, and Flags, Emblems, Sectional Symbols.

#### **4.11.4. A Good Practice Guide To Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols**

The NIHE Good Practice Guide to Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols draws upon the experience of local communities to help the community, voluntary and statutory sectors focus on more acceptable expressions of cultural identity and has obvious links to the Community Cohesion Strategy given that it shares its name with the Strategy's final theme. The Guide aims to *"create an environment where people feel safe to celebrate and respect culture within and between communities,"* and has five central objectives:

1. to facilitate communities to create a stable environment free from aggressive cultural displays;
2. to promote community empowerment in the management of flags;
3. to raise awareness and mutual acceptance of cultural diversity;
4. to encourage the removal of tattered and torn flags, emblems, and sectional symbols; and
5. to explore alternative expressions of culture.

The Community Cohesion Strategy aims to support local communities in the removal of sectional symbols with this Guide highlighting good practice for doing so, demonstrating clear alignment with the Community Cohesion Strategy.

#### **4.12. Summary**

This section set out the strategic, policy and socio-economic context within which the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy was both developed and delivered. An analysis of the relevant government policy which may influence future work around community relations and cohesion is provided in the analysis in Section 7.

## Section 5: Strategy Delivery

### 5.1. Introduction

This section sets out a summary of the key deliverables of the Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020. The infographic below provides a high-level overview of significant achievements. The pages that follow explore each of the five themes in more detail and provide a summary of the deliverables against intended actions and outcomes.



**1,480 units in 45 schemes**

The number of new social housing units developed through Housing for All (997) and the T:BUC Shared Housing Programme (483) (35 and 10 schemes respectively)



**£960,000+**

The amount of funding allocated to community and voluntary groups across estate-based cohesion, race relations, re-imaging and areas at risk programmes



**13**

The number of staff added to facilitate the roll out of the Cohesion Strategy, secured through external funding



**6**

The number of new programmes and initiatives developed in partnership with other agencies through Peace IV and Interreg VA



**11**

The reduction in the number of bonfires taking place on NIHE property during the lifespan of the strategy



**More than 3000 per year**

The number of residents and tenants engaged across Peace IV, Interreg and Race Relations initiatives funded through the Cohesion Strategy

**One Peace wall removed, and one Peace wall remodeled during the strategy** (see image overleaf)



## 5.2. Headline Achievements

The table below provides a summary of the headline achievements of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020, broken down by theme. There is clear evidence from both the output data and from the survey and qualitative consultation process that the strategy has contributed to the creation of more stable, safer, and cohesive neighbourhoods.

*Table 4: Headline achievements of the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020*

Community Cohesion Strategy Theme	Headline Achievements
Residential Segregation / Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 997 Housing for All shared housing units developed in 35 schemes over the period 2017/18 to 2020/21, adding to 483 units in the 10 schemes completed by 2019/20 under the original T:BUC Shared Housing Programme</li> <li>• 18 good relations plans supported</li> <li>• 10 advisory groups established</li> <li>• 60 estate groups supported across 13 areas through BRIC2</li> <li>• £206,182.13 invested in communities across NI through BRIC2</li> </ul>

Community Cohesion Strategy Theme	Headline Achievements
Race Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSNI Partnership developed to obtain statistics on hate crime specific to NIHE estates &amp; raise awareness of hate incidents/prevention work</li> <li>• 69 race relations projects delivered <i>over the life of the strategy</i>, engaging more than 3000 participants per year</li> <li>• £132,345.56 invested in race relations projects</li> <li>• 44 unique minority ethnic organisations engaged with</li> <li>• A review of the community welcome pack carried out with a range of stakeholders incl. PSNI, Education Authority &amp; Black and Minority Ethnic groups</li> <li>• Input into the review of the Race Relations Policy, HIPA Scheme and Hate Crime review</li> <li>• 12 interagency partnerships established focusing on needs assessment, hate crime prevention and development of services, partners included PSNI, Councils, Councils, Belfast Metropolitan College, HCN, HSCT, Education Authority, Ethnic Community Groups and networks and community organisations</li> <li>• Strategic Cohesion Forum maintained throughout the lifespan of the strategy</li> <li>• BME representative appointed to the Equality Forum</li> <li>• Member of NICS Race &amp; Ethnicity Network</li> </ul>
Communities in Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 455 Estate Based Cohesion projects were allocated to organisations across the 13 areas to progress good relations outcomes</li> <li>• Six major programmes secured under Peace IV and Interreg VA with a combined total value of more than £12m+ (<i>only a proportion of this allocated to NIHE</i>). These programmes were Listen Share Change, Futures, MEA Local Area Network, BCC Building Positive Relationships, Children and Young Peoples Programme and ONSIDE<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• More than 6000 residents engaged in Peace IV and Interreg VA funded initiatives</li> <li>• Areas at Risk programme delivered in 2 areas in North Belfast (Glenbank/Whitewell) resulting in 166 Areas at Risk projects delivered within the initiative, with £261,000 invested in the area</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> The ONSIDE (Outreach & Navigation for Social Inclusion & Digital Engagement) programme is a cross border project led by Disability Action NI in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Independent Living Movement Ireland, and Supporting Communities.

Community Cohesion Strategy Theme	Headline Achievements
Interface Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Peace wall was demolished</li> <li>• 1 Peace wall was remodeled</li> <li>• £365,000 was invested to deliver barrier removal and interface normalisation programme</li> <li>• 2 environmental works programmes were delivered</li> <li>• 10 dwellings accessed interface aftercare supports</li> </ul>
Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 134 reimagining projects were delivered in communities across NI</li> <li>• Comprehensive and up to date data base of all sectional symbols on NIHE land and property has been developed by Geographic Information Systems (GIS)</li> <li>• The flag protocol was reviewed by the Strategic Cohesion Forum</li> <li>• 24 Positive cultural celebrations were supported through small grants</li> <li>• By 2021, there were 11 fewer bonfires on NIHE lands than at the start of the strategy</li> <li>• NIHE are a signatory to Memorandum of Understanding on the Bonfire Management Agreement</li> <li>• 43 Community Groups funded through the Positive Expressions of Culture initiative (PEOC), formerly the Bonfire Management Programme</li> <li>• 6 areas are now using beacons/alternatives to Bonfires. Belfast City Council's Bonfire Management Programme serves as an example of positive partnership working in this space</li> <li>• A number of other communities were supported to transition from bonfires to beacons through the Positive Expressions of Culture programme, including Killynure, Longstone, the Diamond and Ballykeel</li> <li>• A Business case has been completed to appoint contractor to pre-lift bonfire material</li> </ul>

### 5.3. Residential Segregation/Integration

The Residential Segregation and Integration theme reflects a twin track approach of support for shared new build delivery and programme delivery within existing estates. The delivery of shared housing was identified as an action in the Draft Programme for Government 2016 – 2021. The key initiatives as committed in the Community Cohesion Strategy reflect:

- Implementation of the Shared Housing Programme



- Supporting the implementation of the T:BUC and PfG Housing for All shared housing initiative
- Implementation of BRIC2

### Shared Housing Programme

A commitment to delivering approximately 200 new build shared social housing units per year (800 during the lifespan of the Cohesion Strategy) was set out as part of the Social Housing Development Programme. The **Shared Housing** Programme is managed by the NIHE's Development Programme Group (DPG), on a three-year rolling basis. DPG provides grant funding to housing associations, so that they can build or buy new social housing.

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
1. Work in partnership with DfC "Housing for All programme" to deliver approx. 200 units annually with an overall draft PFG target of 800 units by 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 997 shared housing units (in 35 schemes) developed</li> </ul>

### T:BUC Housing for All

The Programme for Government shared housing is badged '**Housing for All**'. Each shared neighbourhood scheme is supported through the development and delivery of a five-year Good Relations Plan which is managed by the Housing Association developing the scheme. The Good Relations Plans include 'bonding' programmes which are delivered to the new shared neighbourhood residents, and 'bridging' programmes which are delivered between the new shared residents and residents from the surrounding communities (within a five-mile radius of the new shared scheme).

The Residential Segregation/Integration theme reflected NIHE's participation in and contribution to 'Housing for All'. This committed the NIHE to facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and affordable sector as far as was practicable, desirable, and safe. The NIHE worked with the DfC, Housing Associations and others to bring forward proposals for shared new build schemes under the OFMDFM's T:BUC programme. The NIHE then supported the development of good relations plans in new developments to build community cohesion. A crucial stage in the development of the Good Relations Plans is the establishment of Advisory Groups drawn from: local political representatives, voluntary and Community sector organisations, local Council and NIHE GROs, and statutory bodies. The Advisory Groups are key to supporting and monitoring the delivery of the Good Relations Plans which include thematic programmes in areas such as Health and Well-being, Youth and Cultural Diversity.



Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyse and assist in the sustainability of shared neighbourhood estates by supporting research into segregated/shared housing, including updating the <i>Mapping Segregation</i> report.</li> <li>2. Facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and affordable sector (as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.)</li> <li>3. Via the shared New Build Programme we will work in partnership with The Executive Office, DfC, and Housing Associations to deliver 10 Shared Neighbourhood (TBUC) schemes.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mapping Segregation</i> analysis updated based on 2011 census findings</li> <li>• 1,480 new social housing units developed in 45 schemes through Housing for All (997 units in 35 schemes) and the T:BUC Shared Neighbourhood Programme (483 units in 10 schemes)</li> <li>• 18 good relations plans supported</li> <li>• 10 advisory groups established</li> </ul>

## BRIC2

The Building Relationships in Communities (BRIC) programme was launched in 2010. Funded under Priority 2 Theme 2 of the EU Peace Programme, BRIC was designed to develop the good relations capacity of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and to develop good relations plans and programmes for 88 NIHE estates. Initially delivered over a four year period until December 2014, BRIC2 was then embedded into the 2015-2020 Community Cohesion Strategy to build on the positive work carried out to date.

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop support programmes of action to address the issues of residential segregation and integration in 72 communities across 3 years, through our new BRIC 2 programme to increase sharing within and between communities.</li> <li>2. Revisit 52 previous Shared Neighbourhood Programme, Shared Community Programme, BRIC and BRIC 2 Programme participant groups to ensure ongoing support and sustainability.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 estate groups supported across 13 areas through BRIC2</li> <li>• £206,182.13 invested in communities across NI through BRIC2</li> <li>• 1,873 Housing Executive staff trained</li> <li>• 85 estates/groups trained in Good Relations</li> </ul>

3. Good Relations training was provided to staff and community participants.	
--	--

## 5.4. Race Relations

The Race Relations theme made a clear and positive commitment to tackling race issues and builds on the NIHE Race Relations Policy which aims to ensure that all black and minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland can get full and fair access to housing services and employment opportunities within the NIHE. As in the Race Relations Policy, this theme commits the NIHE to support the promotion of good relations between and within ethnic groups and communities. The actual delivery approach under this theme included:

- Administration and allocation of small grants to community and voluntary organisations to deliver race relations projects at a local level.
- Working closely with DoJ to provide input and to review the DoJ 'Race Relations strategy'.
- Continuous review of the NIHE strategy to ensure representation of ethnic communities on the Strategic Cohesion Forum and the Equality Consultative Forum as well as ongoing review of existing resources such as the Community Welcome Pack.
- Proactively developing new partnerships with key statutory and voluntary agencies and the wider Housing Community Network to explore early intervention/prevention of hate crime on a local estate-based level and utilisation of existing community structures such as established interagency partnerships.
- Networking activity to develop partnerships with minority and ethnic community groups across Northern Ireland.

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate a clear and positive commitment to tackling race issues through the Housing Executive's updated Race Relations policy.</li> <li>2. Contribute towards improved race relations at a strategic and operational level through effective partnership working via Strategic Cohesion Forum and estate-based strategy work.</li> <li>3. Continue to deliver the HIPA (Hate Incident Practical Action) scheme on behalf of the Department of Justice</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSNI Partnership developed to obtain statistics on hate crime specific to NIHE estates &amp; raise awareness of hate incidents/prevention work</li> <li>• 69 race relations projects delivered <i>over the life of the strategy</i>, engaging more than 3000 participants per year</li> <li>• £132,345.56 invested in race relations projects</li> <li>• 44 unique minority ethnic organisations engaged with</li> <li>• A review of the community welcome pack carried out with a range of stakeholders incl.</li> </ul>

<p>and the PSNI to support victims of hate crime.</p> <p>4. Funding of locally based Race Relations projects across NI in Housing Executive estates.</p>	<p>PSNI, Education Authority , HSCT, ethnic community groups and networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 interagency partnerships established focusing on needs assessment, hate crime prevention and development of services; partners included PSNI, Councils, Belfast Metropolitan College, HCN community organisations, Education Authority, HSCT, Community Advice, ethnic community groups and networks</li> <li>• Strategic Cohesion Forum maintained throughout the lifespan of the strategy</li> <li>• BME representative appointed to the Equality Forum</li> <li>• Member of NICS Race &amp; Equality Network</li> </ul>
--	--

Figure 4: Housing Community Network Structure

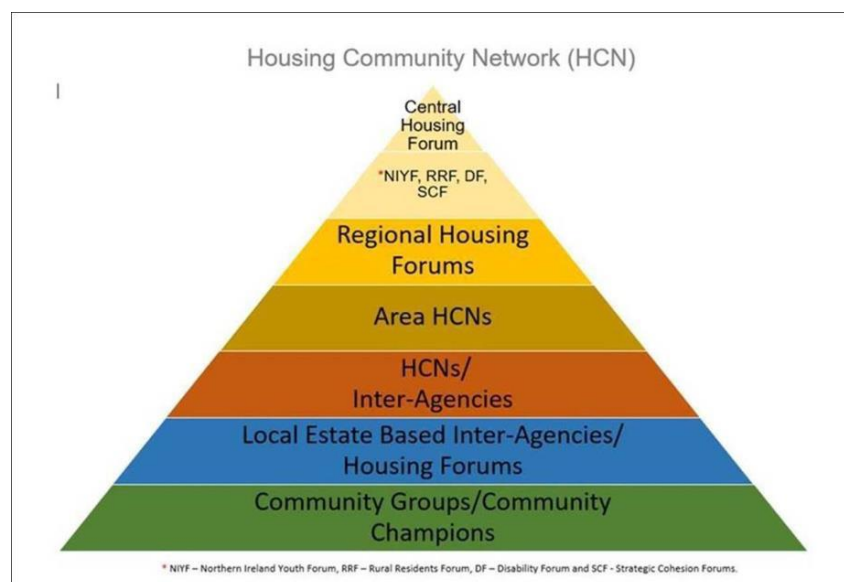


Figure 4 (above) shows the structure of the Housing Community Network. It shows how good relations permeates the various levels from community groups through to the central housing forum.

## 5.5. Communities in Transition

The Communities in Transition theme aimed to build relationships within and between people and communities, promoting participation in community development and peacebuilding and creating community cohesion. It recognised particular difficulties facing communities with weak community infrastructure and ‘tipping points’ that might create community division and where NIHE intervention is an important step in helping improve community relations within a neighbourhood. The NIHE identifies communities at risk and seeks to create the environment to allow timely and appropriate interventions whilst also engaging adjacent communities to foster an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and understanding. This involves conducting regular audits and preparing local plans. The key initiatives delivered under this theme include:

- **Areas at Risk** – to provide annual support to two Areas at Risk in North Belfast on behalf of the DfC (BRO North Belfast).
- **Estate Based Cohesion Projects** - through the delivery of a small grants scheme, to provide resources for local organisations to deliver 65 Estate Based Cohesion Projects annually. Small grants can be allocated across the themes of Communities in Transition, Interfaces, and Segregation.
- **External Funding and Programmes** - by developing partnerships and relationships with other organisations, to pursue additional, external funding to support the delivery of the Cohesion Strategy’s objectives.

The specific commitments as set out in the Community Cohesion Strategy and subsequent key achievements are included below:

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify communities at risk (‘tipping points’) and taking a proactive approach to identifying ‘hot spots’ and changing issues within the 5 themes through establishing a comprehensive data base to identify areas that would benefit from intervention.</li> <li>2. Create the environment to allow timely and appropriate interventions.</li> <li>3. Renew our focus on statutory and voluntary partnerships through participation on multi agency forums.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 455 Estate Based Cohesion projects were allocated to organisations across the 13 areas to progress good relations outcomes</li> <li>• Six major programmes secured under Peace IV and Interreg VA with a combined total value of more than £12m+ (<i>only a proportion of this allocated to NIHE</i>). These programmes were: Listen, Share Change; Futures; MEA Local Area Network; BCC Building Positive Relationships; Children and Young Peoples Programme; and ONSIDE</li> </ul>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Engage with adjacent communities to foster an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and understanding via ‘bridging events’.</li> <li>5. Conduct regular audits and prepare good relations local plans.</li> <li>6. Continue to deliver Areas at Risk (A@R) Programme on behalf of DfC at local level.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 6000 residents engaged in Peace IV and Interreg VA funded initiatives</li> <li>• Areas at Risk programme delivered in 2 areas in North Belfast (Glenbank/Whitewell) resulting in 166 Areas at Risk projects delivered within the initiative, with £261,000 invested in the area</li> </ul>
--	---

## 5.6. Interface Areas

The Interface theme sought to address the large number of interface areas which exist in Northern Ireland, in partnership with the Department of Justice (DoJ) and in light of the DOJ’s strategy needs (DoJ Community Safety Strategy 2012-2017 and Interface Framework 2023)<sup>23</sup>. The greatest concentration of peace walls and interfaces is in Belfast, but these areas are also present in Derry/Londonderry and Portadown and NIHE homes are located in the immediate vicinity of all of these structures. Twenty-one of these interfaces are owned by the Housing Executive. Erected originally to improve security, peace walls now contribute to the perpetuation of the cycle of division and segregation.

This theme committed the NIHE to invest in improvement through environmental initiatives and regeneration programmes and to develop opportunities to bring communities together, especially hard to reach groups such as young people. Much of this was achieved through the allocation of small grants to local organisations to carry out re-imaging works. It should be acknowledged, however, that the process of dialogue, negotiation and engagement required to bring about an agreed approach in local communities was significant and driven by the NIHE staff in local communities.

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop opportunities to bring communities together.</li> <li>2. Invest in our young people as the next generation of leaders in our society, through a programme of interface intervention.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Peace wall was removed on the Crumlin Road</li> <li>• 1 Peace wall was remodeled on the Crumlin Road</li> </ul>

<sup>23</sup> For more information see: [www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/departments-justice-interface-programme](http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/departments-justice-interface-programme)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Support interface communities by supporting local plans for the regeneration and remodelling of interface areas.</li> <li>4. Continue capacity building in areas of weak social infrastructure.</li> <li>5. Continue to invest in improvement through environmental initiatives.</li> <li>6. Deliver the Interface Normalisation programme on behalf of the Department of Justice. This programme provides additional security measures to resident's homes at interface locations that are proposing transformation.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £365,000 was invested to deliver barrier removal and interface normalisation programme</li> <li>• 2 environmental works programmes were delivered; one at Woodvale interface and one at Strand Walk</li> <li>• 10 dwellings accessed interface aftercare supports</li> </ul>
--	---

### 5.7. Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols

The Flags, Emblems, and Section Symbols theme built on the NIHE aim to create an environment where people feel safe to celebrate and respect culture within and between communities and recognises that people have the right to live in a tolerant, diverse society where differences are recognised and respected. The theme committed the Housing Executive to support local communities in the removal of sectional symbols. Political and sectarian displays are prevalent in NIHE estates but there is clear evidence of how re-imaging projects can be the catalyst for physical, social, and economic regeneration. The Flags, Emblems, and Section Symbols theme committed NIHE to carrying forward this work to develop community capacity and build stronger and more confident communities. The key activities and initiatives delivered under this theme included:

- Provision of funding via the re-imaging programme to address the physical manifestations of segregation.
- Delivery of capacity building programmes and ongoing mentoring support by NIHE staff to organisations operating within interface areas.
- Facilitation of dialogue, negotiation and engagement between communities, resulting in delivery of 134 reimagining projects (meeting the target of five per year) to address the chill factor created by contentious murals on Housing Executive estates and make them physically more welcoming.
- Undertaking a review of the Flags Protocol.
- Appointment of a contractor to pre-lift any bonfire material, and provision of support for 13 positive cultural celebrations across NI through PEOC funding.

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Key Achievements
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a comprehensive and up to date data base of all sectional symbols on NIHE land and property.</li> <li>2. Identify areas ready for positive intervention in collaboration with our Regional/Area Offices.</li> <li>3. Consult and support local communities about the removal of sectional symbols.</li> <li>4. Continue capacity building in areas of weak social infrastructure.</li> <li>5. Use the BRIC2 programme as a vehicle for addressing sectional symbols.</li> <li>6. Focus on more acceptable expressions of cultural identity.</li> <li>7. Propagate models of ‘good practice’ and promote sharing the learning events.</li> <li>8. Develop and expand our existing support network and services to help us deliver a culture of respect throughout Northern Ireland.</li> <li>9. Continue to deliver the successful Better Bonfire Management Scheme</li> <li>10. Continue to work with OFMDFM and fellow statutory partners to play a part in assisting communities to move forward on the issue of flags.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive and up to date data base of all sectional symbols on NIHE land and property has been developed by the Housing Executive’s Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team. NIHE have been using GIS from around 2008 and the original Community Cohesion GIS Application was developed around March 2015</li> <li>• 134 reimagining projects delivered during the lifespan of the strategy</li> <li>• The flag protocol was reviewed by the Strategic Cohesion Forum</li> <li>• 170 Positive cultural celebrations were supported through PEOC funding from 2015-2020</li> <li>• By 2021, there were 11 fewer bonfires on NIHE lands than at the start of the strategy</li> <li>• NIHE are a signatory to Memorandum of Understanding on the Bonfire Management Agreement</li> <li>• 43 Community Groups were funded through the PEOC programme</li> <li>• 6 areas are now using beacons/alternatives to Bonfires. Belfast City Council’s Bonfire Management Programme serves as an example of positive partnership working in this space</li> <li>• A business case has been completed to appoint contractor to pre-lift bonfire material</li> </ul>

## Section 6: Consultation Findings

### 6.1. Introduction

This section sets out the consultation findings including a) a summary of the key findings from the web based survey with grant recipients, followed by b) a thematic analysis of the semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. A list of the stakeholders who participated in consultation is provided in Appendix 2.

### 6.2. Survey Findings

A web-based survey was distributed to 127 groups who had received funding under one of the five themes of the Community Cohesion Strategy between 2015 and 2020. Grants were distributed under the remit of: Race Relations, Estate Based Cohesion Projects or Re-Imaging communities. The survey sought opinions on how this funding made a difference to the group and local community; how this funding progressed good relations in the community; the relevance of the five cohesion themes; and the priorities and actions for a future Community Cohesion Strategy.

#### Demographics

**37**

Responses  
(29% response  
rate)

**49%**

Responses from  
urban-based  
groups

**23%**

Responses from  
groups at  
interfaces

**29%**

Responses from  
groups in rural  
areas

Responses were gathered from all areas of Northern Ireland with the majority in the West Area (31%) and Causeway Area (11%). The table below highlights response levels across all respondent areas.



Area	Percentage of Responses (%)
West Area	31.43%
Causeway Area	11.43%
East Area	8.57%
South Down Area	8.57%
West Belfast Area	8.57%
Lisburn & Castlereagh Area	5.71%
Mid Ulster Area	5.71%
North Belfast Area	5.71%
North Down & Ards Area	2.86%
South & East Belfast Area	2.86%
South Antrim Area	2.86%
South Area	2.86%
South West Area	2.86%

65% of groups received funding for projects which targeted the general population of their operating area, whilst 26% targeted children and young people, and 13% targeted older people. Responses were attracted from groups who had received funding across the five years of the Community Cohesion Strategy with the majority being funded in 2020 (83%).

### Good Relations and Cohesion Related Outcomes

The projects funded under the Community Cohesion Strategy produced a wide range of good relations outcomes. The most commonly delivered outcomes were:



**85%**

Improved community  
relations



**70%**

Improved community  
wellbeing



**55%**

Enhanced appreciation  
of cultural diversity

30 respondents provided further information on perceived outcomes achieved. A sample of these comments is provided below:

*“The funding delivered our Re-Engaging with the Community project which allowed families from the estate and surrounding areas to engage in a community orientated project for the first time in over a year. It also gave the participants a focal point for the community to bring a positive and constructive understanding at a time when tensions were rising and a few weeks*

*previously we had witnessed riots and disorder on the street due to a vacuum caused by the NI protocol and perceptions surrounding this.” – Group Feedback*

*“The funding delivered music tuition and brought together several children from the local area; lessons were held in small groups. As we are a rural community, all the children attend different schools. The music tuition found a commonality between them through playing the same instruments.” – Group Feedback*

*“The funding went into an event which developed relationships with all ethnic minority groups and encouraged local groups to engage with them in capacity building around cultures and respect for their traditions. The outcome was achieved as many community groups took active part in the events such as Irish, British, Polish, Indian, and Russian speaking.” – Group Feedback*

Respondents noted that NIHE Cohesion funding had a positive impact on the progression of their group. It is evident from this feedback that funding provided a catalyst for continued post-programme development. Respondents reported:

**26%**

Respondents reported that since receiving NIHE Cohesion funding, the community in which they operate had become more closely integrated, which had increased community capacity.

*“Our groups have grown and brought everyone together within the community.” – Group Feedback*

*“Our group has benefited greatly from the Cohesion Fund; it has abated heightened tensions during summer periods and helped our communities to strengthen social bonds and respect for each other's differences.” – Group Feedback*

**16%**

Stimulated community awareness about their organisation, bringing awareness of the work they do to the forefront and cementing the organisation's place in the community.

*“Our group has been promoted within the community due to the funding we received from the Cohesion Unit. Our invaluable services have been brought to the forefront of the community and ensured that residents, especially those who are vulnerable, are aware of the services that we provide and how to avail of them.” – Group Feedback*

**16%**

Enhancement and delivery of more projects or interventions to address the needs of communities, with one respondent referencing increased participation in their projects post-funding.

*“The NIHE's Cohesion fund has assisted us to develop and enhance projects during the summer months which helps reduce tensions and alleviate anti-social behaviour levels which are inherently high within the area.” – Group Feedback*

**10%** Directly or indirectly resulted in improvements in their facilities.

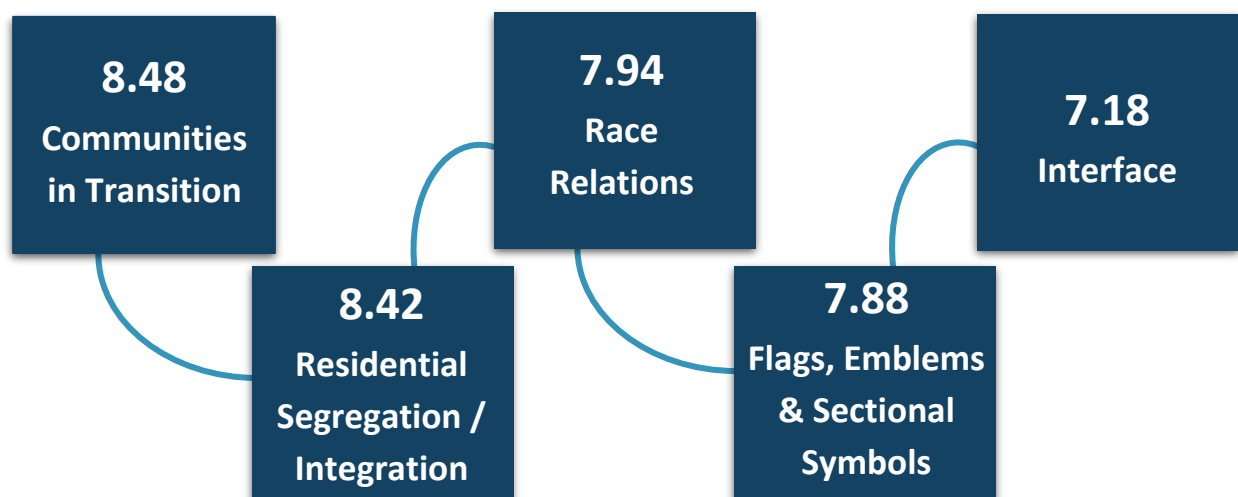
**10%** Organisation capacity increased through feasibility studies, business plans, or social return on investment studies which enabled further progression and increased the likelihood of future funding which will maintain community assets, support capital ambition, or enable further community provision.

### Importance of Community Cohesion Strategy Funding

Respondents rated the importance of Community Cohesion funding in progressing good relations in their community on a scale of 0-10 where 0 equalled not important and 10 equalled very important. The average response was 8.14 suggesting a high level of importance.

### Relevance of Community Cohesion Themes

In rating the extent to which the five themes of the 2015-20 Strategy are still relevant on a scale of 1 to 10 (irrelevant to very relevant), all themes attracted a weighted average of 7 or more, suggesting they are all still relevant.

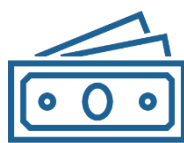


### Other Priorities and Actions

Other priorities and actions which respondents felt should be reflected in the next NIHE Cohesion Strategy include:



**Shared Spaces**



**Funding for  
Groups Working  
with NIHE Estates**



**Mental Health  
Support**

### 6.3. Thematic Analysis

Findings from the stakeholder interviews are presented under the five themes of the 2015-20 Cohesion Strategy below and set the scene for subsequent recommendations on the future strategy in context.

1. Residential Segregation/Integration
2. Race Relations
3. Communities in Transition
4. Interface Areas
5. Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols

### 6.4. Cohesion Theme 1: Residential Segregation/Integration

Residential segregation is a physical separation of two or more groups into different neighbourhoods, or a form of segregation that sorts population groups into various neighbourhoods shaping the living environment at the neighbourhood level.<sup>24 25</sup> From 1971, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) assumed responsibility for housing and had to work in the areas that were most acutely impacted during the early stages of the Troubles which saw 60,000 people being forced to leave their homes between 1969 and 1973 with 14,000 homes destroyed. This led to widespread segregation which continues to this day.

In Northern Ireland in 1969, 69% of Protestants and 56% of Catholics lived in streets where they were in their own majority. By 1973, the respective proportions had increased to 99% of Protestants and 75% of Catholics<sup>26</sup>. Segregation in Northern Ireland has created a segmented

<sup>24</sup> Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1988). The Dimensions of Residential Segregation. *Social Forces*, 67(2), pp.281–315.

<sup>25</sup> Kawachi, Ichiro and Lisa F. Berkman. (2003) *Neighborhoods and Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 265.

<sup>26</sup> Wright, Northern Ireland a Comparative Analysis 1988

housing market within the social housing sector, with research finding that the most segregated communities are in the urban areas of Belfast, Derry, and Craigavon. A baseline survey among Housing Executive managers in the late 1990s/early 2000s estimated that over 90% of NIHE estates were segregated into predominantly single communities, with the proportion rising to 94% in Belfast. More recent analysis, which used a different methodology based on analysis of 2011 census data using a grid square tool, indicated that residential segregation in estates constructed by the Housing Executive had reduced, but remained widespread. In 2011, almost 80% of households in NIHE-built estates outside Belfast and 94% of households in estates in the city were living in segregated communities<sup>27</sup>.

There was a definite sense among NIHE stakeholders that segregation impacts on their ability to discharge their duty of ensuring that housing is provided based on need and making the best use of existing housing and land. While acknowledging that the traditional community divide in Northern Ireland has been and continues to be the main driver of segregation, other factors contribute such as people wanting to stay in the area where they were born or where they can remain close to family to sustain their support network.

NIHE staff contributors cautioned against focusing exclusively on the segregation statistics as the key metric in measuring success against this cohesion theme. It was felt that the work across all the cohesion themes has enabled a “desegregation of mindset and attitude” in some cases, which may not lead to mixed estates but has opened conversations and communication channels among people and communities that were unimaginable a decade ago.

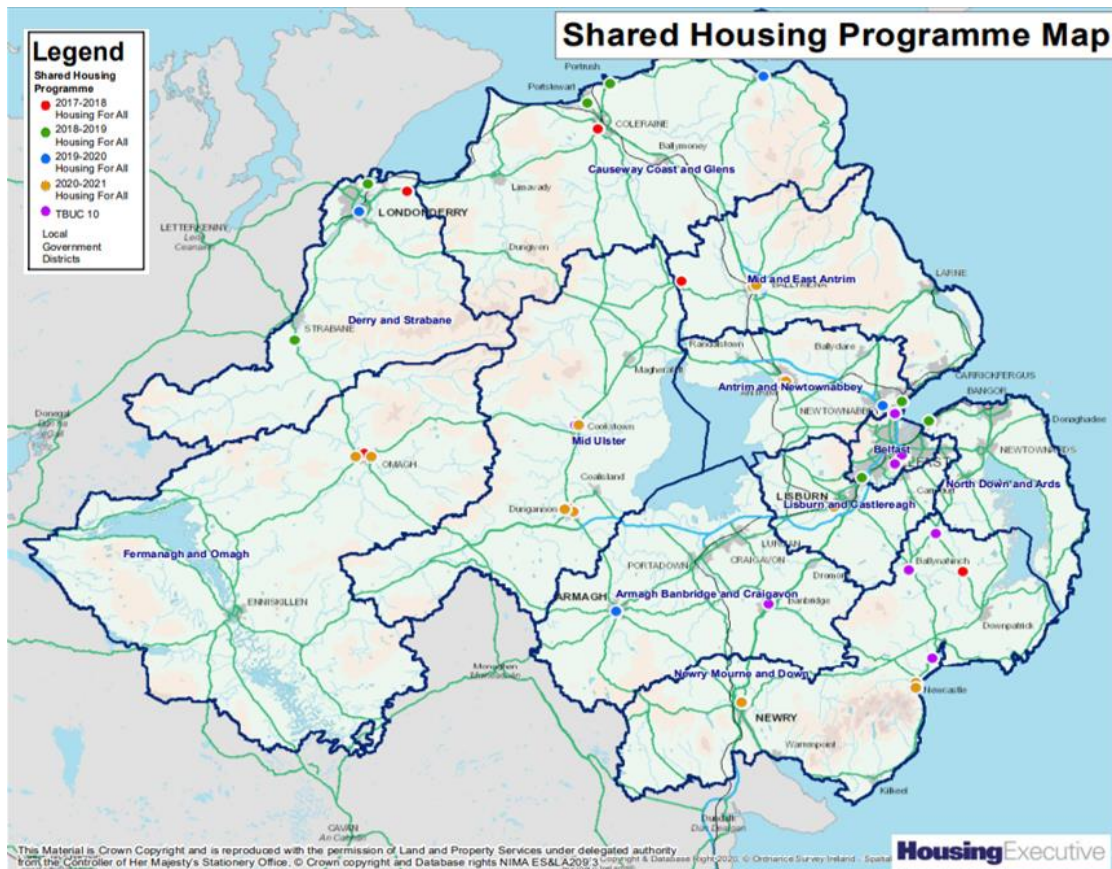
Approaches adopted for addressing segregation in social housing by the NIHE since 2015 include supporting communities through Shared Housing and estate-based cohesion programmes (Shared Neighbourhood Programme, Shared Communities Programme, and Building Relationships in Communities (BRIC 2).

---

<sup>27</sup> Based on analysis derived from work by Shuttleworth and Lloyd (2018): [www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Mapping-segregation/Estates-outside-Belfast-based-on-2011-analysis.aspx](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Mapping-segregation/Estates-outside-Belfast-based-on-2011-analysis.aspx) and [www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Mapping-segregation/Belfast-estates-2011-analysis.aspx](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Research/Mapping-segregation/Belfast-estates-2011-analysis.aspx)

## Shared Housing Programme

Figure 5: Locations of 'Housing for All' and original T:BUC shared housing schemes



Shared Housing is a tangible delivery to reduce segregation and promote integration. Homes within shared communities are allocated the same way as any other social housing schemes, using the common waiting list and Housing Selection Scheme, with the aim of ensuring that no one community is more than 70% in the dominance based on religion, nationality or ethnicity and all tenants have signed up to the good neighbour agreement. First introduced in 2008, it has accelerated since 2015 with just over £23 million allocated across the 59 Schemes (1,728 homes) and surrounding areas across Northern Ireland. Each new scheme is built by Housing Associations, supported by the Housing Executive and subsidised by a grant from the DfC.

While not ignoring the accusations of social engineering that the Programme was subject to in its early days, stakeholders who took part in the research felt that it had been accepted and had gained much credibility due to the success of the many shared schemes. The need for greater investment beyond the current 6% of the new build programme per annum was a common theme to emerge.



It was highlighted that in some cases, shared housing programmes are adjacent or close to estates where the housing is substandard, which can create dissension. Delivering upgrade programmes on existing estates close to the shared housing programme would, it was felt, facilitate a feel-good factor for all. At the time of writing, a proposal for a five-year Sustainable Communities programme has been submitted to the Executive Office; if successful, it was felt that this would increase capacity to link improvements to existing schemes with new shared housing programmes.

Stakeholders referenced the importance of the schemes being branded as ‘Shared Neighbourhoods’ and the input of the local advisory groups attached to each scheme comprising community, voluntary, civic, and political representatives. Partnership work with the NIHE Local Office and the GROs was highlighted as a critical enabler to the success of the Schemes. Stakeholders felt that there could be a natural alignment between the locations of integrated schools with a shared housing programme.

One contributor highlighted that while segregation is much less visible in physical terms in rural areas, with no peace walls or similar infrastructure, it can be entrenched in the minds of rural communities. Schemes such as those in Portglenone and Sion Mills, which have populations of fewer than 5,000, have been successfully embedded into the local community through the commitment of community groups and volunteers.

Given the changing demographic across Northern Ireland the criteria that the 70-30 balance can include ethnic origin in addition to religion was welcomed. The challenge associated with developing a shared scheme comprising the minimum criteria of 14 units was referenced as in some small rural areas this would not be possible given the demographic.

*“The whole approach of shared housing is around co-design using a community development model.” – Stakeholder Interview Participant (Housing Sector)*

### **Good Relations Plans**

The Housing Association GROs oversee the development of a five-year Good Relations (GR) Plan with key actions in six areas: promotion, engagement, bonding, bridging, sustainability, and learning. The supports and activities with the GR plan encompass an area spanning a five-mile radius around the shared scheme. They underpin the development of a shared neighbourhood, where people from different community backgrounds can live in an area where diversity is

welcomed, and where people from all backgrounds can live, work, learn and play together in a safe and welcoming environment.

The GROs also set up the Advisory Committee for each scheme, which facilitates ongoing discussion between community, civic and political representatives who are bound by their connection to the area where the shared housing programme is located. Each tenant in the shared housing scheme must sign up to a good neighbour agreement.

Housing Association staff who were consulted spoke in positive terms about the Good Relation activities involving the whole community including senior citizens, shared education projects among schools, community events and residents' associations, with a commitment to including tenants and families from the shared housing scheme in all aspects of the implementation of the GR plan.

While the Housing Association GROs have responsibility for the design and implementation of the GR plan, Housing Associations recognised the value of using the NIHE support and Good Relations plan templates in their other estates many of which are single identity. This would align with need identified to embed Good Relations work and activities in areas that would not meet the criteria for a shared housing scheme.

### Poverty as an Underlying Factor

Despite this reality of physical separation, the majority (79%) of people sampled in the 2020 NI Life and Times Survey aspired to live in mixed neighbourhoods but were unaware of how to go about creating a shared atmosphere. It is unclear as to the extent to which this survey reflected the views of NIHE tenants.<sup>28 29</sup> Many contributors felt that the day-to-day impacts of poverty and deprivation are among the key underlying factors for segregation with NIHE communities.

Two-thirds of NIHE tenants live on less than £200 per week with over 80% relying on means tested benefits. 80% of households have no one in paid employment while 10% rely on pay day loans for essentials. These statistics reinforce the disproportionate impact of the austerity measures introduced in 2010 still felt within NIHE communities.

---

<sup>28</sup> NI Life and Times Survey (2020): MXRLGNH ([ark.ac.uk](http://ark.ac.uk))

<sup>29</sup> Taken from question: 'If you had a choice, would you prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only your own religion, or in a mixed-religion neighbourhood?'



*“Poverty stagnates social mobility and as a result the people impacted can be less amenable to integration and therefore segregation becoming more entrenched.”- Stakeholder Interview Participant*

Deprivation also contributes to the vulnerability of NIHE estates to paramilitarism, anti-social behaviour and higher incidences of intimidation linked to race, religion, and sexual orientation.

## 6.5. Cohesion Theme 2: Race Relations

The Race Relations theme and the associated policy aims to ensure that all black and minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland can get full and fair access to housing services and employment opportunities within the Housing Executive. Promoting good relations between and within ethnic groups and communities has become an increasing priority for the NIHE and the work of the Race Relations Officer within the Cohesion team has been crucial to this.

The external environment remains challenging: figures published by the PSNI indicate that, since 2016, the monthly number of reported race hate crimes and incidents has generally been higher than reported sectarian crimes and incidents in Northern Ireland, with the exception of summer months, when sectarian tensions tend to peak<sup>30</sup>. One of the barriers highlighted for the NIHE in planning their interventions is the absence of data in relation to ethnic minorities within their estates. The ethnic origin of 48% of NIHE tenants is unknown, of the remainder 0.7% are from an ethnic origin other than white, while 1% (of the 18% of known nationality) are non-British, non- Irish or non- Northern Irish. This limited dataset and stakeholder feedback suggest that most BME households are private renters, which can create dissension at community level if they are perceived to be occupying housing space in high demand areas.

### Race Relations Outputs

The consensus among the consultees was that the NIHE has been supportive of Race Relations. The Race Relations post created in 2018 is focused on reaching out to and working with the BME community. Building trust and credibility is the key starting point from which progress can be made in meeting their specific support needs.

Using an outreach-based approach has increased the level of engagement with grass roots groups especially in rural areas and some have benefitted from funding from the Cohesion Unit for Race relations programmes and initiatives which, previous to the existence of the Race Relations Officer role, they were not aware of. A total of 69 race relations projects were delivered between

---

<sup>30</sup> [Hate Motivation Statistics | PSNI](#)

2015 and 2021, including hate crime workshops with multiple stakeholders; 44 minority ethnic groups have been engaged with; and 12 partnerships have been formed with interagency groups focusing on need assessment, hate crime prevention, and access to services.

There are a number of congruent strategies against which to map action and impact, such as the Racial Equality, Refugee Integration and Race Relations strategies. The NIHE Race Relations Policy pre-dates, but sits within the wider context of strategies including the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2025 and T:BUC. While recognising the challenges in integrating ethnic minorities into already segregated communities, there was some evidence to demonstrate how new cultures have enriched communities in places across Belfast, Mid Ulster and the North West. One example highlighted how the 'Band of Brothers' initiative demonstrated the impact of the Polish army in World War 2 and changed the perception of the Polish community in Shankill and East Belfast.

Concern was expressed that hate crime may be underreported due to intimidation and fear of having to move out of an area or losing employment. When hate crime happens in NIHE estates, the relevant NIHE staff must link in with the Good Relations Officer for the area and the NIHE Race Relations officer. It was felt that the model of practice adopted by the North West Migrant forum, which includes wrap around support for migrant families, could be replicated across all NIHE estates (see recommendation 8.5).

While the Race Relations officer facilitates discussion with the BME communities to input into consultations and strategy development, thus increasing the representation of BME communities on the NIHE Housing Forums, any future NIHE Cohesion Strategy must consider how meaningful engagement can be facilitated with the BME community to ensure that their lived experience is reflected in services and supports. Young migrants were identified as a cohort with whom there is limited engagement and should be deemed to be a priority. It was felt that schools (pre-school, primary and secondary) would be the best starting point for a concerted focus on child and young migrants.

### **Good Relations Outcomes and Race Relations**

The question as to whether Race Relations should be standalone priority or be incorporated within Good Relations was prominent throughout the consultations. The prevailing consensus was that they should continue to be separate due to the differing contexts. It was felt that there was an established infrastructure for Good Relations which is still primarily "Orange and Green" with the approach changing from targeted interventions to a mainstream approach. This is not the case for Race Relations.

During the consultation process, stakeholders described the problem of racism and hate crime as “corrosive in NI society.” It was felt that with the increasing number of asylum seekers it must be addressed as a standalone issue. While GROs are attached to each of the thirteen NIHE areas, the Race Relations Officer has an NI wide reach and manages the urban, rural, and geographic variances that present region wide. The initial business case presented the need for two Race Relations Officers, but funding was allocated for one post only. Given that the needs of the BME community have intensified since 2018, the case for a second Race Relations Officer should continue to be propagated.

Stakeholders noted that Race Relations and the level of comfort that people from a BME background feel within communities across Northern Ireland is dictated by their capacity to access services, language competence, social networks, cultural awareness, and Information Communication & Technology (ICT). It was felt that effective engagement requires an innate understanding of the challenges and barriers faced and with such diversity across the BME community, tailored rather than universal supports are required.

*“Each community has a different journey to navigate when seeking to integrate, they are not all starting from the same place.” – Stakeholder Interview Participant*

## 6.6. Cohesion Theme 3: Communities in Transition

The Communities in Transition theme aims to build relationships within and between people and communities, promotes participation in community development and peacebuilding and encourages greater community cohesion within NIHE estates. It recognises particular difficulties facing communities with weak infrastructure and seeks to redress the imbalance from lack of investment in social capital, especially around young people.

Stakeholders felt that the other four themes of the Cohesion Strategy contribute to positive transition in NIHE communities and that it was not necessary to have this as a standalone theme; instead, related activities could be included in the Building Successful Communities Programme, which had been successful in the past.<sup>31</sup> Frequently the question was posed “What are we trying to transition communities from and to, deprivation, coercive control, paramilitarism”?

### Social and Economic Transition

A variety of initiatives have been undertaken under the social and economic transition theme. Stakeholders referred to a number of examples:

---

<sup>31</sup> [Building Successful Communities | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

- The transition of the Old Warren Estate in Lisburn into a thriving community was lauded as an exemplar of how a community development approach was used to facilitate social and economic transformation which has resulted in high levels of employment in local social enterprises and a multi-cultural and inclusive demographic. It was the vision of the Old Warren Development Association to see a different future for the estate which was the catalyst for change.
- NIHE funding of ‘Supporting Communities’ is designed to transform the participation of social housing tenants in their local communities. Supporting Communities acts as an independent organiser for the Housing Community Network, the key engagement structure for NIHE communities, in which more than 500 community groups actively participate. Supporting Communities role helps ensure neutrality in the engagement between the Housing Executive and the community network. Supporting Communities was appointed by the HE to enable, engage and empower communities and the HE funds them to deliver this community involvement service. In 2017 Supporting Communities was appointed the Independent Tenant Organisation for Northern Ireland by DfC, tasked with the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the tenant participation strategy for NI 2015- 2020 and to support all social housing tenants and staff to develop the skills needed for effective participation.
- The Estate Based Cohesion project supported 455 projects and partnered in Five PEACE IV and One INTERREG programme. One of the PEACE IV programmes ‘Futures’ was a partnership between Belfast Met (lead partner), Start360, the Housing Executive and Southern Regional College.
- Futures engaged 739 young people aged 14-24 in the top 25% most disadvantaged areas across NI in a needs-based, bespoke programme in education, personal development, good relations, and citizenship work for six months, while raising aspirations and capacity to build positive relationships with peers, adults, and young people from different backgrounds. 30% of Futures completers were NIHE tenants, demonstrating great success for NIHE in reaching the target demographic within their estates. Outcomes achieved for participants included improved health and well-being, increased confidence and self-esteem, greater independence, improved relationships and increased participation and attainment in education. Fostering vibrant sustainable communities is one of the high-level outcomes that the NIHE seek to deliver on. The outcomes achieved by Futures participants from NIHE estates contribute to more cohesive communities through tackling disadvantage and providing equality of opportunity by promoting, and protecting the

interests of at-risk young people, people with disabilities, and other socially excluded groups (see recommendation 8.5).

- The NIHE Social Enterprise Programme<sup>32</sup> seeks to create sustainable businesses in NIHE communities and provide employment opportunities for those who have previously struggled to sustain in the labour market. The rationale for the programme is that, as the largest landlord in Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive has a stake in communities and recognises the particular challenges they face in terms of social disadvantage and exclusion from the wider economy. NIHE staff working on the ground in communities felt that cohesion can be best achieved when people have jobs and improved life opportunities. This results in more pride and participation in their community, a greater likelihood to engage in Good Relations activity and being more resistant to community harms such as anti-social behaviour and interface disturbances.

Since its inception, the Housing Executive has worked closely with tenants and residents in NIHE estates to foster vibrant, stable and sustainable communities and this remains a key priority for the organisation. Communities living in NIHE estates can face particular challenges in terms of social disadvantage and exclusion from the wider economy. In this context, the provision of funding for Social Enterprise programmes is designed to promote social inclusion and prosperity by encouraging collaboration and partnering at community level, with the aim of raising aspirations, supporting skills development and enabling NIHE tenants and residents to engage fully in society and prosper to the best of their abilities. Increased skills and employability underpin cohesive communities which are crucial to settled and sustained tenancies and ensuring that NIHE properties do not require excessive maintenance. NIHE also contribute significantly in-kind through allowing the use of some of their properties for community centres and for groups to meet, 191 community lets were provided to 111 groups during 2015-2020. Equipping communities with the skills and expertise to develop social enterprises assists in the wider regeneration of neighbourhoods.

- It was felt that the NIHE have a role to play in maximising their community's potential to avail of the opportunities presenting from the social clauses in NIHE procurement. The inclusion of Social Clauses within public procurement contracts is a statutory requirement for all public authorities. These 'Buy Social' clauses require public bodies to ensure private contractors deliver on specific targets relating to work experience, training, and apprenticeship, with targets being proportionate to a contract's value. However, the

---

<sup>32</sup> Circa £2 million in the period 2015-20

NIHE's approach has been to include additional social clauses above and beyond what is required under legislation. These additional social clauses, which have been contained within contracts recently procured at the time of writing, represent a significant additional investment within NIHE communities outside of traditional grant funding mechanisms. They are targeted at maximising the progression into the workforce of people who are long term unemployed as well as placing a responsibility on the contractor to develop links and improve communications with the communities in which they are working. They seek to deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits for tenants and local communities as well as the provision of services enhancing the lives of the Housing Executive's customers in the estates where they live.

## 6.7. Cohesion Theme 4: Interface

The 2015-20 Cohesion Strategy provided for increased investment in Interface areas which has been led since 2015 by the Interface officer who seeks to work with the 26 Interface areas, 25 of which are in Belfast. 88 Peace Walls also remain in Belfast with 21 of these on NIHE owned property. The programme to deliver 'normalisation works' in communities saw £365,000 invested where interfaces have been removed or remodelled. Areas in Ardoyne, Tigers Bay, Oldpark and Alliance Avenue have been among those that have benefitted from this programme. Where structures are removed any vacant space or property is developed for community benefit such as social housing.

The Interface Aftercare Scheme, which is jointly administered by the NIHE, Department of Justice, and Police Service of Northern Ireland, aims to provide assurance to residents living immediately adjacent to Peace Walls through the installation of additional security measures to provide greater protection within the home. At Workman Avenue/Forth Parade/Ainsworth, 22 properties were upgraded in 2015, with a further 18 on the Crumlin Road and Ardoyne in 2016 and nine in North Queen Street in 2020.

Any physical change at an interface is precipitated by facilitating conversations among and between the adjacent communities to foster an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, understanding and respect. The Housing Executive's Interface Officer is an integral part of this process and the trust engendered with and between communities has been a critical enabler for success. While the DoJ are the lead partner in T:BUC for the Interface, there is also much collaboration with the GROs and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) and NIHE support has enabled many groups to avail of the IFI Peace Walls funding programme.

*“Interface projects must be co-produced with the communities involved, it needs conversations with people who are trusted and influential, it works best when both communities talk to each other directly but has worked where the Interface Officer is the facilitator.” – Stakeholder Interview Participant (NIHE Staff)*

## Increasing Priority

The inclusion of Interface Areas as a theme in the 2015-20 Cohesion Strategy afforded it an increased level of investment and priority over the five years. While all the contributors felt that the commitment to remove all Peace Walls by 2023 is unrealistic, it will, they felt, ensure that Interface areas remain a priority which must be sustained through continued investment. NIHE Staff felt that while “some communities are further on than others in managing the interface areas” the progress in areas such as North Queen Street, Ardoyne, Shankill, and Girdwood is a notable achievement and has facilitated visible physical improvements for the benefit of all communities.

The Christmas Market at the peace line in the Fountain area of Derry/Londonderry had become established prior to Covid-19 which is testament to the relationships that have been forged and this model has been replicated in Ardoyne.<sup>33</sup> While the physical infrastructures in urban environments are a very visible manifestation of interface areas, there was a recurring view that the invisible interfaces that exist in the more rural areas need a greater priority. These can be difficult to define and target and, in many cases, exist in the mindsets of communities.

According to stakeholders engaged, over the past five years, there has been a developing trend of ethnic minorities getting involved in the interface conversations. Consequently, future strategies must reflect the increasing number of people from a BME background living in interface areas.

## 6.8. Cohesion Theme 5: Flags, Emblems, and Sectional Symbols

The vision of the Housing Executive’s *Good Practice Guide to Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols* is that “people have the right to live in a tolerant, diverse society where differences are recognised and respected”.<sup>34</sup> The guide notes that the Housing Executive seeks to create an

---

<sup>33</sup> Derry Daily (2014) Christmas Spirit to Break Down Fountain-Bishop Street Interface Barriers. Available at: <https://www.derrydaily.net/2014/11/05/christmas-spirit-to-break-down-fountain-bishop-street-interface-barriers/>

<sup>34</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2008) *Good Practice Guide to Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols*. Available at: [www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/8d2987db-49d4-4d44-859a-e8330a1c1820/Good-Practice-Guide.pdf.aspx](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/8d2987db-49d4-4d44-859a-e8330a1c1820/Good-Practice-Guide.pdf.aspx)

environment where people in their estates and surrounding areas feel safe to celebrate and respect culture within and between communities.

## Reimaging

Political and sectarian/racist displays are prominent within many estates and symbols such as murals, flags, kerb painting, bonfires and paramilitary memorials can make people feel unwelcome and excluded and create a significant ‘chill factor’ for visitors to NIHE Estates. Recognising these issues, and in view of the evidence that reimaging can act as a catalyst for physical, social and economic regeneration, the Strategy included a commitment to continue with work including re-imaging.

Their estate-based re-imaging programme establishes links with local groups to assist in developing neighbourhood based reimaging programmes and funds the delivery; 109 such initiatives were funded from 2015-20. These locally based re-imaging initiatives have had significant aesthetic impact on NIHE single identity estates on both sides of the community (e.g., Lower Newtownards Rd, Sandy Row, Ligoniel, Lower Falls, Milltown, and Shankill). Re-imaging projects can also be the catalyst for physical, social, and economic regeneration.

## Flags

The 2012 flags dispute ended many established local flags protocols and the NIHE have been working steadfastly over the past decade to facilitate new arrangements. Flags are flown to mark territory and there has been an increasing trend to fly flags of other countries that are perceived to accord with a political agenda.

With no formalised programme from Government, successful local solutions have involved conversations between groups, exclusive zones for flags and agreement to not fly flags around certain public buildings such as hospitals and schools. NIHE has produced a good practice guide on flags and sectional symbols and the Strategic Cohesion Forum has reviewed the Flags Protocol. While the 2021 Flags report did not include an action plan, it is being analysed within the NIHE to inform future direction in this area.

## Positive Cultural Celebrations

The Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition report highlighted a move to use willow-burning beacons as a means of replacing traditional bonfires in some areas. Noting that while areas that have sufficient space for a traditional bonfire generally continue to uphold this practice, the report commented that the now widespread use of beacons is a welcome



development for some. It also included a recommendation that the NI Executive should consider a programme to support positive expression of cultural heritage and commemoration, within a context that promotes a sensitivity towards environmental awareness and highlights the risk to life and property and which causes harm to human health. Within this recommendation, it was noted that such a programme would incorporate elements on better bonfire management and support alternatives to bonfires, such as beacons.

The NIHE continue to fund the Better Bonfire Management Scheme, which seeks improvements in Bonfire funding and management and promotes alternatives such as the use of Beacons. 43 projects were funded under this scheme in 2015-20 with a further 24 supported to deliver positive cultural celebrations. Statistics suggest that this support has made a difference; there were 156 bonfires across NI in 2021, 11 fewer than in 2016. Of these, 10 were contentious.

## Section 7: Analysis

### 7.1. Introduction

This section presents an analysis and concluding thoughts on the evaluation of the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 with key challenges and critical success factors identified. The section concludes with a series of recommendations that have implications for a future iteration of the Cohesion Strategy.

### 7.2. Overall Analysis

This independent evaluation carried five key objectives:

1. to evaluate the Housing Executive's 2015 - 2020 Community Cohesion Strategy;
2. to discover more about the key issues facing communities across Northern Ireland in terms of community cohesion;
3. to provide detail on relevant government policy which may influence work around community relations;
4. to provide insight and suggestions for future community cohesion plans; and
5. to assess the feasibility of carrying out an analysis of Social Return on Investment (SROI), or else an alternative cost-benefit analysis, for the future Strategy by examining current information recording processes and by offering guidance.

These objectives form the basis of our analysis.

### 7.3. Evaluation of the NIHE 2015-2020 Community Cohesion Strategy

On commission and on developing a deeper understanding of the evolution, development and delivery of the Cohesion Strategy, the researchers proposed and agreed that the approach to this evaluation was twofold:

1. To set out the extent to which NIHE delivered activities as intended at the level intended
2. To ascertain what change occurred as a result of these activities

We deal with each one of these below.

## Extent to which the strategy delivered as intended at the level intended

Section 5 of this report sets out a substantial set of outputs achieved across the five themes of the strategy, including for example:

- 1,480 new social housing units developed in 45 schemes through Housing for All (997 units in 35 schemes) and the T:BUC Shared Neighbourhood Programme (483 units in 10 schemes).
- 497 unique organisations funded with 1,060 unique funding awards made across the range of small grant programmes such as Estate based Cohesion, Race relations, re-imaging and others. The amount of small grants allocated was in excess of £1m<sup>35</sup>.
- Five major external funding sources secured through Peace IV and Interreg VA resulting in an increase in the staff team within the Cohesion Unit from 10 to 23 over the five years of the strategy. Eight of the additional 13 posts have since been approved as permanent and mainstreamed positions within the unit.
- More than 3000 participants/tenants are estimated to have engaged annually across the various Peace, Interreg and Community Cohesion funded projects.
- 12 interagency partnerships focusing on needs assessment, hate crime prevention and development of services have been established with organisations such as local authorities, PSNI, EA, HSCT, DoJ, DfC and community and voluntary organisations, including 44 ethnic minority organisations.

The Community Cohesion Strategy document sets out 35 ‘commitments’ across the five themes. The evaluators provide the following concluding analysis on progress against the commitments:<sup>36</sup>

Number Achieved	Number partially achieved/Challenging to measure
20 (57%)	15 (43%)

The commitments typically reflected output statements that commence ‘we will’. Whilst most of the commitments were achieved or partially achieved, it was challenging to measure a considerable proportion due to a) a lack of a clearly defined or specific target or number or b) a lack of access to information during the evaluation process.

The development of an aggregated and cumulative overview of the outputs achieved during the lifespan of the strategy was challenging. The research team navigated through approximately 100 documents to try and collate programme and strategy related information into a coherent set of outputs.

<sup>35</sup> Source is NIHE ‘Bible of Funded Groups’

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 3 for further details

These documents included: annual reports, action plans, board papers, meeting minutes, case studies, project level evaluation reports, financial reports, corporate plans and contact/small grant databases. It is therefore unlikely that the data presented represents a full and conclusive overview of strategy achievements. The strategy would have benefitted from a more systematic approach to data collection and a stronger causal link between the activities and commitments proposed, intended outcomes achieved and the data collected and stored. The absence of same can potentially detract from the significant and positive work of the strategy (see recommendation 8.5).

Despite potential limitations or gaps in data, the level of outputs achieved is substantial. This evaluation acknowledges that for many of the outputs, a significant and sustained body of work is required involving ongoing dialogue, negotiation, mentoring and support to communities to bring them on a journey to the final output; this requires perseverance and commitment. The level of output achieved is impressive, particularly given that the Cohesion Strategy was delivered during an extremely challenging macro-environment created by the intersecting effects of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the three-year collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive. The implication was an ever-evolving good relations environment across communities in NI characterized by the emergence of local authority community plans and the implementation of the €500m investment programmes of Peace IV and Interreg VA.

### **What Change Occurred as a result of these outputs**

The architecture of the Cohesion Strategy was in the main ‘output’ focused, the language used to frame the various commitments and objectives primarily reflected the ‘how much’ rather than the ‘so what’. This is also reflected in the data collected relating to the strategy and consequently, there is limited outcomes based data to substantiate or be conclusive about actual change.

This evaluation acknowledges the challenge in measuring change in the good relations and cohesion and the limitations of focusing exclusively on segregation or NI Life and Times statistics as the key metrics in measuring success against this Cohesion Strategy. It was felt that the work across all the cohesion themes has enabled a “desegregation of mindset and attitude” which has opened conversations and communication channels among people and communities that was unimaginable a decade ago.

The Cohesion Strategy has four overarching aims:

1. contribute to the creation of more stable, safer, and cohesive neighbourhoods;
2. work in partnership to address the complex housing needs of a divided society;

3. respond to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict; and
4. facilitate mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.

While it was not possible to measure the extent to which the full range of specific commitments set out in the 2015-2020 strategy had been achieved (see page 54), there is nevertheless clear evidence from both the output data and from the survey and qualitative consultation process that the strategy has contributed to the creation of more stable, safer and cohesive neighbourhoods. There is strong evidence of partnership working throughout the lifespan of the strategy; this is considered one of the critical success factors and is a cornerstone of the NIHE approach. Further, there is evidence that shared housing and many of the small grant allocations, interface work and bonfire based initiatives and interventions by NIHE staff on the ground made a contribution to responding to danger resulting from community conflict.

Based on qualitative and survey feedback collected during the consultation process, we conclude that the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 made some level of contribution to the Good Relations outcomes in a number of relevant policies and strategies, which are set out in Table 5.

*Table 5: Contribution of NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 to the work of other strategies and policies*

Strategy/Policy	Good Relations Outcomes
Draft Programme for Government 2021 Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect.</li> <li>• Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other.</li> </ul>
Together: Building a United Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve attitudes amongst young people and enable their active role in building good relations.</li> <li>• Everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety</li> <li>• Create a community, which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.</li> </ul>
A Fresh Start: The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth of mutual respect and equality of treatment under a united and stable society</li> </ul>
Urban Villages Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the physical environment</li> <li>• Foster positive community identities</li> <li>• Build community capacity</li> </ul>

Strategy/Policy	Good Relations Outcomes
Racial Equality Strategy 2015-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatting racism and hate crime</li> <li>• Equality of service provision for minority ethnic communities</li> <li>• Increase participation, representation, and sense of belonging for minority ethnic communities</li> <li>• Strengthen social relations and interactions between people of cultures</li> <li>• Support minority ethnic communities in developing leadership and collective capacity</li> <li>• Safeguard the right to maintain cultural identity and to pass it on to subsequent generations</li> </ul>

A future iteration of a Cohesion Strategy would benefit from the use of a theory of change setting out a clear causal link between the theme, activities, intended outputs (how much), intended change (so what) and the subsequent development of a clear and proportionate evaluation framework to accompany this. Some of the potential outcome areas, with alignment to SROI and cost benefit analysis are considered in Section 7.4 below.

## 7.4. Critical Success Factors

The NIHE Cohesion Strategy 2015-2020 enabled the leveraging of additional resources through:

- The enhancement of existing funding schemes such as the re-imaging and aftercare programmes; and
- New funding streams and for GROs in each NIHE area, as well as Health & Housing Officers through ONSIDE (Interreg VA)<sup>37</sup>.

The inputs of NIHE staff also built the capacity of groups to apply for other external funding such as the IFI Peace Walls programme.

Partnering on PEACE IV and Interreg programmes under their commitments to contribute to social and economic stability through increased cohesion between communities has also resulted in access to new funding. This has resulted in targeted interventions to achieve personal development and positive life outcomes for marginalised groups such as young people from NIHE

<sup>37</sup> The ONSIDE (Outreach & Navigation for Social Inclusion & Digital Engagement) programme is a cross border project led by Disability Action NI in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; the Independent Living Movement Ireland; and Supporting Communities.

estates who were previously not in employment, education, or training (NEET) and for people with a disability (ONside Programme).

The NIHE's capacity to engage marginalised groups at a local level and their networking capacity makes them an attractive partner. The Community Cohesion team is now much bigger than it was at its inception in 2004 and it is important to acknowledge its expertise and work as the focal driver for the delivery of the strategy on a day-to-day basis. However, the current rate of staff turnover and the difficulty in retaining staff over a longer period of time presents a challenge for future cohesion strategies as relationships do not remain established. This may be addressed via the permanent 13 GRO structure, but failure to retain GROs will impact on the work that is going on.

The range and complexity of the partnerships fostered by NIHE staff has been a critical enabler for the successes of the Cohesion Strategy. Whether this has been collaborating with DoJ and the PSNI on community safety issues or working with community groups and representatives in interface areas, their commitment to improve the lives of NIHE tenants has been paramount. Frequently contributors referenced the conversations ongoing within communities facilitated by the NIHE as crucial enablers for progress on sensitive community issues. Through this partnership approach, the NIHE are viewed as honest brokers who are committed to equality and community participation at all levels.

The availability of small grants distributed under the remit of: Race Relations, Estate Based Cohesion Projects or Re-Imaging has been a critical success factor for enabling cohesion in urban, interface and rural communities across Northern Ireland. The survey results discussed in Section 6 provide evidence of improved community relations, improved community wellbeing and an enhanced appreciation of diversity within communities who benefitted from the small grants scheme. The groups and organisations who sourced the funding reported enhanced capacity to maintain and develop community assets, support capital ambition, and enable further community provision and participation (see recommendation 8.5).

## 7.5. Relevant Government Policy

Section 3 of this report demonstrates that the NIHE Community Cohesion Strategy was developed with a clear connection to and alignment with prevailing policy and strategy in good relations, race relations and shared communities at that time. The five themes included in the policy were relevant and our review outlines a strong and relevant strategic positioning of the Cohesion Strategy at the point of its development.

Internally, the NIHE has responded to the evolving strategic and policy context through the development of new and relevant strategies such as community safety and community involvement. As the NIHE moves towards the development of its next Cohesion Strategy, there is merit in considering how these strategies can best connect and synergise to ensure an optimisation of resources. The roll out of Peace Plus (2022-2027) as an amalgamation of Peace & Interreg funds, will also have implications for a future iteration of a Cohesion Strategy.

The T:BUC strategy, Racial Equality Strategy and Draft Programme for Government remain the enduring strategic and policy drivers for good relations in NI. In addition, January 2020 saw the launch of **New Decade, New Approach (NDNA)**<sup>38</sup> as a way forward, agreed by the political parties for a restored Executive, to strengthen public services and to tackle immediate challenges in key areas such as growing the economy, health, education and housing.

The T:BUC and Race Relations Strategies expire in 2023, hence the Housing Executive needs to ensure that it is represented in the consultations and engagements for the new strategies. At the time of writing, the T:BUC strategy was under review; this was the first step in moving towards the development of a new strategy, but with no Ministers in place (as of autumn/winter 2022), the timelines for review sign-off and further strategy development were unclear. An Executive Office official consulted as part of the research process noted that the shared housing strand of T:BUC had been one of the most successful aspects of the strategy, having been mainstreamed by the Housing Executive and Department for Communities. The official also noted that, more broadly, the Housing Executive had carried out effective work to put structures in place at community level.

Through NDNA, the Executive set out a way to bring positive changes in areas that impact greatly on people's lives, such as the economy, overcrowded hospitals, struggling schools, housing stress, welfare concerns and mental health. It proposed a multi-year Programme for Government, underpinned by a multi-year budget and legislative programme. Of relevance for a future iteration of the Cohesion Strategy is a commitment to develop and implement an Anti-poverty Strategy, a reaffirmed commitment to tackling paramilitarism and a focus on ending sectarianism.

NDNA set out proposals to augment the Programme for Government outcomes framework with a new outcome and indicators to provide focus on ensuring that every household has access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home, suitable for its needs. It also proposed that the

---

<sup>38</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2020) *New Decade New Approach*. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/856998/2020-01-08\\_a\\_new\\_decade\\_a\\_new\\_approach.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf)



Executive would enhance investment and agree a target for new social and affordable home starts and tackle the maintenance backlog for Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties.

The commitment to housing has clear relevance for a future NIHE Cohesion Strategy in respect of shared housing developments and ensuring good relations is embedded in existing and new housing developments.

Further, the statement on housing in November 2020<sup>39</sup>, in which the Minister for Communities noted *“I plan to change the classification of the Housing Executive landlord to a ‘mutual’ or co-operative designation so that it may borrow and secure a sustainable future for all of its 85,000 homes and provides security for current tenants and future generations”* may have longer term implications for the Housing Executive’s structure, responsibilities and modes of delivery, including in relation to community cohesion. In its current format as a public body, the Housing Executive has statutory responsibilities to have due regard to (i) the need to promote equality of opportunity and (ii) the desirability of promoting good relations. These requirements have been a key factor shaping the organisation’s cohesion services and strategies to date. At the time of writing, there are no firm indications on the future structure of the Housing Executive, but any broader changes to the role and responsibilities of the organisation could have implications for the scope of its activity in relation to community cohesion and should be considered in the creation of future cohesion strategies.

A number of other strategies and policies may also inform thinking in relation to future community cohesion strategy development; these are outlined in the following paragraphs.

***Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020-2025 (Department for Communities)***<sup>40</sup>

The five-year strategy describes how the Department for Communities will work across government, with its Arm’s Length Bodies (including the Housing Executive), and with communities to Support People, Build Communities and Shape Places. Noting that ‘we must develop better ways of engaging with communities and in particular those communities that are most marginalized and vulnerable’, the Ministerial Foreword to the Strategy continues ‘...we will therefore strive to increase the capacity of communities to engage with us, placing their inclusion at the heart of all we do’. The plan sets out high-level priorities associated with four cross-cutting themes: Anti-Poverty; Wellbeing and Inclusion; Sustainability and Inclusive Growth; and Agility and Innovation. Priorities under the Wellbeing and Inclusion outcome are to:

---

<sup>39</sup> [Housing Statement from Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín 3 November 2020 | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> [DfC 5 Year Strategy \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#) (accessed November 2022)

- support cultural and community confidence, participation and wellbeing through direction and support to the creative industries, museums, libraries, sport and arts, culture and heritage sectors;
- increase and incentivise participation in the labour market and wider society through targeted, sustainable interventions, delivering these alongside community-based partners and other sectors;
- incentivise, support and enhance community empowerment through an innovative and sustainable community and voluntary sector; and
- promote and develop indigenous languages to support wider access to opportunities, experience and services.

### ***People and Place – A Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal***

The People and Place strategy was launched by the then-Department for Social Development (subsequently DfC) in 2003, with the aim of targeting those urban communities in Northern Ireland suffering the highest levels of deprivation by bringing together the work of all government departments in partnership with local people to tackle disadvantage.<sup>41</sup> The Neighbourhood Renewal, Areas at Risk and Small Pockets of Deprivation programmes put in place as a result have continued to operate, with limited change. However, recognising the changing strategic context within which Neighbourhood Renewal operates, in 2020 the Minister for Communities committed to a comprehensive and strategic review of the Strategy, to improve how the Department addresses the objective need of a place-based approach to deprivation. The review, which was ongoing at the time of writing, has been conducted using a Co-Design approach, seeking to (i) build on the success of the People & Place Strategy 2003; (ii) develop a new strategy which recommends a more effective, efficient and integrated place based approach; and (iii) targets objective need which will align with the emerging Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Community Wealth Building framework. Subject to approval, at time of writing the aim was to commence transition and implementation of the new strategy during 2023/24.

### ***Anti-Poverty Strategy***

The Northern Ireland Act 1998 obliges the Northern Ireland Executive to develop a strategy ‘to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need’. In 2015, the Northern Ireland High Court ruled that there was no such strategy in existence.<sup>42</sup> In view of this situation, and in line with *New Decade, New Approach*, at the time of writing the Department for Communities was developing an anti-poverty strategy, with the aim of addressing inequalities

---

<sup>41</sup> [People and Place Review | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#) (accessed November 2022)

<sup>42</sup> [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#) (accessed November 2022)

and obstacles that directly affect the everyday lives of the most vulnerable in society and the issues, barriers and disadvantages that undermine equality of opportunity.

A Co-design Group and Cross-departmental Working Group were established to help take the work forward, and an Anti-Poverty Strategy Expert Advisory Panel was appointed in October 2020. In its report, the panel noted that the majority of households in poverty live outside the Belfast area and in the West of Northern Ireland, and made a number of recommendations, including that the Assembly should pass an Anti-Poverty Act, which would include a ‘socio-economic’ duty requiring public bodies to take account of socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.<sup>43</sup>

*Leading the co-design, development and delivery of a cross Department anti-poverty strategy supported by evidence-based policy proposals to deliver targeted interventions based on need is a priority within the Anti-Poverty outcome of the DfC’s Building Inclusive Communities Strategy.*

### **Community Wealth Building**

As part of the *Building Inclusive Communities* Strategy, DfC committed to grow and scale community wealth building (CWB) to support sustainability and inclusive growth. As a result, the Minister for Communities appointed an Independent Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building to undertake work with the intention of advising on the most effective and sustainable approach to embedding the principles of CWB into all relevant departmental investment, policy and practice.<sup>44</sup>

The Panel produced a report in October 2022, which explained that:

*Community Wealth Building is a fast-emerging new approach to economic development that seeks to transform local economies based on direct community ownership and control of assets and wealth by the people of those communities themselves. As such, it extends democracy beyond the political to the economic realm, giving people real ownership and control over their own economic lives and destinies.<sup>45</sup>*

Furthermore, according to the report:

---

<sup>43</sup> [Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://communities-ni.gov.uk/recommendations-for-an-anti-poverty-strategy) (accessed November 2022)

<sup>44</sup> [Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://communities-ni.gov.uk/community-wealth-building-in-northern-ireland) (accessed November 2022)

<sup>45</sup> [Recommendations to advance Community wealth building in Northern Ireland \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://communities-ni.gov.uk/recommendations-to-advance-community-wealth-building-in-northern-ireland) (accessed November 2022)

*‘Stabilising and sustaining public services is key to CWB by insourcing jobs and contracts that had previously been outsourced to the private sector, and by municipalising or nationalising important goods, services, and assets that have either been privatised or otherwise should be in public hands. Public services are (or can be) “anchor institutions” – large economic institutions that are rooted in place...’*

In this context, it is noted that CWB activities already exist in communities across Northern Ireland, with a **well-developed community infrastructure** that supports working-class and marginalised communities and a **thriving social enterprise sector**, as well as social value clauses in procurement and communities taking more control over land and property to use them more effectively and sustainably. The report also highlights that, for areas that have benefitted least from desegregation in housing and mixing, local economic development is an important pathway to peace building, meaningful contact and social progress.

### **PEACEPLUS**

The PEACEPLUS programme 2021-2027 is a new EU funding programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland, building upon the work of the previous PEACE and INTERREG Programmes. According to the programme overview<sup>46</sup>, PEACEPLUS will comprise six key thematic areas, as outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6: PEACEPLUS (2021-2027) Themes and Investment Areas

<b>Theme 1: Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plans for each local authority area</li> <li>• Empowering Communities</li> <li>• Building Positive Relations</li> <li>• Reimagining Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 2: Delivering Socio-Economic Regeneration and Transformation</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SME Development and Transition</li> <li>• Innovation Challenge Fund</li> <li>• Programme Areas Skills Development</li> <li>• Smart Towns and Villages</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 3: Empowering and Investing in our Young People</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared Learning Together Education Programme</li> <li>• PEACE PLUS Youth Programme</li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> [PEACEPLUS Programme 2021 – 2027 \(seupb.eu\)](https://seupb.eu) (accessed November 2022)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 4: Healthy and Inclusive Communities</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative Health and Social Care</li> <li>Rural Regeneration and Social Inclusion</li> <li>Victims and Survivors</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 5: Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity, Nature Recovery and Resilience</li> <li>Marine and Coastal Management</li> <li>Water Quality and Catchment Management</li> <li>Water Quality Improvement Programme</li> <li>Geothermal Energy Demonstration Programme</li> <li>Enhanced Sustainable Travel Connectivity</li> </ul>
<b>Theme 6: Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration</b>	Investment areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Planning and Engagement</li> <li>Maintaining and Forging Relationships between Citizens</li> </ul>

The European Commission formally adopted the programme in July 2022, and Programme launch and funding calls were expected to follow after finalisation and ratification of arrangements between the UK and the Commission in late 2022.

### **Mainstreaming Shared Education**

PEACEPLUS is expected to provide a source of funding to support the activities of the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy<sup>47</sup>, which was published in September 2022. The strategy builds on the history of sharing and collaboration in education in Northern Ireland, in a context where ‘mainstreaming’ is considered the next logical step, and explains that the vision for Shared Education is:

*An education system where Shared Education is embedded in partnership working across religious and socio-economic divides, that delivers educational benefits, and promotes a culture of inclusivity, respect and mutual understanding, contributing to community cohesion and good relations.*

<sup>47</sup> [Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

At the time of writing, the published strategy and executive summary documents described in detail the key areas of activity, while specific actions to be taken forward to support implementation were due to be outlined in subsequent delivery plans.

### ***Strategy to End Violence against Women and Girls***<sup>48</sup>

On the instruction of the Northern Ireland Executive, at the time of writing the Executive Office was leading work across departments to develop a strategy to end violence against women and girls. A call for views had been published in January 2022 as part of a programme of engagement and research to inform the co-design process, with the aim of having a draft framework for the strategy by the end of 2022.

### ***Inequalities experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast***<sup>49</sup>

This research, commissioned by Belfast City Council in partnership with Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, was undertaken with the aim of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the range of experiences of minority ethnic and migrant populations in Belfast, to inform policy making and service provision in the city. While the report acknowledges that it only provides a small sample of Belfast's minority ethnic and migrant population and does not necessarily encapsulate all the issues experienced, the range of participants nevertheless enabled the research team to highlight key shared problems across diverse groups. The literature review identified that:

- Migrants find themselves within highly segregated urban spaces in Belfast and the sectarian context affects to a large extent minority ethnic groups' experiences of life in Northern Ireland.
- Migrants that have moved to Belfast have found themselves identifying along neighbourhood sectarian lines, impacting their perception of other areas of Belfast and confidence moving through those areas.

Points emerging from interviews carried out for the research included:

- 'More than 80% of participants [were] happy with the neighbourhood they live in. It is likely that the sociability and openness of a neighbourhood is crucial to people's homemaking in the city. Mundane interactions and encounters with neighbours can play a vital role in people's sense of belonging.' (main report, p12)

---

<sup>48</sup> [Ending Violence Against Women and Girls | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls)

<sup>49</sup> [Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/inequalities-experienced-by-black-asian-minority-ethnic-and-traveller-people-residing-in-belfast) (accessed December 2022)

- Review council provision in areas such as community provision, culture and arts, leisure and sporting activity, economic development, procurement to scope out opportunities for promoting the integration and inclusion of migrant and minority ethnic communities.
- Consider the inclusion of key attitudinal and integration data as standard in the Belfast Residents Survey and other surveys by Belfast City Council, drawing on best practice in the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and measures in the Indicators of Integration framework.
- Consultation with minority ethnic and migrant groups must be developed that are sustainable and responsible.

### ***UK Government ‘Levelling Up’ initiative: UK Shared Prosperity Fund***

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government’s ‘Levelling Up’ agenda, designed to succeed the former EU structural funds. It will provide £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula. Under the UKSPF arrangement, places will be empowered to identify and build on their own strengths and needs at a local level, with a focus on pride in place and increasing life chances<sup>50</sup>.

Across England, Scotland and Wales, the Fund’s interventions will be planned and delivered by councils and mayoral authorities– ‘lead local authorities’ – working closely with local partners and the Scottish and Welsh governments. In Northern Ireland, it was determined that UK government would have oversight of the Fund and would work closely with local partners to design a Northern Ireland investment plan<sup>51</sup>. A UK wide prospectus for the fund was published in April 2022, setting out a vision to support local places across the UK through investment in three priorities: *Communities and Place*, *Supporting Local Business*, and *People and Skills*<sup>52</sup>.

In Northern Ireland, the UK Government has indicated that the Fund will provide £126,854,145 of new funding for local investment to March 2025. The aim is to help places right across Northern Ireland achieve enhanced outcomes, by:

- supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs to innovate, thrive and grow, further unleashing the potential of the private sector;
- supporting individuals furthest from the labour market and by moving more people into work with the right skills; and
- investing in the places where people live, restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging.

---

<sup>50</sup> [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

<sup>51</sup> [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus)

<sup>52</sup> UKSPF Investment Plan Northern Ireland - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)).

To support the development of a specific UKSPF investment plan for Northern Ireland, the UK Government established a Partnership Group in July 2022. Its overarching task was to advise on the development of the investment plan and alignment of the UKSPF prospectus to the specific needs and circumstances of Northern Ireland. The Partnership Group comprised representatives from:

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- Northern Ireland Office
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) (Mid Ulster District Council)
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) (Belfast City Council)
- Queen’s University Belfast
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Chief Officers Third Sector (CO3)
- NOW Group
- Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
- Confederation of British Industry

The resulting plan, which was published in 2022, identified a number of key activities to maximise the impact of the funding available:

- a programme of support to help economically inactive people move towards and secure sustainable employment;
- a joined-up service for entrepreneurs seeking to start a business, and for businesses to sustain and grow;
- targeted support to encourage smaller businesses to use innovation and to become innovation-active;
- support to encourage more people to develop numeracy skills, enhancing their life chances and economic potential; and
- a locally attuned package of community and place interventions, focused on green space, active travel, community and neighbourhood infrastructure and local arts, culture and heritage activities.

### ***Communities and Place priority***

Where the *Communities and Place* priority is concerned, the creation of renewed community spaces and civic relationships throughout Northern Ireland will be prioritised. The investment plan notes that a restored sense of pride in place is expected to be a catalyst for new investment, local growth and job creation. The Communities and Place investment priority will support the building of resilient, healthy and safe places and a strong sense of community spirit through a wide range of place-based initiatives such as active transport, neighbourhood support infrastructure, and cultural and artistic engagement. It is envisaged that volunteering opportunities will be threaded across funded initiatives to garner a sense of community ownership and to instill a renewed sense of pride in place. The overarching goal within this



priority is that: *By 2025, we aim to improve people's pride and satisfaction with towns and villages through UKSPF support, ensuring these areas are attractive for new residents, potential investors and visitors.* Where strategic alignment is concerned, the investment plan notes that activity under this priority would align with Community Planning and that:

*There is clear potential to complement other funding sources such as Peace Plus funding which will prioritise 'Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities' and 'Healthy and Inclusive Communities', as key thematic areas. Similarly, UKSPF can help to complement DLUHC's Levelling Up Fund, as well as the Community Ownership Fund which is supporting communities to take ownership of assets at risk of closure and to turn these assets back into community benefit<sup>53</sup>.*

The investment plan explains that, in light of the challenges and opportunities identified, the community and place interventions considered to be the most appropriate within the Northern Ireland context are:

- NI2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards such as flooding.
- NI3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments, along with incorporating natural features into wider public spaces.
- NI6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.
- NI7: Support for active travel enhancement and measures to improve connectivity in the local areas, including undertaking active travel needs assessments at the local level.
- NI9: Funding for impactful voluntary and /or action projects to develop social and human capital in local places for example.

Key associated outcomes are:

- Increased users of facilities / amenities
- Improved perception of facility/infrastructure projects
- Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support
- Number of volunteering opportunities created as a result of support
- Increased use of cycleways or paths.
- Improved engagement numbers

In Northern Ireland, two main delivery mechanisms have been identified for the UKSPF Communities and Place workstream:

---

<sup>53</sup> [UKSPF Investment Plan Northern Ireland - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/81444/ukspf-investment-plan-northern-ireland.pdf)

1. A 'Communities and Place Programme' delivered by councils working in partnership with local community-based partnerships. Local councils and their partners will be able to prioritise locally-determined packages of activity, drawing from predominantly capital activities relating to: local green space; community and neighbourhood infrastructure; active travel; arts, culture and heritage activities; and volunteering and social capital. Councils are expected to be commissioned in early 2023 and it is anticipated that the main programme will launch during the 2023/24 financial year, running to March 2025.
2. Green Space Development: The investment plan indicated that councils would be asked to submit a plan for delivery in winter 2022/23 to release funding for creation of and improvements to local green spaces, community gardens, watercourses and embankments.

Overall, there remains a strong strategic and policy driver for community cohesion and the NIHE remains strategically positioned to make a positive contribution. As with its predecessor, the architecture of the next Cohesion Strategy should be strongly aligned with the wider strategic and policy context.

## 7.6. Considerations for a Future Strategy

### Cohesion is Multi-Faceted

There was a moderate level of awareness among contributors about the NIHE Cohesion Strategy 2015-20 in general but a very high level of understanding and insight of their own role within the strategy. There was a conviction that much had been achieved since 2015 despite challenging external circumstances and static macro metrics such as levels of segregation in housing.

While contributors did not identify with a single uniform definition of cohesion in the context of NIHE estates, they felt that it should have parallels with wider societal cohesion, which starts with the family unit and access to life opportunities. It is a combination of all five thematic areas, which are interconnected, and is fundamentally about making the lives of people better and all that is involved in achieving this.

Cohesion is shaped by the tenure and prevailing issues in NIHE estates. Where there is a higher concentration of people who own their own property, negative issues such as paramilitarism and anti-social behaviour tend to be less embedded. Such differences in the presentation of cohesion suggests that it might be more effective to plan through an area and place-based approach. Good cohesion requires effective community planning and there is now a mature framework for this within local and district councils which was only in its infancy in 2015.

Solutions to many Cohesion issues are multi-disciplinary and it was felt that specifically, NIHE Community Cohesion representatives in NIHE areas should be involved in the community planning process and the associated implementation groups in their respective council areas. GROs would be a good conduit between NIHE Cohesion planning and Council community planning. While there is an inherent risk with this approach if the needs of marginalised NIHE estates are not prioritised by councils, there may also be opportunities to leverage additional resources.

As the Housing Executive is a statutory partner in the Community Planning process – but with engagement primarily organised through the regional Place Shaping teams – there is an opportunity for more regular and structured internal engagement between the Housing Executive’s Place Shaping and Cohesion/Good Relations Officers to ensure that Cohesion is fully facilitated and promoted within the Community Planning process. Feedback from the Housing Executive indicates that with relation to Beacons, for example, there is generally a need for input from the Housing Executive’s Good Relations and Place Shaping officers as well as the local office. On this and a range of other cohesion-related issues, a more structured approach to internal communication between teams, linked to the Housing Executive’s role in community planning, would be beneficial (see recommendation 8.5).

Based on the priorities within each local authority community plan, the NIHE could shape a future overarching community strategy with *Cohesion and Involvement* and *Building Social Capital* as strands. While community safety will remain relevant, legislative obligations exist around it which takes it outside of the scope of the NIHE. The *Communities in Transition* theme is the manifestation of change in the other thematic areas so it would not merit inclusion as a standalone theme. Where possible, language should major on the positive, for example, placing emphasis on *integration* as opposed to *segregation* and a theme of “Welcoming Communities” could replace “Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols”. The new title (Welcoming Communities) should tie in the 5 themes that are in the strategy (or the updated/ reviewed themes) alongside a more in-depth explanation of the new name.

## NIHE Structures

Underrepresentation of young people and the BME community on NIHE housing forums was highlighted and efforts should be made to address this, which may require some support to build confidence and capacity to meaningfully engage. It was also evident that some of the same people and groups sit on multiple NIHE housing forums. The NIHE should use the planning process for their next community strategy to review the membership and efficacy of these forums.

## 7.7. SROI Compatability

One of the key objectives of this report was to assess the feasibility of carrying out an analysis of Social Return on Investment (SROI), or else an alternative cost-benefit analysis, for the future Strategy by examining current information recording processes and by offering guidance.

Measuring the tangible costs and outputs of a service or activity is relatively straightforward; however, quantifying the wider social, economic, and environmental outcomes that a service or activity is delivering is more challenging. SROI is an approach to understanding and managing the value of these social, economic, and environmental outcomes. It is based on a set of principles that are applied within a framework. SROI is similar to cost-benefit analysis, in that it assigns a monetary value to outcomes, both positive and negative, thus enabling different activities to be compared in monetary terms. It is based around the seven principles in Table 6.

*Table 6: Seven principles of SROI*

Principle	Details
<b>1. Involve stakeholders</b>	Understand the way in which the organisation creates change through a dialogue with stakeholders
<b>2. Understand what changes</b>	Acknowledge and articulate all the values, objectives, and stakeholders of the organisation before agreeing which aspects of the organisation are to be included in the scope
<b>3. Value what matters</b>	Use financial proxies for indicators to include the values of those excluded from markets in same terms as used in markets
<b>4. Only include what is material</b>	Articulate clearly how activities create change and evaluate this through the evidence gathered
<b>5. Do not over-claim</b>	Make comparisons of performance and impact using appropriate benchmarks, targets, and external standards
<b>6. Be transparent</b>	Demonstrate the basis on which the findings may be considered accurate and honest and that they will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders
<b>7. Verification</b>	Ensure appropriate independent verification of the account

This analysis has highlighted the output-focused nature of the Community Cohesion Strategy, and whilst it is important to be able to count and quantify *how much*, one of the central tenets of SROI is in understanding *what changes* and being able to clearly articulate and evidence

outcomes or changes for all stakeholder groups. Thus, the development of an SROI study for the current iteration of the Cohesion Strategy would be challenging.

The table below identifies a number of Good Relations outcomes with associated financial proxies that are used in the SROI Social Value Map. The outcomes are chosen given their potential alignment and relevance to the Cohesion Strategy.

*Table 7: Good relations outcomes (with financial proxies) used in the SROI Social Value Map*

<b>Good Relations Outcome</b>	<b>Financial Value (Per Person)</b>	<b>Description of Outcome</b>
Feel belonging to neighbourhood	£3,753	Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement: I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood.
Talks to neighbours regularly	£4,511	Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement: I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood.
Active in tenants' group	£8,116	Individual attends formal group or association.
Good neighbourhood to live in	£1,747	Answering 'Good' to the question: Overall, do you think your neighbourhood is a good or a bad place to live?
No problem with anti-social behaviour	£6,403	Rating the level of anti-social behaviour in the area as low.
Not worried about crime	£12,274	Answering 'Not Worried At All' to the statement: How worried are you about being a victim of crime?

Good Relations Outcome	Financial Value (Per Person)	Description of Outcome
Resolution of problem with graffiti	£439	The local area around the dwelling should be surveyed to consider the extent to which the relevant problem is present, recorded on a simple subjective scale from 1 (no problem) to 5 (major problem). Values can be applied where an area is improved from being assessed as scoring 3, 4 or 5 to being scored 1 or 2.

Other outcomes such as measuring the increased capacity of organisations (in receipt of grant funding or mentoring) would also have relevance and value. **The concluding analysis is that a future SROI study is possible for a Cohesion Strategy; however, this would require the development of a robust outcomes framework embedded within the architecture of the strategy (see Section 8.3). To facilitate an SROI or cost benefit study, this should be accompanied by a systematic approach to data collection, with a clear link between the activities delivered, intended outcomes and the data collected and stored.**

## Section 8: Recommendations

### 8.1. Introduction

Our overarching recommendation is that the Housing Executive should begin at the earliest point in the process of developing a new strategy to shape their community services and supports over the next five year period. This section presents recommendations for consideration in relation to this future strategy development and implementation, many of which have been referenced with varying degrees of explicitness in the previous sections.

### 8.2 Architecture of Future Strategy

Given the multi-faceted nature of cohesion and what it means for different communities, we recommend that the future strategy should be called the *NIHE Community Strategy*, with community cohesion and community involvement as two key strands. Themes such as Integration, Race Relations and Interface Areas should continue, whilst a theme of Welcoming Communities could replace the Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols theme from the 2015-2020 strategy. These would sit under a Cohesion Strand.

A prevailing narrative from the consultation process was that each of these ‘themes’ are component parts of Communities in Transition, although the term ‘Communities in Transition’ has become conflated with actions to tackle paramilitarism. A future NIHE Community Cohesion strategy should consider whether ‘communities in transition’ can become an underlying principle for all of this work, or whether it merits inclusion as a standalone theme, it could be merged with a ‘building community capacity’ theme under the Community Involvement strand.

In addition, the transition of the Shared Housing Programme, which at the time of writing sits with the Communities team in the Housing Executive’s Housing Services Division, to the Regional Directorate in 2023 would have implications for its inclusion in a future strategy. This may mean that a future strategy should reference how it will complement and work in tandem with the Shared Housing Programme, but not necessarily have responsibility for reporting on its outputs and deliverables.

The strategy should draw on the NIHE’s current community involvement strategy and the councils’ community planning process to identify themes for community involvement. We note that, in addition to existing themes, representatives of groups that had received funding under the five themes in the 2015-2020 Strategy highlighted other priorities that could be included in future strategies, including *shared spaces, funding for groups working with Housing Executive*

*estates, and mental health support.* The Housing Executive may wish to consider integration of these work areas when developing its updated Community Strategy.

Each thematic area in the new strategy should have outcomes which have strong alignment to its relevant policy area. To provide a robust causal link between activities, outputs and associated change, each outcome should have measurable indicators to evidence success and achievement. The process to achieve this would include:

1. Agree high level strands for the strategy, suggested here that Community Cohesion and Community Involvement could represent two strands.
2. Agree on thematic areas of work under each strand (themes). These themes can be used to categorise and group together various activities and initiatives.
3. Identify the changes that you wish to achieve relative to each theme (outcomes) and clarify who each outcome relates to (i.e. residents, organisations). The outcomes should align with government policy and – in the case of SROI – could align with an established financial proxy. Information on the Draft Programme for Government Indicators consulted on in 2021 and the Good Relations Indicators reported on annually by the Executive Office is set out at Appendix 4, along with an overview of the Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019.
4. Discuss how you will know if you have achieved each change (indicators). Agree on indicators of success – these will determine your approach to data collection. Determine whether baseline data exists for each indicator either in national datasets or in previous research.

An example of an emerging strategy structure is included in Appendix 5.

### **8.3 Data Collection & Impact Measurement**

It is recommended that NIHE develop and implement a consistent system to store and report on all relevant output and outcome data for future Cohesion strategies. The system should align with and be derived from the strategy architecture (see 8.2).

Section 7.7 concluded that embedding SROI methodology is possible to facilitate a potential SROI or cost benefit analysis on a future NIHE strategy. However to enable this, a systematic approach to data collection and storing is required. This evaluation has highlighted the extensive outputs achieved during the 2015-2020 Cohesion Strategy; however, it also raised challenges in accessing consistent information with no one central point of data available.



We would highlight the Outcomes system implemented by the Housing Executive's Supporting People team as an exemplar; an overview is provided at Appendix 6. NIHE also has access to a Salesforce System for administering grant funding, whilst a range of purpose built social value reporting systems are available and/or under development and merit consideration, although the inclusion of NI specific good relations and cohesion outcomes and proxies would be important.

Having such a system embedded facilitates a seamless transition from quantifying outcomes to applying a financial proxy and subsequent SROI calculations. An input figure i.e. the total amount invested in the strategy over its cycle is essential for the application of this methodology. With the significant partnership and collaborative working, this process would also enable an attribution value for NIHE interventions. Furthermore, it would value NIHE inputs in areas where they are working on behalf of others or when external influences outside their scope are prevalent such in NIHE estates where there is a high level of home ownership.

A future monitoring and evaluation framework for the NIHE Community Strategy should be an amalgamation of SROI and Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) which is the framework used by the Executive Office and is based around the questions:

1. How much did we do?
2. How well did we do it?
3. Who Benefitted?

## 8.4 Networking and Engagement

The forums and groups hosted and facilitated by the NIHE provide considerable opportunities for groups and individuals to have their voice heard in relation to policy and strategy. We recommend that the NIHE use the strategy planning process to review the efficacy and membership of their forums and groups to ensure that it is representative of their communities. There appears to be limited representation from young people and the Black and Minority Ethnic communities, and we recommend that the NIHE addresses this to ensure their engagement in the next strategy. To achieve this, some bespoke supports may need to be put in place to build the capacity of such groups to engage. Initiatives supported through PEACE PLUS/ 'Levelling Up' funding (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund) may offer opportunities to support such engagement through initiatives with partner organisations and community groups.

## 8.5 Additional Recommendations

1. The evaluation team reviewed approximately 100 documents in an attempt to create an aggregated and cumulative overview of the strategy outputs during the development of this report. In line with the new strategy, a more streamlined and consistent recording and storing of output data would assist with efficacy and accuracy and should be embedded in the development of the next Cohesion Strategy. The use of an online system (such as the Outcomes system used for Supporting People – See Appendix 6) may provide one central point of data for the Cohesion Strategy and merits consideration.
2. The importance of grant funding programmes was highlighted consistently by community and voluntary organisations, and by NIHE staff. Funding extended the reach of the cohesion strategy and increased community capacity to deliver cohesion based activity. It is recommended that small grants are included as part of the delivery mechanism in a new cohesion strategy.
3. It is recommended that collaborative work with the PSNI is embedded into a future Cohesion strategy to access hate crime data at a local level (NIHE estate). This can drive data informed decisions and assist GRO's on the allocation of race relations funding, funding of positive expressions of culture and the development of activities to prevent hate crime.
4. This evaluation highlights the ongoing challenge in dealing with hate crime in NI. It is recommended that the NIHE should create an intervention model for estates which adopts a wraparound support approach for ethnic communities, akin to the current model provided by the North West Migrant Forum. This can be embedded in a future Cohesion Strategy. In addition, the case for a second Race Relations Officer should continue to be propagated by the cohesion team.
5. The evaluation revealed questions relating to the integration of the Race Relations priority into Good Relations but concluded that the differing contexts of these themes necessitates that the two should remain separate. The Race Relations theme could however benefit from lessons learned in changing the approach adopted by Good Relations, with the next Cohesion strategy moving away from targeted Race Relations interventions and towards a mainstreamed approach.
6. Groups who received funding under the themes of the Community Cohesion Strategy between 2015 and 2020 highlighted that Shared Spaces, Mental Health Support, and

funding for groups working with NIHE Estates should be prioritised in the next NIHE Cohesion Strategy.

7. Futures engaged 739 young people aged 14-24 in the top 25% most disadvantaged areas across NI in a needs-based, bespoke programme in education, personal development, good relations, and citizenship work for 6 months, while raising aspirations and capacity to build positive relationships with peers, adults, and young people from different backgrounds. 30% of Futures completers were NIHE tenants demonstrating great success for NIHE in reaching the target demographic within their estates. Outcomes achieved for participants included improved health and well-being, increased confidence and self-esteem, greater independence, improved relationships and increased participation and attainment in education. There is merit in pursuing supplementary funding for this programme, the emergence of Peace Plus, and particularly Theme 3 'Empowering and Investing in Young People' provides a relevant opportunity. It is recommended that NIHE consider a future application to Peace Plus.
8. This evaluation found that re-imaging projects in single identity and Interface areas can be the catalyst for physical, social, and economic regeneration highlighting the importance of the continued funding of this priority. It is recommended that 're-imaging' remains a central part of the next iteration of the Cohesion Strategy.
9. Solutions to many Cohesion issues are multi-disciplinary and the evaluation highlights that NIHE Cohesion representatives should be involved in the community planning process and the associated implementation groups in their respective council areas, complementing NIHEs overall involvement. It is recommended that NIHE GR officers would be a good conduit between NIHE Cohesion planning and Council community planning.
10. It is recommended that NIHE consider the introduction of a system based approach to capturing data in future iterations of the strategy. This could be an extension of existing NIHE SPOC system, Salesforce or the purchase of a license for purpose built SROI/Social Value tool with NI specific good relations outcomes and proxies.
11. It is recommended that the NIHE use the strategy planning process to review the efficacy and membership of their forums and groups to ensure that it is representative of their communities. Currently, there appears to be limited representation from young people and the Black and Minority Ethnic communities which should be addressed. To support this, it is recommended that bespoke supports are providing to build the capacity of such

groups to engage, with initiatives supported through PEACE PLUS/ 'Levelling Up' funding suggested as potential sources to support such engagement.

## Appendix 1: Documents Reviewed

Titles of Documents Reviewed	
48th Annual Report 2018-2019	Cohesion Project Spent 2015-2020
49th Annual Report 2019-2020	Contact Info for Area and Regional Managers
50th Annual Report 2020-2021	Contact Information for Race Relations
Action Plan 2018-2019	Copy Race Relations Contacts
Action Plan 2019-2020	Corporate Plan 2017/18 - 2020/21
Aftercare Scheme Flyer	Corporate Plan 2021-2022
Anti-Racism Conference: Presentations	Development of an Inclusion Forum - TOR
Anti-Racism Conference Beyond Words: Growing Our Anti-Racism Practice	Draft TOR: BME Access to Services Task Group
Areas at Risk: Glenbank & Greater Whitewell	EID COH Assessment Eid Festival
Areas at Risk: Amended Funding Proposal for 2016-2017	Eid Festival Letter from Ian McCrickard
Areas at Risk: Letter from Ian Snowden to Organisations Neighbourhood Renewal – March 2018	Eid Festival Poster Eid Festival
Areas at Risk: Full Year Report 2019-2020	EID Photos Eid Festival
Areas of Risk: Full Year Report 2020-2021	Final 2020-2021 Application Form Eid Festival
Areas At Risk: Funding Proposal 2015	Flag Protocol
Areas at Risk: NIHE Application 2018-2019	Funding Proposal for Area at Risk - 2015-2016
Belfast Islamic Centre: 2018 COH Application Eid Festival	Fusion Day Images
Belfast Islamic Centre: 2018 COH Signed Application Eid Festival	Fusion Day Poster
Belfast Islamic Centre: Conditional Funding Offer Eid Festival	Fusion day Press Release
Belfast Migrant Forum Agenda	Fusion Day Report
Bible: Group Funding Information	IQI ASEC - Interagency Partnerships Enabling Response
Black and Minority Ethnic and Migrant Worker Mapping Update	Mid Ulster Projects: Howard Primary School Reimaging Learning Local History and Reimaging
Black History Month Celebration: 8 x images	Mid Ulster Projects: Cookstown North Community Group Post Project Evaluation
Black History Month Celebration: Conditional Offer of Funding	Mid Ulster Projects: Killymoon Leaving a Lasting Legacy
Black History Month Celebration: Email Conversations	Mid Ulster Projects: Maghera Cross Community Link Youth Connect
Black History Month Celebration: Evaluation	Mid Ulster Projects: St Elizabeth's Senior Citizens Group
Black History Month Celebration: Invoice	Mid Ulster Projects: The Rivertall Theatre Group Blood Upon the Rose
Black History Month Celebration: NWMF Child Safeguarding Document	Mid-Ulster Projects: Ballynakelly Fun Day

Titles of Documents Reviewed	
Black History Month Celebration: NWMF Directors	Mid-Ulster Projects: Dungannon Halloween Family Fun Day
Black History Month Celebration: Online Safety Agreement for Use with Young People	Mid-Ulster Projects: Milltown Super Adults Club
Black History Month Celebration: Post Project Evaluation Form	Mid-Ulster Projects: Sandholes Community Group Promoting Social Inclusion in a Rural Area 2018
Black History Month Celebration: Quotation	Migrant Forum Minutes (01/09/2021)
Black History Month: Quotation 2020	Minutes of East Belfast Race Relations Network Sept 2021
Board Paper 2016	Minutes of Task & Finish Group Newcomer Family's Needs Assessment
Board Paper 2017	Nationalities of Housing Executive Tenants as of January 2022
Board Paper 2019	NICS Race & Ethnicity Working Group Meeting Notes
Board Paper 2020	Oasis Youth Evaluation Form 2021
Board Paper 2021	South Projects: ADHD Wrap You Wellbeing
BRIC 2: 2015-2018 Expenditure Analysis	South Projects: Devenish Partnership Forum Golden Age Project
BRIC 2: Good Relations Action Plan - Hannahstown	South Projects: Fox Park Residents Group Looking Good Estate & Residents Get to Know Your Neighbour Project
BRIC 2: Good Relations Action Plan - Springhill 2015-2016	South Projects: Lisanelly Regeneration Group Christmas Wonderland
BRIC 2: Good Relations Action Plan - Twaddell	South Projects: Loughmacroy Ladies Group Remembering the Past - Looking to the Future 2018
BRIC 2 Presentation	South Projects: Men's Shed - New Horizons Enniskillen Creating Opportunities and Enhancing Connections
Building Good Relations Booklet	South Projects: Omagh Men's Shed Environmental Project
CC Proactive Prevention Work PowerPoint	South Projects: Shared Neighbourhoods Good Relations Plan 2009
CC Race Relations PowerPoint	South Projects: Tamlaght Community Group Improving Relationships with Others 2018
COH Application Oasis 2020-2021	South Projects: Tempo Development Group Rural Activities for a Rural Community
Cohesion Assessment Form Eid Festival 2019	South Projects: The Saturday Club Social Integration for Youth who have a Learning or Physical Disability
Cohesion Assessment Form Oasis 2020	Welcome Pack 2019

## Appendix 2: Consultation Participants

Ballycarry & District Community Association	Forthspring Inter Community Group	Moneydarragh Community Hub
Bannside Community Group	Fountain Street Community Development Association Strabane	Moneydig Rural Network
Bogside Brandywell Initiative	Glen Golden Years Club	Monkstown Community Association
Belfast City Mission (Island Street)	Greater Shantallow Community Arts	Newbuilding Cricket Club
Black Mountain Shared Space	Hillhall Regeneration Group	Polish Association Bangor
Building Communities Resource Centre	Hospital Road Community Association	Rathcoole Friends of the Somme
Carnagat	Killynure Community Association	Strathfoyle Community Association Ltd
Cathedral Youth Club	Larne FC	Tar Isteach
Clarendon Development Association	Lettershandoney & District Development Group	The Drummond Centre Project Limited
Destined	Lincoln Courts Y & C Association	The Glens Community Association
Downpatrick Community Collective	Magilligan Community Association	Verbal
Belfast City Council	Department of Justice	Apex Housing
Department for Communities	Rural Housing	Strategic Cohesion Forum
Patch Team Forum (Belfast Area)	Regional Managers Forum	17 NIHE staff members
Equality Forum		

## Appendix 3: Achievement of Commitments

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Achievement Status
Work in partnership with DfC “Housing for All programme” to deliver approx. 200 units annually with an overall draft PFG target of 800 units by 2021	
Analyse and assist in the sustainability of shared neighbourhood estates by supporting research into segregated/shared housing, including updating the Mapping Segregation report.	
Facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and affordable sector (as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.)	
Via the shared New build programme we will work in partnership with The Executive Office, DfC, and Housing Associations to deliver 10 Shared Neighbourhood (TBUC) schemes	
Develop support programmes of action to address the issues of residential segregation and integration in 72 communities across 3 years, through our new BRIC 2 programme to increase sharing within and between communities	
Revisit 52 previous Shared Neighbourhood Programme, Shared Community Programme, BRIC and BRIC 2 Programme participant groups to ensure ongoing support and sustainability	
Demonstrate a clear and positive commitment to tackling race issues through the Housing Executive’s updated Race Relations policy.	
Contribute towards improved race relations at a strategic and operational level through effective partnership working via Strategic Cohesion Forum and estate-based strategy work.	
Continue to deliver the HIPA (Hate Incident Practical Action) scheme on behalf of the Department of Justice and the PSNI to support victims of hate crime.	



Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Achievement Status
Funding of locally based Race Relations projects across NI in Housing Executive estates.	
Identify communities at risk ('tipping points') and taking a proactive approach to identifying 'hot spots' and changing issues within the 5 themes through establishing a comprehensive data base to identify areas that would benefit from intervention.	
Create the environment to allow timely and appropriate interventions.	
Renew our focus on statutory and voluntary partnerships through participation on multi agency forums.	
Engage with adjacent communities to foster an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and understanding via 'bridging events'.	
Conduct regular audits and prepare good relations local plans.	
Continue to deliver Areas at Risk (A@R) Programme on behalf of DfC at local level	
Develop opportunities to bring communities together.	
Invest in our young people as the next generation of leaders in our society, through a programme of interface intervention.	
Support interface communities by supporting local plans for the regeneration and remodelling of interface areas.	
Continue capacity building in areas of weak social infrastructure.	
Continue to invest in improvement through environmental initiatives.	
Deliver the Interface Normalisation programme on behalf of the Department of Justice. This programme provides additional security measures to resident's homes at interface locations that are proposing transformation.	

Original Commitment in Community Cohesion Strategy	Achievement Status
Develop a comprehensive and up to date data base of all sectional symbols on NIHE land and property.	
Identify areas ready for positive intervention in collaboration with our Regional/Area Offices.	
Consult and support local communities about the removal of sectional symbols.	
Continue capacity building in areas of weak social infrastructure.	
Use the BRIC2 programme as a vehicle for addressing sectional symbols.	
Focus on more acceptable expressions of cultural identity.	
Propagate models of 'good practice' and promote sharing the learning events.	
Develop and expand our existing support network and services to help us deliver a culture of respect throughout Northern Ireland.	
Continue to deliver the successful Better Bonfire Management Scheme	
Continue to work with OFMDFM and fellow statutory partners to play a part in assisting communities to move forward on the issue of flags.	

Achieved	
Partially Achieved/Unable to measure	

## Appendix 4: Draft Programme for Government/ Good Relations Indicators

The Northern Ireland Executive consulted on a **Draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework** comprising nine headline outcomes (Figure 7) in January 2021.<sup>54</sup>

Figure 7: Depiction of Draft PfG Outcomes Framework in published consultation document



The consultation document noted that:

*'The outcomes in the Programme for Government Framework present a picture of the kind of society we want to see. An inclusive society in which people of all ages and backgrounds are respected and cared for and in which we all prosper. A society which has no barriers to prevent*

<sup>54</sup> PfG draft Outcomes Framework consultation ([northernireland.gov.uk](https://www.northernireland.gov.uk)) (accessed November 2022)

*people from living fulfilling lives. The Outcomes apply equally to everyone, and no one is excluded.'*

Elaborating on the outcomes-based approach, the document explains that:

*Previous Programmes for Government had been prepared on the basis of services inputs and outputs which, when it comes to measuring success, are strong on counting levels of activity but which are less good at the more fundamental assessment of whether the activities are the right thing to be doing based on their effectiveness when it comes to achieving positive change and improvement.*

*The old, traditional model also underpins rigid organisational structures in delivering public services which then makes it difficult to see the bigger picture and to present a whole of government response to societal challenges and needs.*

The outcomes and key priorities identified at the consultation stage are set out below. Workstreams for which the Department for Communities is allocated responsibility (generally in conjunction with one or more other departments) are highlighted, as are priority areas that arguably have some degree of relevance to Community Cohesion activity.

<b>Our children and young people have the best start in life</b>	<b>Key Priority Areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to education</li> <li>• <b>Capability and resilience: Equipping children and young people with the knowledge and support to make safe, healthy and sustainable life choices, building their social, cultural and environmental awareness and self-confidence through team sports and cross community activities [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• Care</li> <li>• Early years [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</li> <li>• Skills and Attainment</li> </ul>
--	--

<b>We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment</b>	<b>Key Priority Areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural environment</li> <li>• Green economy</li> <li>• <b>Built environment: creating and shaping high quality, sustainable, places for people to live, work and spend leisure time. Furthering sustainable development and supporting positive place-making and effective stewardship [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• Housing: maintaining and redeveloping our current housing stock and ensuring new houses are built in an energy-efficient, sustainable way</li> </ul>
---	---

	<p>that protects our natural environment and built heritage <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active and sustainable transport</li> <li>• Waste Management</li> <li>• Water and wastewater management</li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inclusion and tackling disadvantage:</b> tackling the issues that lead to inequality and disadvantage in terms of welfare and poverty, and providing support where it is needed in both urban and rural communities. <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• <b>Rights and equality:</b> promoting and protecting the rights of individuals to ensure we are recognising and respecting diversity, ensuring everyone feels included <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• <b>Legacy:</b> Delivering for those affected by the legacy of the Troubles, seeking to promote a shared and reconciled future for all, and recognising and valuing the achievements of the peace process to date</li> <li>• <b>Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity:</b> tackling the issues of the past and ending sectarianism. Promoting, protecting and providing education on the rights of individuals across our public services to ensure different values and identities are respected and welcomed in society <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>We all enjoy long, healthy active lives</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Health</li> <li>• <b>Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage:</b> address the issues that lead to inequality and disadvantage in terms of health and healthcare <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• Mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• <b>Older people:</b> Considering the health and social care needs of an ageing population, promoting positive attitudes to older people and tailoring support to enable them to enjoy better health and active lifestyles <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• <b>Physical Health and Wellbeing:</b> Promoting public health measures, increasing awareness and supporting save, active and healthy lives <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
---	--

<p><b>Everyone can reach their potential</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capability and resilience:</b> supporting personal development opportunities for everyone, and building confidence and capacity <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
--	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better jobs: Creation and development of more opportunities and better jobs, by tackling issues such as job security, wages and flexibility and giving employees a voice. Improving employability and helping those who are unemployed into work and ensuring we develop a workforce that is equipped and ready for employment. <b>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• Skills and attainment</li> <li>• Sports, Arts &amp; Culture: Supporting creative industries, oversight and delivery for the arts, cultural and language sectors. <b>Promoting cohesive communities through the culture, arts and language sectors [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced carbon-neutral</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing globally</li> <li>• Green Economy</li> <li>• Growth</li> <li>• Food, farming and fishing</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Innovation</li> </ul>
---	---

<p><b>Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to justice: improving the effectiveness and accessibility of justice at all levels, speeding up justice and supporting the PSNI in bringing about transformational change, and delivering for victims and survivors of historical abuse and for those affected by the legacy of the Troubles</li> <li>• Address harm and vulnerability: supporting and putting protections in place for those who are vulnerable, meeting the needs of those who have experienced serious crime, including the complex needs of children, and delivering for victims and survivors</li> <li>• <b>Early intervention and rehabilitation: Addressing offensive behaviours and tackling organised crime, supporting rehabilitation, intervening early, meeting the often complex needs of both children and adults throughout the justice system [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> <li>• <b>Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity: Supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing integrated and shared education, addressing hate crime, tackling sectarianism, ending paramilitary activity and addressing the harm vulnerabilities caused by it [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
---	---

<p><b>We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Disability:</b> Improving the quality of life for those of us with disabilities, empowering people to have more influence over their own lives and providing opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Housing:</b> tackling homelessness. Facilitating and supporting housing associations, provision and maintenance of appropriate social housing, investment in new social and affordable homes <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Inclusion and tackling disadvantage:</b> supporting people to build a route out of poverty, administering an effective social security/benefits system to those who need it, tackling the issues that lead to inequality <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Mental health and wellbeing:</b> promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, and addressing social issues, risk factors and environmental impacts, such as social isolation and loneliness. Providing access to supporting services and promoting early intervention <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Older people:</b> considering the health and social care needs of an ageing population, promoting positive attitudes to older and tailoring support to enable them to participate fully in society <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>People want to live, work and visit here</b></p>	<p><b>Key Priority Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competing globally</li> <li>• Better jobs</li> <li>• Growth</li> <li>• <b>Housing:</b> tackling the issues to ensure everyone has access to good quality, affordable housing and in promoting an integrated, shared society <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Tackling sectarianism, building respect and identity:</b> supporting safe and resilient communities, building respect for cultural identities and rights of individuals, providing shared/integrated education, tackling sectarianism, ending paramilitary activity and addressing the harm and vulnerabilities caused by it <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> <li>• <b>Sports, Arts and Culture;</b> providing access to sports, arts and culture and encouraging and facilitating opportunities for people to get involved. Promoting built heritage, eco-tourism and outdoor recreation. Providing spaces and facilities for sports, arts and culture events and activities to take place <i>[DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</i></li> </ul>
--	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Planning: Creating and shaping high quality, sustainable, places for people to live, work and spend leisure time. Furthering sustainable development and supporting positive place-making and effective stewardship [DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES]</b></li> </ul>
--	---

## Good Relations Indicators (T:BUC Strategy)

A *Good Relations Indicators* report is published annually in order to monitor progress against the four key priorities of the T:BUC Strategy.<sup>55</sup> The report is an official statistic which uses a number of data sources to provide an overview of relations between communities in Northern Ireland.

The outcomes, indicators and information sources used are summarised below and overleaf.

### Priority 1: Our Children and Young People

Outcome	Indicator	Source information
<b>Improved attitudes between young people from different back-grounds</b>	1.1a Percentage (%) who think that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now that they were five years ago.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Life and Times Survey</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	1.1a Percentage (%) who think that relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in five years' time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Life and Times Survey</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	1.1b Percentage (%) who feel favourable towards people from: Catholic communities, Protestant communities, Minority Ethnic communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Life and Times Survey</li> <li>• Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
<b>Young people engaged in bringing the community together</b>	1.2a Percentage (%) of young people who regularly socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	1.2b Percentage (%) of young people who have: shared sports facilities or equipment; shared classes; or done projects, with pupils from other schools where the pupils are from a different religious background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>

### Priority 2: Our Shared Community

Outcome	Indicator	Source information
---------	-----------	--------------------

<sup>55</sup> [Good Relations | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)



<b>Increased use of shared space and services</b>	2.1a Percentage (%) who think that Protestants and Catholics tend to go to different local shops or use different GP surgeries and other services in their area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	2.1b Percentage (%) who think that leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their area are 'shared and open' to both Protestants and Catholics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	2.1c Percentage (%) of those who have children at school who think that their child's school is somewhere they can be open about their cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	2.1d Percentage (%) whose school has been involved in shared education with another school in the last academic year, broken down by type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Omnibus Survey</li> </ul>
	2.1e Percentage (%) who see the area they live in as Protestant, Catholic or mixed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland House Condition Survey</li> </ul>
<b>Shared space is accessible to all</b>	2.2a Percentage (%) who would define their neighbourhood/workplace as somewhere they can be open about their cultural identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	2.2b Percentage (%) who would prefer mixed religion neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	2.2c Percentage (%) of first preference applications to post-primary integrated schools that do not result in admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NI School Census</li> </ul>

### Priority 3: Our Safe Community

Outcome	Indicator	Source information
<b>Reduction in the prevalence of hate crime and intimidation</b>	3.1a Number of hate crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PSNI</li> </ul>
	3.1b Number of people presenting as homeless as a result of intimidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Housing Executive</li> </ul>
	3.1c Percentage (%) of people who felt: annoyed by republican murals; intimidated by republican murals; annoyed by loyalist murals; intimidated by loyalist murals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
<b>A community where</b>	3.2a Percentage (%) of people who see town centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>

<b>places and spaces are safe for all</b>	3.2b Percentage (%) of people feeling safe going to events held in: a GAA club, an Orange Hall, a Protestant secondary school, a Catholic secondary school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	3.2c Percentage (%) of who would like to see peace lines come down now or in the near future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>

#### Priority 4: Our Cultural Expression

Outcome	Indicator	Source information
<b>Increased sense of community belonging</b>	4.1a Percentage (%) who feel a sense of belonging to: their neighbourhood; Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young Life and Times Survey</li> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	4.1b Percentage (%) of people who feel they have an influence on decisions made in: their neighbourhood; Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young Life and Times Survey</li> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural diversity is celebrated</b>	4.2a Percentage (%) who think the culture and traditions of: Catholic communities; Protestant communities; Minority Ethnic Communities, add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>
	4.2b Percentage (%) who feel their own cultural identity is respected by society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey</li> </ul>

### Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019

The Indicators of Integration framework<sup>56</sup> was developed by the Home Office in consultation with, and with input from, other government departments, local authorities, regional Strategic Migration Partnerships, non-governmental organisations and local service providers from across the UK's four regions, as well as refugees. The document explains that:

*This framework can be used to complement a wide variety of strategies and projects across the United Kingdom, including local and national integration strategies. ... As integration is a devolved policy issue in the UK, the framework has also been developed with input from representatives of devolved administrations and recognises their devolved strategies...*

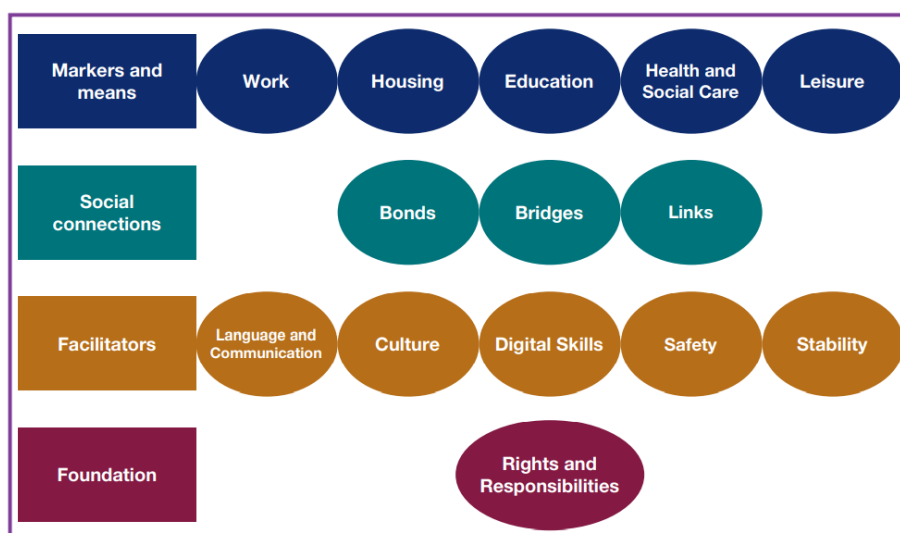
<sup>56</sup> See [Home Office Indicators of Integration framework 2019](#)

*The Home Office Indicators of Integration framework seeks to inform the planning, monitoring and evaluation of integration projects. This report presents a structured approach to integration in a range of local and national contexts and an evidence-based framework for developing interventions. The report helps to define how practitioners might measure **what good looks like** in relation to measuring progress towards integration over time. It can underpin the delivery of broader strategic goals by offering a framework that represents up-to-date evidence on best practice and what works, which can inform **how** integration goals will be achieved in practice. The report also provides suggested indicators that practitioners and policy officers can use where appropriate to measure the outcomes of initiatives.*

The framework exists within the context of the Government’s Integrated Communities Strategy, which sets out a vision for integration, defined as ‘communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities’. While a previous version of the framework, developed in 2004, had a specific focus on refugee integration, it was utilised in a much broader range of integration contexts than originally anticipated. The 2019 framework replaced the 2004 publication, with Indicators of Integration intended as a tool to help plan integration interventions at local or national levels, and to promote and measure integration in a broad range of diverse contexts. The report notes that ‘the indicator set can contribute to the measurement of the experiences of any group of people whose integration into communities or society is of concern’.

The framework is structured around 14 key domains which are considered to be of central importance to integration, and which are organised within four overarching headings (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Domains of Integration (Indicators of Integration Framework, 2019)



An indicators list which elaborates potential outcome measures within each of the domains and possible data sources is also provided. Examples of indicators that might have relevance or potential to be adapted for future Community Cohesion approaches include:

### **Housing**

- Reported satisfaction with housing conditions
- Reported satisfaction with neighbourhood (e.g. community safety, social cohesion and availability of necessary amenities)

### **Leisure**

- % participation in local social and leisure groups

### **Social bonds**

- % reporting that they have someone from own community to talk with when needing support
- % able to use social media to retain or develop social contacts with relatives and friends
- % reporting having friends with similar backgrounds
- % participating in a community organisation or involved in religious group or association
- % people who feel they are able to practice their religion freely
- % reporting sense of 'belonging' to neighbourhood and local area

### **Social bridges**

- % participating in youth clubs, childcare facilities, sports clubs, trade unions and other organisations
- % attending communal spaces (including places of religious worship) where they mix with people from different backgrounds
- % local people reporting having friends from different backgrounds
- % local people (incoming and receiving communities) who report mixing with people from different ethnic or other backgrounds in everyday situations
- % confident to ask their neighbours of all backgrounds for help
- % reporting sense of 'belonging' to neighbourhood and local area
- % volunteering/helping in the community in the past month
- % reporting that people of different backgrounds get on well in their area
- Prevalence of residential segregation (by ethnicity) in the local area

### **Social links – with institutions**

- % assuming office or representational functions with local community organisations or committees (e.g. playgroup board, PTAs, patient group, residents' association, Neighbourhood Watch)

### **Culture**

- % engaging with UK cultural institutions and events (e.g. museums, local festivals, cultural celebrations)
- % reporting that people of different backgrounds get on well in their area
- % reporting being knowledgeable and comfortable with diversity of local social norms and expectations

### **Digital skills**

- % reporting confidence in using technology to access digital services
- % with personal access to internet (including mobile data)
- % over 16 with smartphone or computer

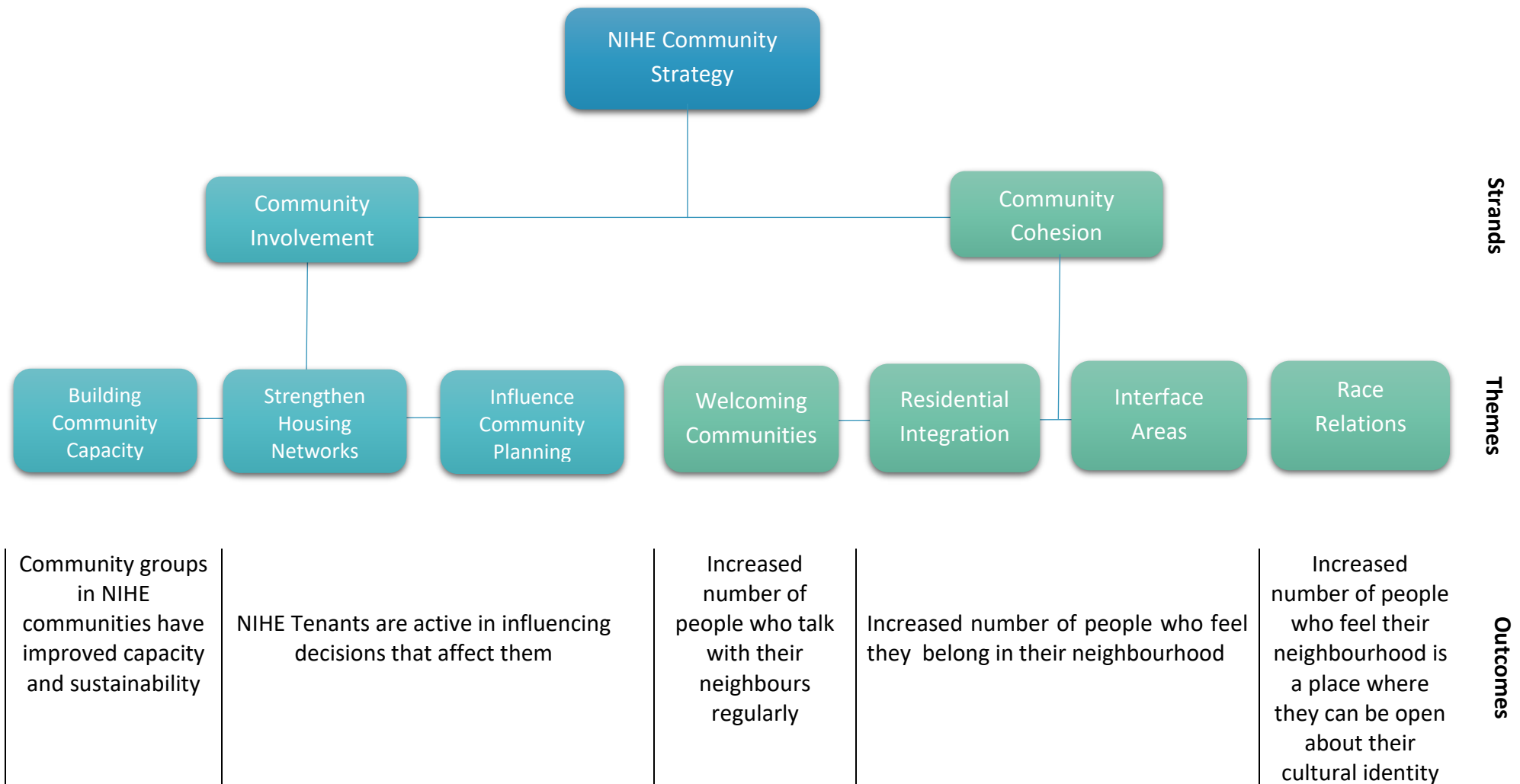
### **Safety**

- % reporting feeling fearful or insecure
- Self-reported feeling of safety when walking alone outside during the day/night
- % reporting experience of racial, cultural or religious harassment or incidents
- % reporting a hate crime

### **Stability**

- % reporting satisfaction with local area
- % reporting familiarity and trust with local people and neighbours
- % reporting intention to remain in neighbourhood for three or more years
- % reporting sense of 'belonging' to neighbourhood and local area

## Appendix 5: Possible Cohesion Strategy Architecture



## Appendix 6: Overview of Supporting People Outcomes System

Services funded through the Supporting People programme are required to submit performance and outcomes data in relation to their clients. Since 2018, data on outcomes have been collected through an Outcomes system for all services; the outcomes on which providers report were designed in consultation with the provider sector and are linked to the Draft Programme for Government Outcomes.

The frequency of outcomes submission depends on the service type: reporting for short term services is required quarterly, while reporting on long term services is carried out annually. Outcomes are submitted using a secure, bespoke web-based tool that can be accessed by Supporting People service providers. The user interface aims to supply providers with the information needed to successfully submit outcomes, and is supported by a user guide and short videos. Each field on the Outcomes system interface has built-in data validation, which means that the values can only be numbers, all questions require a response and an *achieved* value cannot be greater than the *supported* value. A total of 11 indicators were identified in consultation with providers, some of which apply to specific service types. The indicators are set out below, while the full outcomes framework is reproduced overleaf.

- 1a. Service users supported to access welfare benefits
- 1b. Service users supported to gain employment (paid or voluntary) and/or enhance skills/education
- 2a. Service users supported to remain in own home (long term services only)
- 2b. Service users supported to achieve independent living (short term services only)
- 2c. Number of service users supported to move into alternative temporary living arrangements (crisis accommodation services only)
- 2d. Service users supported to maintain their tenancy as a result of floating support (floating support services only)
- 3a. Service users supported to manage their physical/mental health
- 3b. Number of services users supported to access health care (crisis accommodation services only)
- 4a. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure in own home/tenancy
- 4b. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure and protected (crisis accommodation services only)
- 5a. Service users supported to contribute to wider society and enhance social networks.

## Supporting People Outcomes Framework

Draft PFG Target(s)	SP Programme – High Level Outcome	SP Services – Outcome Indicators	Service Level Outcome Measure	Applicable to Client Group				
				Mental Health & Disability	Older People	Homeless	Young People	Crisis Accommodation Services
We care for others and help those in need More people working in better jobs	1. Improved Economic well-being for service users	1a. Service users supported to access welfare benefits	Number of service users in receipt of any relevant benefits as a result of the support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
		1b. Service users supported to gain employment (paid or voluntary) and/or enhance skills/education	Number of service users who engaged in employment (paid or voluntary) and/or desired training/education as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We care for others and help those in need	2. Increased number of people living independently	2a. Service users supported to remain in own home (LONG TERM SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users in a sustained tenancy 12 months after start of support service	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
		2b. Service users supported to achieve independent living (SHORT TERM SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users living in permanent/stable accommodation in the community as a result of support provided	✓	X	✓	✓	X
		2c. Number of service users supported to move into alternative temporary living accommodation (CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users successfully moved into alternative temporary living arrangements as a result of support provided	X	X	X	X	✓
		2d. Service users supported to maintain their tenancy as a result of floating support (FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users who maintained their tenancy as a result of floating support being provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We care for others and help those in need	3. Being healthy	3a. Service users supported to manage their physical/mental health	Number of service users who accessed primary health care/ mental health services/ social services as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We enjoy long, healthy, active lives		3b. Number of service users supported to access healthcare (CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users who accessed healthcare as a result of support provided	X	X	X	X	✓
We care for others and help those in need	4. Living in Safety & Security	4a. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure in own home/tenancy	Number of service users feeling more secure as a result of support provided	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other		4b. Number of service users who have been supported to feel secure and protected (CRISIS ACCOMMODATION SERVICES ONLY)	Number of service users feeling secure and protected as a result of support provided by service	X	X	X	X	✓
We enjoy long, healthy, active lives	5. Achieving and making a positive contribution	5a. Service users supported to contribute to wider society and enhance social networks	Number of service users who have improved/ enhanced their social network as a result of support provided (e.g. improved family relationships; participating in community projects/ residents groups/ volunteering etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X