



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Ireland



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Northern Ireland

ALL-IRELAND HOUSING AWARDS 2024

Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from the
All-Ireland Housing Awards 2024

Kindly sponsored by:

choice 

Proud Sponsors of the **Good Practice Compendium**

Choice is a **'profit for a purpose'** social enterprise established over 40 years ago to provide housing and tenant support services at an affordable rent.

We work with a range of like-minded partners to bring about positive change for our tenants and their communities.

Today, Choice has over 12,000 homes and employs over 400 people in a Group structure that includes:

Choice Services:
our in-house repairs and maintenance service provider

Maple and May:
provides private rented accommodation and affordable housing for sale

Through our Group structure we are committed to using our significant resources and expertise to deliver more and better homes and services for all.



Welcome

Welcome to the 15th annual Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) All-Ireland Housing Awards Good Practice Compendium.

As we celebrate another milestone year, we are thrilled to once again showcase the outstanding achievements of housing professionals across the island of Ireland. This compendium serves as a testament to the dedication, innovation and impact of individuals and organisations working tirelessly to improve the lives of residents and communities through housing.

This year's compendium features a diverse range of initiatives and projects, demonstrating the breadth and depth of excellence within the housing profession. From developers building small and large estates to frontline housing staff and those developing co-produced solutions to tackle community issues, the compendium reflects the rich tapestry of innovation and dedication present across the sector.

At CIH, we firmly believe that sharing good practice is not only a celebration of our collective achievements but also an invaluable learning opportunity. As we navigate through unprecedented challenges, including the imperative to address longstanding housing issues, the insights and experiences shared in this compendium will serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for housing professionals across the island.



Justin Cartwright CIHCM
Chartered Institute of Housing

Reflecting on the past year, we are reminded of the resilience and determination displayed by housing professionals in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges, our commitment to providing sustainable and affordable housing options for everyone remains unwavering. This compendium is a testament to our shared vision and a reaffirmation of our collective efforts to create healthier, safer and more inclusive communities.

As we embark on this journey of discovery and celebration, we invite you to explore the pages of this compendium and be inspired by the remarkable stories and achievements of our colleagues in the housing sector. Together, let us continue to strive for excellence and innovation, ensuring that housing remains at the forefront of our collective agenda.

We extend our gratitude to our headline sponsor, Aico, whose support helped make this event possible. Their commitment to promoting excellence in housing aligns well with our mission to highlight and celebrate the good practice in the sector.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to the housing profession.

		Page
Best housing development		10
Ogle Street	Ark Housing	10
Setting new standards in housing for older people	Alpha Housing	11
Lanestown View, Donabate	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	12
Belfast's Brookfield Mill has a new lease of life	Clanmil Housing Association	14
208 A-Rated Social Rented Homes at Kilruddery Glen, Bray	Co-operative Housing Ireland	15
New Dolphin Park	Fold Housing	17
Modern city living at Old City Crescent, Londonderry	Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)	18
Creevagh Heights & Sean Dolan's GAA club house	Radius Housing	20
Excellence in communication		22
Inspiring Women in Leadership - Celebrating International Women's Day	Co-operative Housing Ireland	22
Comms Forum	NIFHA	24
Excellence in tenant financial wellbeing		26
Improving Lives with Financial Support - Welfare Advice Service	Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)	26
A holistic approach to financial wellbeing	Apex Housing Association	28
Partnership Project	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	29
Killarney - "Mind the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves"	Clann Housing	30
Cost Saving Tips and Tricks	Co-operative Housing Ireland	31
Community Investment Network- Cost-of-living Guide for Tenants	Housing Association Charitable Trust	32
Financial Inclusion Project Team	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	34

In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

Excellence in health and wellbeing		36
Brain Health Village	Respond	36
Omagh Magic Basketball Team	Apex Housing Association	38
Working together to promote healthy lifestyles	Clanmil Housing Association	39
Ageless Clann - Nurturing wellbeing and tackling health inequalities for older residents and their communities	Clann Housing	40
It Takes A Village To Raise A Child	Irish Wheelchair Association	42
MIND (Mentoring, Interventions; Nurturing, Development)	Northern Ireland Alternatives	43
"Your Health is Your Wealth" Initiative	Oaklee Housing	45
Excellence in housing innovation		47
Springville House 'Rightsize' Development	Tuath Housing Association	47
Floating Support Service	Ark Housing	49
Choice and Rio Ferdinand Foundation	Choice Housing Ireland	50
Quality in Our Diversity Coordinating Group	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	52
Co-Own for Over 55s	Co-Ownership	53
Main St, Randalstown	Rural Housing Association	54
Creating Homes	Simon Community NI	55
St. Josephs, Manor Hill, Waterford	Waterford City and County Council	57
More than bricks and mortar		59
Creative Community Art Project	Radius Housing Association	59
Stock Transfer	Choice Housing Ireland	61
Tenant to Board Pathway	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	62
Killarney	Clann Housing	64
Empowering tenant engagement in Dungannon with the Tenant's Regional Panel	Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)	65
Bringing Spring to Springbank - Springbank Drive Community Greenspace	Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)	67
"Embracing Community: The Enduring Legacy of Iveagh Trust's Kevin Street Estate"	The Iveagh Trust	68

In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

Promoting shared and inclusive communities		70
Bringing people together through Culture Calendar 2023	Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)	70
Northern Lights - a celebration of NI culture	Apex Housing Association	72
Community FUNd Newtownards	Ark Housing	73
Listen Up	Choice Housing	74
Clanmil and Partisan Productions bring housing to the stage with Shared	Clanmil Housing Association	75
Celebrating Neighbours and Diversity	Co-operative Housing Ireland	77
Scribblestown - Promoting Shared & Inclusive Communities	Oaklee Housing	78
Stella Maris Star of the Sea Artwork Regeneration Project	Radius Housing	79
Working in partnership		81
Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) Rapid Build Program	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	81
More than Mowers!	Alpha Housing	83
Public Private Partnership	Comhar Housing	84
A Partnership Approach to Nurturing the Next Generation of Housing Professionals	NI Housing Associations and NIHE	86
Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG): Mental health subgroup	Galway County Council Housing	87
House to Home	Habitat for Humanity Ireland	89
Safe Houses Offaly	Oaklee Housing	90
Housing First For Youth	Simon Community NI	91
Net zero in housing		93
Rural Led Energy Transition (RULET) Retrofit Pilot	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	93

In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

Housing team of the year 95

Housing Solutions Team - Aisling Devine Service Manager	Simon Community NI	95
Ark Housing	Ark Housing	96
Services Department	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	97
Development Team	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	99
Housing Services and Asset Management and Property services teams	Co-operative Housing Ireland	100
CLAN team (Community Links, Advice & Network)	Crosscare/ CLAN	101
Emma Geddis	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	102

Outstanding contribution to housing 105

Jim Dennison	Simon Community NI	105
Jim McShane	Ark Housing	106
Paul Leonard	Choice Housing Ireland	107
Chris Ellison	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	109
Erskine Holmes OBE	Grove Community Housing Association	110
Ciara Scollay	MACS Supporting Children and Young People	110
Elaine MacNeill	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	111

Young professional of the year 113

Kirsty McCauley	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	113
Kerryann McGouran	Ark Housing	114
Adam Gannon	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	116
Alisha Curtis	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	117
Eoghan Cregan	Co-operative Housing Ireland	118
Conor McManus	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	119
Matthew Hamilton	Radius Housing Association	121
Tiarnan Spain	Tuath Housing Association	122

In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

Best housing story**124**

Blair Anderson	Northern Ireland Youth Forum	124
Greater Shantallow Area Partnership & the Skeoge Community	Apex Housing Association	125
Sheena McAuley	Ark Housing	127
Gordon Robinson	Choice Housing Ireland	128
Lorraine Gorman	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	129
Michelle McGoldrick	Belmayne Community Group	131
Tony Reilly	MACS Supporting Children and Young People	132
Davy Faulkner and Alex Pelan	Simon Community NI	133

Housing hero**134**

Bronagh Magorrian	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	134
Teresa McCloskey	Apex Housing Association	135
Martin Murphy	Ark Housing	137
David Kortukohun	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	138
Mary Osakwe	Taylor Hill Ballbriggan Residents Association	139
Andrea Donnan	East Belfast Mission	140
Paul Stuart	Grove Community Housing Association	141
Kelan McClelland	Simon Community NI	142
James O'Neill	Tuath Housing Association/An Garrán Resident's Association	143

In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.

WINNERS

Best housing development - Ogle Street, Ark Housing

Excellence in communications - Inspiring Women in Leadership - Celebrating International Women's Day, Co-operative Housing Ireland

Excellence in tenant financial wellbeing - Improving lives with financial support - Welfare Advice Service, Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)

Excellence in health and wellbeing - Brain Health Village, Respond in partnership with Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI)

Excellence in housing innovation - Springville House 'Rightsize' Development, Tuath Housing Association in partnership with Cork City Council

More than bricks and mortar - Creative Community Art Project, Radius Housing Association in partnership with Belfast City Council SEUPB Peace IV Team

Promoting shared and inclusive communities - Bringing people together through Culture Calendar 2023, Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)

Working in partnership - Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) Rapid Build Program, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in partnership with Office of Public Works, Tuath Housing Association, John Sisk & Son, United Nations Migration Agency (IOM) - Ireland, Depaul Ireland

Net zero in housing - Rural Led Energy Transition (RULET) Retrofit Pilot, Northern Ireland Housing Executive in partnership with Ulster University

Housing team of the year - Housing Solutions Team - Aisling Devine Service Manager, Simon Community NI

Outstanding contribution to housing - Jim Dennison, Simon Community NI

Young professional of the year - Kirsty McCauley, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Best housing story - Blair Anderson, Northern Ireland Youth Forum

Housing hero - Bronagh Magorrian, Northern Ireland Housing Executive

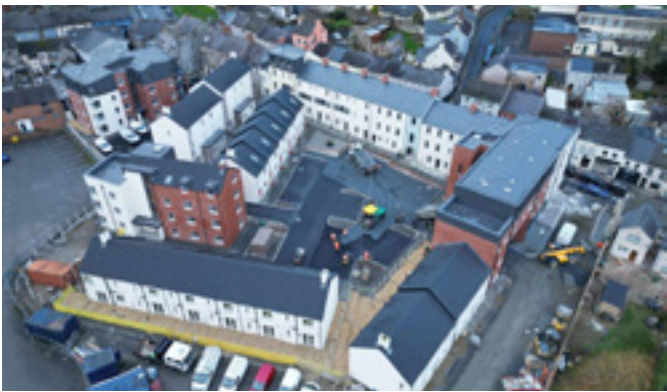
BEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Sponsored by:  +AddJust

This award recognises developments that provide desirable and sustainable places to live, improving the lives of people within the community. The well-designed development demonstrates creative approaches and excellence from concept to delivery.

WINNER - Ogle Street

Ark Housing



Statement of support

Nestled amidst the historic streets of Armagh, Ogle Street stands as a testament to the power of well-designed housing to revitalize communities and enhance the lives of its residents. This transformative development has breathed new life into a once-barren site, transforming it into a thriving hub of modern living.

Ogle Street's architectural brilliance lies in its ability to seamlessly blend contemporary design with the city's rich heritage. The stepped roofline, reminiscent of Armagh's traditional architecture, echoes the town's historical charm, while the use of local stone and careful colour coordination maintain a sense of harmony with the surrounding environment. This harmonious blend of old and new forms a cohesive and visually appealing development that respects the city's heritage while embracing modernity.

Beyond its architectural appeal, Ogle Street stands out for its commitment to providing high-quality homes that meet the diverse needs of the Armagh community. A mix of houses, maisonettes, and apartments caters to a wide range of family sizes and lifestyles, ensuring that everyone can find a home that suits their needs. Thoughtful design features, such as wheelchair-accessible units and gas central heating, further enhance the livability of these homes, making

them truly inclusive and adaptable to the needs of all residents.

Ark Housing's commitment to community engagement has been a key factor in Ogle Street's success. The organization's Communities team has actively involved Armagh residents in local initiatives, fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring that Ogle Street truly becomes part of the fabric of Armagh's vibrant community. The 'Bounce Back Armagh' networking event, organized by the Communities team, brought together over 30 community groups, demonstrating the power of collaboration in strengthening community bonds.

Ogle Street is also a key part of Ark Housing's ambitious Housing For All programme, which aims to make shared housing a lynchpin of the housing sector. This development is one of a number of Ark properties that promote a shared future, where people from all walks of life can live together in harmony and mutual respect. Through these initiatives, Ark Housing is creating a more inclusive and equitable housing landscape in Armagh and beyond.

Ogle Street's positive impact extends beyond its physical environment and engaged community. The development has played a significant role in Armagh's economic rejuvenation, providing employment opportunities for local architects, builders, and other professionals. The use of local materials further strengthens the development's connection to the community and contributes to the local economy.

Ogle Street stands as a beacon of modern living in the heart of Armagh. Its architectural brilliance, commitment to high-quality housing, and dedication to community engagement make it a worthy recipient of the CIH All Ireland Housing Awards' Best Housing Development category. As a model of sustainable and inclusive development, Ogle Street sets a new standard for housing in Armagh and all of NI, ensuring that residents can live fulfilling lives in vibrant and thriving communities.

Outcomes and achievements

For residents:

- Enhanced quality of life: Modern, comfortable homes with thoughtful design features cater to diverse needs and lifestyles, improving overall well-being.
- Strong sense of belonging: Community engagement initiatives foster a sense of connection and inclusion within the development and larger Armagh community.
- Accessibility and inclusivity: Wheelchair-accessible units and inclusive design elements ensure everyone can find a suitable and comfortable home.
- Contribution to economic well-being: Increased employment opportunities during construction and potential for attracting new businesses.

For the community:

- Revitalization of a previously neglected area: Transformation of a vacant site into a thriving hub enhances the overall appeal of Armagh.

- Preservation of local heritage: Architectural design blends seamlessly with historic context, maintaining Armagh's unique character.
- Strengthened community bonds: Community events and initiatives bring together residents and foster a sense of collaboration and solidarity.
- Model for inclusive housing: Shared housing initiatives promote diversity and mutual respect, contributing to a more equitable housing landscape.

For the environment:

- Sustainable design: Use of local materials and energy-efficient features minimize environmental impact.
- Improved access to green spaces: Potential for incorporating pocket parks or landscaping within the development.
- Reduced urban sprawl: Effective redevelopment maximizes existing space and minimizes the need for development on greenfield sites.

Setting new standards in housing for older people

Alpha Housing



Statement of support

In recent months, tenants have been settling into their beautiful apartments in Clarke House, Alpha Housing's newest development in Broughshane, Co. Antrim.

The stunning £2.1 Million scheme comprises 14 spacious apartments for independent older people. It was delivered in partnership between Alpha Housing and the Department for Communities (DfC), who provided £1.4m in funding through the Housing Executive's Social Housing Development Programme. Situated on Fir Park, just off the main arterial road, Clarke House is conveniently located close to local shops, amenities, and transport links. The scheme was designed by local firm Wheeler Architecture and built by Ballymena-based Martin & Hamilton.

Clarke House is a 'Category 1' development incorporating the 'HAPPI principles', the blueprint for high-quality housing for older people. This means the apartments are bigger, brighter, and finished to a higher specification than usual.

At 70m² (750ft²), the twelve two-bedroom apartments are significantly more spacious than standard 'Category 1' dwellings. This extra space is especially evident in the open plan kitchen-living areas and bedrooms. Natural light is maximised through almost all apartments being double or triple aspect and large windows and external French doors.

Interior designer Caroline Mawhinney helped guide the apartments' design, from the tasteful kitchens to the elegant wet rooms. Upscale tiling is just one feature that makes these homes distinctive. Unusually for social housing, the homes were carpeted for tenants moving in. Quality of life features include a separate cupboard for washing machines and tumble driers off hallways to minimise noise in the kitchen-living areas.

The interior designer also supported Alpha to furnish Clarke House's communal areas with vibrant colours, contemporary furniture, and local art. A cosy common room is a popular gathering place for tenants' weekly get-togethers.

All ground floor apartments benefit from private patios for outdoor socialising. Although a constrained site, there are two beautiful communal outdoor seating

areas for outdoor dining, featuring natural stone paving, and attractive planting, including a variety of climbers and small acer trees. Local character has been preserved through the restoration of an old dry-stone wall on the perimeter of the site.

Clarke House has been warmly welcomed by the local community, and demand for the new homes has been strong. Lexie Scott, Chair of Broughshane & District Community Association, said:

"We're absolutely thrilled to have this high-quality development, right in the heart of our village. It

provides much needed accommodation for some of our senior citizens and helps free up family homes."

Clarke House is helping enhance the reputation of NI's housing association sector. It has been featured in a prominent double-page spread in The Belfast Telegraph, and shortlisted for a Construction Employer's Federation Excellence Award.

Alpha Housing is taking inspiration from the success of Clarke House and is planning to build similar developments in Antrim, Carryduff and Omagh.

Outcomes and achievements

Clarke House is loved by its new residents.

Tenant Laverne Campbell says:

"All the residents love our new apartments which are bright, spacious and located in the heart of Broughshane village. Over the last year we've developed a strong community spirit and meet up weekly for a catch-up in the common room. The outside space is also ideal for BBQs and other gatherings in the summer months. I'm certainly glad to have made the move to Clarke House."

Another resident, Betty Shaw, concurs:

"I am highly delighted with my new apartment. I was brought up in the area and love the village of

Broughshane and its people who are very friendly. The apartments are so beautifully finished, much bigger than I thought they would be. I am so happy this is my new home."

When opening the development, former Irish rugby international David Humphreys MBE said:

"I'm delighted to help open Clarke House. Having spent my childhood here, Broughshane is a place that's close to my heart. Clarke House provides great independent living in a wonderful location. Having been shown some of the lovely apartments by the residents, I think they are going to hugely enjoy their new homes."

Lanestown View, Donabate

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Circle VHA is proud to submit Lanestown View, its first mixed-tenure housing development in Donabate, as a contender for the Best Housing Development Award. This exceptional project, a collaborative effort between Circle VHA and Cairn Homes, has redefined the landscape of affordable housing, seamlessly blending social and cost rental homes to create a vibrant and inclusive community.

Lanestown View's architectural brilliance lies in its ability to accommodate diverse housing needs whilst connecting the existing Donabate village with

the recently completed Donabate distributor road. Development features a carefully curated mix of 1-4 bedroom properties, in a variety of house types, catering to a wide range of household structures and living styles. These beautifully designed homes boast contemporary amenities and modern finishes, ensuring a comfortable living experience for all residents.

Meeting the Needs of the Local Community

Lanestown View stands as a testament to Circle VHA's commitment to addressing the pressing housing crisis within the Dublin area. The development's mixed-tenure model, with 29 cost rental and 43 social homes, has significantly expanded the availability of affordable housing options, alleviating the burden on the local market. This strategic approach has ensured that Lanestown View is not just a housing project; it is a catalyst for community growth and social cohesion.

A Sense of Place and Cohesion with the Surrounding Area

Lanestown View seamlessly integrates into the Donabate landscape, demonstrating a deep understanding of the area's character and architectural heritage. The development's design aligns with the surrounding natural environment, incorporating greenery and landscaping elements to create a

tranquil and inviting atmosphere. The use of natural materials and traditional brickwork further enhances the connection to the local aesthetic, fostering a sense of place and belonging among residents.

Imagination in Design and Construction

Beyond its commitment to social responsibility and community integration, Lanestown View stands out for its imaginative and innovative design. The development's layout and architectural features foster a sense of community and interaction, with open spaces, shared amenities, and pedestrian-friendly streets encouraging social engagement among residents. The use of sustainable building practices, such as Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and energy-efficient appliances, further demonstrates Circle VHA's dedication to environmental responsibility.

A Model for Inclusive and Sustainable Housing

Lanestown View exemplifies Circle VHA's unwavering commitment to providing high-quality, affordable

housing that not only meets the needs of the local community but also contributes to a sustainable and inclusive society. By blending social and cost rental homes, the development has created a thriving community where individuals from diverse backgrounds can live together. The project's innovative design, coupled with its commitment to sustainability, sets a new benchmark for future housing initiatives, paving the way for a more equitable and environmentally conscious society.

Circle VHA is confident that Lanestown View is a worthy recipient of the Best Housing Development Award. This project has not only addressed a critical need for social and affordable housing in Donabate but has also demonstrated the power of mixed-tenure models to create inclusive and sustainable communities. We encourage the judges to consider Lanestown View as an exemplar of innovative and responsible housing development, deserving of recognition for its transformative impact on the lives of its residents and the Donabate community as a whole.

Outcomes and achievements

Lanestown View, a groundbreaking housing development by Circle VHA in Donabate, Ireland, has set a new standard for affordable and sustainable housing. This mixed-tenure project, a collaboration with Cairn Homes, has successfully addressed the housing needs of the community by offering a mix of social and cost rental homes, catering to diverse household structures, and living styles. w

The development's innovative design, blending seamlessly with the surrounding environment, has fostered a sense of community and place, while its commitment to sustainability has set a benchmark for future housing initiatives. With its transformative impact on the lives of residents and the wider community, Lanestown View stands as a model for inclusive and sustainable living, earning its place as a contender for the Best Housing Development Award

Belfast's Brookfield Mill has a new lease of life

Clanmil Housing Association



Statement of support

Preserving the unique character of a Belfast landmark while providing modern new homes is no mean feat, but Clanmil Housing achieved that at Brookfield Mill, Belfast.

The development on the city's Crumlin Road comprises 77 apartments, including 55 two-bedroom apartments; 3 two-bedroom duplex homes and 19 three-bedroom duplex homes. It was completed in December 2022 at a cost of £13.1million and has provided homes for c.270 people in an area of high housing need.

The innovative design focused on revitalising the building to provide safe, secure and attractive homes whilst preserving its character and being sympathetic to the surrounding residential area.

Clanmil worked in partnership with Kerr Property Holdings Ltd as the developer and their contractor EHA, to complete this "design and build" scheme.

The four-storey former linen factory, built in 1850, was one of the biggest mills of its kind in Belfast. In 1977 it was taken into the ownership of the Flax Trust and over the next few years, was used as small business incubator units, office space and an education centre. It then lay derelict for almost 30 years before Clanmil began work in 2019.

Before starting the refurbishment, Clanmil carried out extensive community consultation. People living in the area, along with community and political representatives, were invited to provide input and feedback on the proposals.

Local people have a lot of affection for the building, and we were mindful of their hopes that we would preserve its essential character.

It was also important for residents to discuss long-term safety and security, as Brookfield Mill is located in what has historically been a 'flashpoint' area, where tensions between communities can run high. Security gates in the adjacent Flax Street, had remained closed for many years, separating communities and preventing access to the Crumlin Road.

Clanmil engaged with local community group Twaddell, Ardoyne, Shankill Communities in Transit (TASCIT) to seek their views on the development and discuss any concerns. We developed a positive working relationship with the group and continue to engage with them.

Despite Brookfield Mill not being listed, we believed that retaining the building was the right thing to do, and we wanted to repurpose this part of north Belfast's history for modern use.

The design involved a full renovation and conversion of the building to provide contemporary homes, with a modern design intervention to the roof replacing the original pitched roofs, enhancing the nearby landmark buildings which are so significant to the local area.

The design team faced a challenge in converting the building, with its vast open plan internal spaces, into modern homes. A creative approach led to a design where the building was separated into five cores, each providing duplex townhouses on the ground and first floors, with apartments above.

Each core has its own access, reducing the number of homes accessed through one entrance. This facilitates different lifestyles (singles and families) in the same area and reduces the likelihood of anti-social behaviour, which can be an issue in large-scale apartment buildings.

Structural interventions (including large openings for stairs and lifts) were carefully considered to ensure maximum retention of the historic building fabric, while complying with contemporary safety regulations. Some of the internal features of the building were retained, including an old staircase in the corner block, as a visual reminder of the original building.

Brookfield Mill has been rejuvenated to provide modern, energy-efficient and comfortable homes, without losing its distinctive character. The residents are thriving and there is a strong sense of community in and around the development. One resident described her home as "perfect" and added "I wouldn't change a thing."

Outcomes and achievements

There are currently c.3,000 applicants on the social housing waiting list for north Belfast, including c. 2,300 in housing stress. The new homes at Brookfield Mill provided homes for almost 270 people, including families and single people.

To maximise energy efficiency, gas heating was installed in each home, with high efficiency combination gas boilers certified for 10 years. Most homes have achieved an EPC rating of B (energy performance), an excellent standard for a building originally built in the 1800s, thanks to the internal insulation and lining of the original external walls.

Brookfield Mill has achieved Secured by Design (SBD)

Gold Certification. SBD is a police initiative aimed at improving the security of buildings, to provide safe places to live.

All homes are constructed to Lifetime Homes Standards, ensuring they can be adapted if people's accessibility needs change over time.

Following intensive community engagement led by Clanmil, the area is more peaceful and welcoming, and the security gates that had separated communities and cut off access to a busy thoroughfare have been reopened, bringing a new lease of life to the neighbourhood.

208 A-Rated Social Rented Homes at Kilruddery Glen, Bray

Lead organisation: Co-operative Housing Ireland

Partner organisations: Lioncor Developments, and Wicklow County Council



Statement of support

Kilruddery Glen provides 208 new homes to individuals and families from the Wicklow County Council social housing waiting list and answers a significant housing need for the area. The estate offers a variety of housing typologies from one-bedroom apartments to larger semi-detached four-bedroom houses with stunning views towards the Wicklow mountains.

It is the largest delivery of social-rented housing by an Approved Housing Body in Wicklow, equivalent to the annual social housing delivery of a county the size of Wicklow. It is the biggest estate in CHI's ownership in the organisation's 50-year history providing homes.

Quality-of-Life

The estate provides for range of needs. Residents enjoy brand new A-rated homes and have a neighbourhood centre on their doorstep. There is sufficient off-street parking and easy access to sustainable travel means and public transport services around the area and into Dublin City Centre as well

as immediate access to local amenities as it is located near a commercial centre and a main artery for Bray and Co. Wicklow.

The estate has a centrally-located public open space which accommodates the green link and a dedicated pedestrian and cycle route through the development to the neighbouring estate. The open space also includes a playground, attractive plantings and seating spaces for residents, all buffered from the Southern Cross Road by the commercial frontage and bookended by residential apartments buildings to the South.

All entrance doors, balconies and communal areas within the development are fully accessible from a mobility perspective to ensure that the widest range of tenant needs can be accommodated. Safety and security were built into the design and construction of these homes and each of the A-rated homes have a very low carbon footprint offering a comfortable and economical 'home for life' for tenants.

The quality and mix of residential accommodation along with the availability of attractive green space and good linkages into the neighbouring community through a greenway along with the developments vicinity to local services makes this a standout project for Wicklow.

Innovation in Design

Kilruddery Glen's design demonstrates creative approaches throughout. Various housing types have been clustered around the site, to create a series of small neighbourhoods designed to promote community among the member tenants. The homes are designed to maximise daylight throughout the year and views of the mountains as well as provide safety and security.

The site includes:

- 160, 1 & 2-bed apartments located in four, five-storey apartment blocks aligned in a north / south direction to maximize daylight penetration while providing views of the mountains to the south and Bray Head to the east. A large communal tenant amenity space is located on a first-floor deck which provides excellent views to the south and sunlight access.
- 30, 3 & 4-bed, two-storey homes are arranged along the northern boundary of the site providing an edge to the public open space / green link route and back gardens to abut the back walls of the gardens of the existing dwellings on Mountainview drive. The homes comprise eight different terraced and semi-detached unit types. Corner units have dual-fronted elevations.
- 18, 1& 2 bed, three-storey duplex units are split into two blocks and stepped to follow the contours of the site. The homes have own-door access and the location of multiple entrances provides maximum passive surveillance and supervision of the surrounding streets, spaces and the green route parkland.

Outcomes and achievements

- Shortlisted: Public – Residential / Housing Project of the Year, Irish Building & Design Awards
- Nov 2023 launch attended by Ministers O'Brien, Harris and Donnelly.
- CHI Member tenants can be involved at every level within the organisation with concrete input into running their communities
- Having a safe / secure home opens the door to important opportunities such as caring for families, seeking / retaining employment, & accessing education.
- 208 sustainable homes to meet local demand is a result of excellent collaboration with Wicklow County Council and Lioncor Developments

"We have a home for life, we're not isolated, we're part of something and we're emotionally invested in making it a happy and thriving community now and in the future." Member Tenant, Kasha Byrne

"Developments like this help us to achieve the quality of housing that we hope for ... and will contribute to the economic and social diversity of Bray and County Wicklow by creating both a more stable and more vibrant community," Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy,

"It's fantastic that we're going to have 208 families with safe and secure homes for life here in Wicklow," Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD

New Dolphin Park

Fold Housing



Statement of support

New Dolphin Park Housing scheme is tailored for older individuals and required meticulous attention to detail and a deep understanding of older people's unique needs. Accessibility was paramount, with features such as handrails and wide doorways to accommodate mobility aids. The layout prioritized the safety and the ease of navigation, incorporating well-lit hallways and non-slip flooring in addition communal spaces were designed to foster a sense of community, offering areas for socialization, group activities and relaxation. Private living spaces are comfortable and adaptable with consideration for future mobility. thoughtful landscaping and outdoor areas provide opportunities for recreation and relaxation, contributing to a high quality of life for the residents.

The housing development features a variety of accommodation options, including a wheelchair-accessible units. Each residence is designed with universal design principles, ensuring that the living spaces are adaptable to the changing needs of older individuals, promoting both aging in place and independent living.

Landscaping around the housing units is carefully planned, incorporating green spaces, walking paths, and communal gardens. These outdoor areas provide opportunities for relaxation, exercise, and social interaction, contributing to the overall well-being of residents. Accessibility features, such as ramps and handrails, are seamlessly integrated to facilitate easy navigation within the development.

To address the diverse needs of older individuals, the housing development includes an on-site Community Café. This café allows our tenants access to health home cooked meals and also allows our tenant engagement officer to offer a space to provide activities tailored to the aging population.

Social connectivity is fostered through communal spaces within the housing development. A central café and community garden serves as a gathering point for residents to engage in activities, events, and socialize with their neighbours. Regularly organized community events, such as game nights, book clubs, and cultural activities, create a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere.

Safety is a top priority, and the housing development employs advanced security measures, including surveillance systems, well-lit pathways, and a secure entrance. Emergency response systems are integrated into each residence to provide immediate assistance if needed, offering peace of mind to both residents and their families. Collaborations with local healthcare providers ensure that residents have access to medical care and wellness resources within the convenience of their community.

Incorporating technology is vital for the convenience of older residents. Smart home features, including voice-activated controls, remote monitoring, and emergency response systems, enhance the safety and autonomy of residents. Additionally, the housing development could provide technology training programs to empower older individuals to navigate the digital landscape.

Transportation accessibility is a key consideration, with the housing development situated near public transit options and incorporating designated parking spaces. A short trip to nearby amenities ensures that residents have convenient access to recreational activities and social events.

Environmental sustainability is integrated into the housing development, with energy-efficient building designs, solar panels, and eco-friendly landscaping practices. This commitment to sustainability aligns with the broader community's values and promotes a healthier living environment.

Community engagement is actively encouraged, with resident-led committees contributing to decision-making processes and shaping the overall community experience. This collaborative approach ensures that the housing development reflects the desires and preferences of its older residents, creating a sense of belonging and empowerment.

In conclusion, the envisioned housing development near the new dolphin park in Rialto, Dublin 8 is designed to cater specifically to the needs of older individuals. By prioritizing accessibility, safety, social connectivity, technology integration, environmental sustainability, and community engagement, this housing project becomes a model for age-friendly living, enhancing the overall well-being and happiness of its residents.

Outcomes and achievements

The new dolphin-themed housing development in Rialto, Dublin 8 for older persons has yielded remarkable outcomes and achievements since its inception. Residents now experience an enhanced quality of life, benefit from the thoughtfully designed living spaces and communal areas. The focus on accessibility has enabled aging in place, fostering a sense of independence among the older population.

The on-site space has become a hub for health and social activities, offering tailored programs that contribute to the physical and mental well-being of residents. Collaborations with healthcare providers ensure that medical needs are met conveniently within the community.

Social connectivity has flourished, with communal spaces and organized events creating a vibrant

community spirit. Residents actively participate in various clubs, activities, and cultural events, forging meaningful connections with their neighbours. The housing development has become a model for inclusivity, promoting a sense of belonging and empowerment among its older residents.

Furthermore, the integration of technology has not only enhanced safety but also provided residents with tools to navigate the digital landscape, fostering a sense of modernity and adaptability. The environmentally sustainable practices employed in the development align with the community's values, contributing to a healthier and eco-conscious living environment. Overall, the outcomes reflect a thriving and fulfilled community where older individuals enjoy a harmonious blend of comfort, safety, and social engagement.

Modern city living at Old City Crescent, Londonderry

Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)



Statement of support

Habinteg's Old City Crescent development exemplifies the very highest standards in social housing. Situated between the Letterkenny Road and Foyle Riverside Park, it neighbours Habinteg's established 60-unit Old City Court development and a popular children's playpark. Old City Crescent is a modern, stylish development of 24 dwellings, which has added to the vitality of this area.

Habinteg acquired the vacant brownfield site in May 2018, having recognised the potential for high-quality housing. The Association acknowledged the opportunity to prioritise social housing development in the vibrant Brandywell community, with the aim of enriching and harmonising with the existing neighbourhood.

With an established need for substantial new housing in the area and an existing waiting list for suitable properties, Habinteg collaborated with key stakeholders including the Northern Ireland Housing

Executive (NIHE) to identify a suitable mix of families, wheelchair users and individuals over 55 who would benefit from the location.

Habinteg, in close partnership with JNP Architects, developed an exciting proposal for the site and planning was received in February 2020. A striking new apartment block of 3 storeys was set to the front of the site complementing existing neighbouring apartments. The exterior comprises buff brick, with vertical feature panels, feature corner windows and a parapet to the flat roof. Twelve houses, including a wheelchair accessible house, were built as a crescent to the rear in red brick with pitched dark grey tiled roofs.

Consultation with neighbouring residents and the local community was positive and reinforced the Association's strongly held belief that the development presented a positive story for the Brandywell. Considering the feedback from the community and from the Association's development, housing and maintenance teams, Habinteg further refined the scheme proposal and contractors Kevin Watson Construction commenced the build in March 2021. The development was completed in July 2023 at a contract cost of £3.1million. Funding of £2.1million was provided through Habinteg's Disposal Proceeds Fund and by NIHE, delivered through the Department for Communities.

With the site located close to local amenities, shops, schools and churches and well served by local transport routes, Habinteg saw that the development, with its 92 residents, would increase footfall in the area and provide great community interaction with a mix of families, older persons and people with special needs, supported by the existing Community Assistant.

The attractive and sympathetically designed buildings comprise twelve three-person two-bedroom apartments for over 55s, 9 five-person three-bedroom houses, 2 three-person two-bedroom houses and 1 five person three-bedroom wheelchair house. The design combines features of modern styling along with a sensitive enhancement of the appearance of the surrounding area.

Each property conforms to Lifetime Homes and Secure by Design requirements with 'fabric first' energy measures. The building construction is of brick and timber frame, aluminium window and door frames, quality thermal and sound insulation, and appropriate services.

Community Involvement projects were undertaken

throughout the construction process and are ongoing. High levels of satisfaction were noted among tenants and the community on completion.

"When we were offered a home from Habinteg we did not expect the gift we received! A home built to our family's needs, finished to a very high standard, spacious and warm. There is a lovely community spirit in 'The Crescent' and we truly love it." (Tenant)

"We are delighted with this high-quality development providing much needed accommodation in this area. Feedback from our residents is very positive regarding the high quality and space provided in their homes. Residents advise that they are enjoying the close proximity to local amenities and the easy access to the river and city." (Homes and Communities Team).

Outcomes and achievements

Old City Crescent makes an innovative and ongoing contribution to the Brandywell area with its attractive design and sustainability approach. It is a tasteful and positive addition to the environment and benefit to the local community, providing much needed quality housing.

Outcomes include:

- Sensitively developing a vacant brownfield site
- Quality new housing for 92 persons /24 households
- Innovative design to challenge social housing stereotype
- Promoting sustainable living
- Appealing features including dark coloured window frames, buff & red brick walls, dark grey tiles
- Quality dwelling layouts and specifications

- Attractive streetscape
- Working with MLAs and Councillors
- Substantial investment of £5.5m
- Very satisfied tenants and local community
- Further community involvement plans together with new tenants and local community

"It's the sum of the parts that make the whole". In essence, adding these dwellings at Old City Crescent goes far to embracing Habinteg's existing developments next door, and others in the wider City of Derry, adding to the whole excitement of living in the vibrant community fostered by the Association.

Following the success of this development, Habinteg is continuing developments at the Waterside area with 73 apartments beside Station View and 21 apartments at Spencer Road, an investment in this area of over £21million.

Creevagh Heights & Sean Dolan's GAA club house

Radius Housing



Statement of support

The Creggan area of Derry/Londonderry has significant social housing need, but like many urban areas has a lack of suitable land for development of new affordable homes. The area is a close-knit community, and the local GAA Club, Sean Dolan's is a hub for many families not just for sport and wellbeing but also to connect and meet neighbours and friends.

As a social housing developer, Radius regularly faces challenges finding suitable, viable sites which will allow a substantive high quality housing project. We also want to deliver new housing developments which successfully integrate with the surrounding area and deliver positive economic and social impact locally, both in the short and long term.

For Sean Dolan's the cost and means of expanding and upgrading their facilities was beyond them as an amateur sports organisation. However, the need for the facility remained strong, as it would allow them to hold events and training throughout the year and help achieve ambitions to expand their club providing more opportunities for young people and especially girls.

Radius began collaborating with Sean Dolan's in 2018 to find a solution to deliver new housing, create new facilities for the club and the wider community as well as improving the built environment by utilising waste, derelict land. This entailed Radius working with Derry City & Strabane District Council, Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as well as Derry, Ulster and all Ireland GAA.

As a leading housing developer, Radius brought experience in major construction projects and finding solutions on difficult sites, as well as design expertise which can integrate communities through development. Radius worked closely with Sean Dolan's and other partners to ensure that the community was fully appraised of the proposal, had the opportunity to engage and any solution was reflective of the community's needs and ambitions.

Radius developed a project proposal for a significant housing scheme on adjacent land as well as a state-of-the-art sports and community facility on the Sean Dolan's site and then with other statutory partners worked through the land acquisition, financial modelling and planning application.

Project investment was more than £20million in the Creggan area, with the Department of Communities providing £10.7m, £9.9m from Radius for the new homes, and Derry City & Strabane District Council reinvesting £600,000 for the sports facilities.

In January 2021, planning permission was granted for 119 new social homes, extension and refurbishment of the existing club house and provision of a new multi-use community facility. Construction commenced in Spring 2021, led by PK McKaigue & Sons. This was a particularly challenging time given Covid was still prevalent and construction cost was rising rapidly.

The new facilities at Sean Dolan's included an extension of the clubhouse pavilion, a new indoor arena with 3G sports surface not just for GAA but also other sports such as rugby and football, a multi-purpose room for the sports club and community, training space, gym room and meeting rooms, as well as space for dance classes and social events.

The 119 new homes are a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses, including wheelchair accessible homes, as well as 1 and 2 bedroom apartments, and apartments for the active elderly. Careful consideration was given to design and use of materials to ensure the homes were modern, innovatively designed and to high energy efficiency standards. The design also included large areas of open space to integrate sports and housing across the whole site and adjoining developments. A fully accessible play park has also been developed which is being adopted by the council as a civic area for the whole community.

Outcomes and achievements

In March 2023, the first phase of new homes was completed alongside the new club house and sports facilities. This was marked with a special event with First Minister Elect, Michelle O'Neill MLA, the Mayor of Derry City & Strabane, Cllr Patricia Logue and President of the Ulster Council, Ciarán McLaughlin in July 2023. The high standard of finish in the new homes and the facilities was commended by the guests.

For both Radius and Sean Dolan's, this project allowed a unique partnership approach which would go beyond the construction of houses or a sports facility. It delivered a high quality, integrated community

project. The new facilities are not just for the club, but for the wider community to use. The facility is well used with numerous social enterprise use ensuing the new and existing community is accessing more services and facilities improving the lives of all.

The new houses, which can connect directly to the sports facilities via a walkway, will be home to more than 119 families, where children will be able to grow up with high quality sports facilities on their doorstep. The new homes will hopefully allow the club to grow membership, and over time meet their ambition to improve their standing as a GAA club in the city and county.

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS

Sponsored by: **resource**
Sustainable Creativity

In challenging times, being there for your community is exceptionally important. This award recognises landlords whose communication with their tenants and residents has been outstanding over the past year, keeping them fully informed and supported. Nominations for this award could be for a single project or refer to your general organisational approach to communication.

WINNER - Inspiring Women in Leadership - Celebrating International Women's Day

Co-operative Housing Ireland



Statement of support

'Women in Leadership' was a collaboration between the CHI Community Engagement and Communications teams to mark International Women's Day on 8th March 2023 and celebrate strong women leaders in CHI communities, the organisation, and likeminded organisations in Ireland. The International Women's Day campaign ran during March and comprised a range of events and communications designed to reach all stakeholders, including CHI colleagues, Member tenants, government, local authorities and similar third-sector organisations in Ireland. This included three events, an in-person yoga class in Limerick, where CHI has over 350 homes, an online, free, 'Chair Yoga' event open to all, and an

in-person 'Inspiring Women in Leadership' forum for stakeholders. There were also coffee mornings held in CHI offices across the country with funds raised donated to Women's Aid, UNICEF and Women's Aid.

Outputs from the events included photographs, videos, social media updates, follow up emails to attendees and stakeholders, a live radio broadcast of the forum on Near FM, and articles on our website. These were in addition to a female-focused series of 'Staff in the Spotlight' blogs on CHI colleagues and their roles in the organisation. All campaign materials had a deliberate look and feel, with elements designed and drawn by colleagues on the Community Engagement and Communications Team alike.

The core element of the campaign, and key event, was an 'Inspiring Women in Leadership' forum held in Wood Quay, Dublin, on 8th March. The forum featured two panel discussions exploring different aspects of what it means to be a leader and was MC'd by Sabrina Ryan from Near FM 90.3, who also broadcasted the event. All CHI Member tenants, colleagues and stakeholders were invited to attend in person or online. The first panel focused on Inspiring CHI leaders and comprised CHI Member tenants who have contributed significantly to their communities, been active Members of the CHI board, or grown their own businesses. Joining the discussion were CHI Member tenants Mamy Nzema Nkoy, Caoimhe McCarthy and Marianne Ward-O'Leary Maughan. CHI Member Mamy Nzema Nkoy shared her experiences

of supporting people in education, academia, and finding her feet as a leader in her community. Member Caoimhe McCarthy discussed the steps she took when setting up family-run business, Sitto Z, who make their own signature artisan chilli sauces, dry rubs and juices. CHI Member and Board Member Marianne Ward-O'Leary Maughan joined the discussion to talk about the importance of encouraging women to take on leadership roles. The discussion focused on the women's careers, activism, the inspiring women in their lives and their advice for others. Speaking on the importance of women's leadership, Marianne Ward-O'Leary Maughan said,

"It's very important that women have the support within their community to go forward, because sometimes she may not think she has the strength to be stronger, but with a little bit of encouragement, it's amazing what we can do."

The second panel was themed 'Supporting Women in Leadership'. The panel featured activists with a

wide area of expertise working in areas such as social integration, leadership development, sustainability, social entrepreneurship, neurodiversity, and workers' rights. They imparted their advice and wisdom on attendees emphasising the importance of encouraging other women, using social enterprise to create community and inclusion, and how women-centred employment policies are crucial in helping women build and sustain their careers.

The event was livestreamed so that CHI colleagues, staff and stakeholders who could not attend in person were able to link in. The event was closed with a few inspirational words from Christine Meehan, CHI Community Engagement Specialist, who was responsible for the event and its success, working in partnership with CHI Communications Officer, Kate Morgan. This was followed by a light lunch with opportunity to network and continue the discussion. CHI was delighted to have also partnered with Near FM to broadcast this event to people in the greater Dublin area.

Outcomes and achievements

There was a great turnout of attendees at the 'Inspiring Women Leaders' forum, over 50 people attended online and in person, the majority of whom were peers from the panellists or organisers' networks. Learning from the event showed that although its original aim was to appeal to and reach CHI Member tenants, there was more appeal to stakeholders including likeminded third sector organisations. However, the event fulfilled key aims of the broader work of CHI's Community Engagement Team, which was to showcase the incredible women leaders in the CHI Member tenant community and provide a platform for Member tenant voices.

CHI's Community Engagement Team gathered feedback from attendees on the event. Of those surveyed who attended in person and online, 100% said they were very likely to recommend the event to

a friend. Some of the highlights listed by attendees were 'interesting panellists with a variety of experience to share', 'the diversity of the panels', 'The celebratory atmosphere, recognition of women's strength and learning'. One attendee noted, 'I think the first panel was a beautiful example of grassroots movements. The genuine compassion of the panellists for their community was inspiring. They spoke from a very authentic place which I felt was empowering and made one feel like change was accessible'.

Ultimately, CHI's International Women's Day showed the organisation's internal teams' commitment to diversity and equity, and their drive to facilitate knowledge sharing among several groups of inspiring women.

Comms Forum

Lead organisation: NIFHA

Partner organisations: Abbeyfield & Wesley, Alpha, Apex, Ark, Choice, Clanmil, Co-Ownership, Craigowen, Connswater, Coventer, Grove, Habinteg, NB Housing, Newington, NIFHA, Radius, Rural Housing, St Matthew's, Triangle and Woodvale & Shankill



Statement of support

The NIFHA Comms Forum brings together Communications Staff from the following organisations, Abbeyfield & Wesley, Alpha, Apex, Ark, Choice, Clanmil, Co-Ownership, Craigowen, Connswater, Coventer, Grove, Habinteg, NB Housing, Newington, NIFHA, Radius, Rural Housing, St Matthew's, Triangle and Woodvale & Shankill.

The purpose of the Forum is to encourage the development and delivery of collaborative communications campaigns with Forum members and external stakeholders, aimed at highlighting the positive work taking place within the social housing sector as well as providing informative campaigns that are beneficial for tenants living within social housing schemes.

The NIFHA Comms Forum recognises the benefits of cross organisational collaboration in terms of increased impact and maximum exposure of key messages. In terms of effective planning and implementation of campaigns, Forum members meet on a monthly basis to identify themes for each communication campaign, working collectively to identify key issues impacting social housing tenants, and working alongside M W Advocates (a Marketing and PR organisation) to effectively plan and implement joint campaigns to address each area identified.

During 2023 the Forum worked collectively to plan, strategize and implement the following social media campaigns:

Rural Homes Week Campaign- The purpose of #RuralHomesNI23 campaign was to encourage Forum members to showcase the range of projects,

community outreach and staff initiatives they deliver. The campaign covered the construction of much needed social homes, but also the work associations do in creating rural communities that enhance the social, economic, and professional well-being of those who choose to live there. Together Forum members identify and share content for the campaign during a designated week, helping generate maximum exposure to key messages.

Good Relations Week Campaign- The #HA4GRW23 campaign was designed to help our members engage and increase visibility during Good Relations Week. The purpose was to ensure good relations work of our members was recognised, and to promote some of the events and initiatives happening during this week, as well as some of the projects they have completed in the past to tackle racism, sectarianism, and inequality. Good Relations Week centred on the idea of togetherness, reinforcing the message that together we can all make a difference and continue to encourage peacebuilding and cultural diversity. We used #HA4GRW23 as a way to track our collective activity during the week and engage with each other's content.

Shining Stars Campaign- Forum members worked together to plan and implement a social media campaign celebrating the very best of those working in the social housing sector. The Shining Stars Campaign aimed to recognise individuals from housing associations across Northern Ireland and the work they do to support tenants and ensure their organisations deliver in local communities. Each housing association was able to nominate Shining Stars, with a citation on why they stand out and go the extra mile. The campaign goal was to raise awareness of the work the social housing sector undertakes, using real life examples to personalise and illustrate the impact of the sector. The campaign utilised the hashtag #NIFHASHiningStars, and each Shining Star had a dedicated social media card which was posted by NIFHA, with members and individuals encouraged to share.

Feedback from Forum members:

"Building a strong network of comms colleagues across the sector for advice, support and to strengthen our sector's voice.

"Campaigns work well to help promote the sector and our impact."

"Hearing each month, the campaigns and ideas that other housing associations are doing is really helpful, to hear new points of view. Also beneficial during campaigns when the housing associations come together and share content. Allows us to reach new audiences and increase our reach."

Outcomes and achievements

- Rural Homes Week saw over 23 tweets across the campaign, with 294 likes and a total of 29,455 tweet impressions. Twitter content alone received 1,168 engagements, this led to a higher level of traffic visiting NIFHA's website and an increased awareness of the positive impact social housing has on rural communities.
- Good Relations Week Campaign outcomes: The Forum created graphics for each organisation, we produced a design template which meant members could input their information directly and create and share content they developed. In total the hashtag was used across 38 posts, with content receiving 400 likes and 378 engagements. Content shared led to a total impressions figure of 18,425.
- Shining Stars Campaign: Housing Associations submitted short briefs and photos on their shining stars.

The delivery of the campaign took place over three days in the lead up to Christmas. This was a shorter campaign than normal, however it still performed successfully with a strong reach and good engagement from Housing Associations, staff and other sector related stakeholders. The campaign saw a total of 196 tweets, with total impressions sitting at 35,801 and a reach figure of 84,460. Posts received 549 likes and 146 retweets.

EXCELLENCE IN TENANT FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Sponsored by: **Prepay
Power**

The award seeks to recognise housing teams and organisations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment and innovation in providing support to tenants facing the challenges of the rising cost of living and promoting their financial resilience.

WINNER - Improving Lives with Financial Support - Welfare Advice Service

**Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association
(Ulster)**



Statement of support

Habinteg's Welfare Advice Service (WAS) offers a customised service to tenants, providing free financial advice, guidance, information, and advocacy on all aspects of benefit entitlement. The aim of the service is to empower tenants to maximise their financial wellbeing, nurture financial resilience and sustain tenancies.

Against a backdrop of a cost of living crisis, the WAS tailored approach to meeting each individual's needs is critical. As social housing tenants, Habinteg tenants and their households are more likely to be living with lower incomes or reliant on welfare benefits. Evidence shows these financial situations can lead to deprivation

and financial exclusion and the WAS can provide a lifeline to those struggling and help to mitigate the financial hardship brought about by such real issues as:

- Decrease in weekly earnings in Northern Ireland
- Erosion of value of welfare benefits - worth 7.5% less in real terms now than they were in 2009 largely due to the multi-year benefits freeze
- Food insecurity
- Rising debt
- Poor health outcomes - the link between deprivation and poor health outcomes - both physical and mental health well-being - is well known
- Fuel poverty - low household incomes, high energy costs and energy inefficient homes cause fuel poverty

Habinteg helps from the first engagement with a prospective tenant and continues resolutely throughout the lifetime of a tenancy. All tenants are offered availability of this essential service - through home visits, venues of their choice, community venues or over the phone - to assess their individual needs. Habinteg host pre-tenancy workshops and provide Welfare Advice surgeries in the Association's community hubs.

Discussions are held with tenants at key points of their tenancy journey, highlighting the WAS and its role in maximising income for the tenant and their household, alleviating financial concerns. This information is reinforced in all Habinteg written communications regarding rent accounts. The WAS is a particularly significant resource for new tenants, especially those setting up home for the first time, which can be a financially overwhelming experience.

The WAS team complete benefit checks to ensure tenants are receiving their full benefit entitlement. The Service aim is to help each tenant to optimise their income by ensuring they have applied for all available benefits, grants and charitable assistance. The WAS offer support with Universal Credit - guiding individuals through the process, raising awareness of potential consequences and sanctions, advising how to challenge decisions and providing assistance to challenge complex benefit decisions, mandatory reconsiderations, and overpayments.

The provision of such an essential support services impact on tenants' financial stability and overall well-being is highlighted by one Habinteg tenant who had invaluable support from her Welfare Advice Officer (WAO):

"After some sad life changing events I found myself homeless, abusing alcohol with no friends or family. When I first met the WAO I had just been released from rehab with no support, financially or emotionally. I was suicidal, lonely and in the depths of despair. At this time the WAO ensured I had food, gas and electric while waiting for income support. She contacted floating support and various charities for additional support and was able to help me complete forms and get my Universal Credit back. Months later when my physical health deteriorated, the WAO helped me again resulting in PIP increasing my income. I have been 'dry' now for over 12 months and I can honestly say without the support of the WAO and floating support, I may not be here today. The WAO still supports and guides me when required with kindness, care and understanding, I will always be so grateful."

Outcomes and achievements

The Welfare Advice Service has proven to be invaluable to Habinteg tenants and engagement with the service has increased by 25% over the last 12 months. With a housing stock of just over 2,200 units, in the last financial year the service:

- Secured £417,867 in total financial gain for tenants
- Identified £74,816 in financial gain directly into tenant's pockets
- Provided benefit advice to 815 cases, 80% of which have poor health
- 81% of new tenants have availed of pre tenancy welfare advice
- 80 tenants received advice on debt/arrears
- Referred 61 tenants to partners for specialist advice such as employment advice
- Produced regular Advice briefings to Habinteg team providing up-to-date information and advice on Welfare Benefits

Case Study 1

- Couple over 65yrs
- WAO applied for Attendance Allowance & Carers Allowance both of which were awarded
- Pension credit awarded
- Entitlement to Housing Benefit increased to full

Total weekly increase in income £159.00

Case Study 2

- Single man living alone
- WAO applied for Personal Independent Allowance which was awarded
- Application for Universal credit made and for Rates relief housing costs, both awarded
- Application for Employment Support Allowance disability premium which was awarded

Total weekly increase in income £344 plus one payment of £750

A holistic approach to financial wellbeing

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

Apex's Welfare Advice Service

The Welfare Advice Team at Apex Housing Association (Apex) supports all tenants and residents - those living in general needs homes and in supported living accommodation.

Tenants are assisted with all areas of financial wellbeing, with the main aim being to maximise tenants' incomes and provide support in these critical times where every penny counts. A holistic approach is central to the success of the team, and often results in additional help being provided to the person beyond the problem for which they were initially referred.

With the cost of living crisis still very much on the horizon, a number of initiatives have been successfully implemented by the Welfare Advice Team to support and assist tenants; working alongside Apex's Tenant Engagement Team, Communications Team and Tenancy Support Worker.

Skeoge Advice Clinic

This welfare advice clinic was established in April 2021 and since then has offered local people access to free, convenient and confidential benefits advice every Thursday in Skeoge Community Hub in Derry~Londonderry. Tenants have been helped with grant applications for white goods and energy vouchers, benefit checks to maximise income, budgeting and signposting for debt advice, form filling and assistance with appealing benefits decisions.

During 2022-23, almost 100 appointments were made for this advice clinic, with many tenants also referred onto other Hub services provided by community partner, Greater Shantallow Area Partnership (GSAP).

Apex Community Supermarket and Foyle Foodbank

Both these vital services are located at Apex Living Centre in Derry~Londonderry and are supported by Apex to help alleviate financial distress and provide much needed essentials such as food and fuel to many, including the most vulnerable tenants.

Tenancy Support Service

This service provides invaluable wraparound support to tenants who are at risk of losing their tenancy and who are often in financial distress. Tenants are assisted with grant applications and are supported in person at benefit assessments, appointments and at Foyle Foodbank to collect food parcels. This service often provides a vital link for referrals to the Welfare Advice Team.

Information events and campaigns

The Welfare Advice Team has hosted information events for tenants to engage directly with them in person or via Zoom, with follow up appointments also offered at these events.

During 2023, Apex supported Talk Money Week, Energy Saving Week and the Move to UC information campaigns. These online campaigns provided tenants with invaluable information and advice in relation to their financial wellbeing. They featured engaging and attractive content (including videos) and covered topics like reducing household bills, how to be a mindful spender and the importance of getting a benefits check. The information appeared prominently on the Apex website and social media (X and Facebook) with some information also texted to tenants.

Winter Support Newsletter

This Winter Support Newsletter was established in 2022, with all featured information gathered by Apex's Tenant Engagement Team in consultation with tenants. The newsletter is provided digitally via text message to all tenants and appears on the Apex website.

It provides vital information for tenants and includes topics like energy saving, budgeting, broadband social tariffs, debt, savings and scams.

The Apex Observer

Apex's tenant newsletter is published twice a year and provides up-to-date information on welfare advice, including relevant topics from the government's budget statement that will have a direct impact on tenants. Case studies are provided to help bring the issues to life.

Website Cost of Living section

The Apex website features a prominent banner at the top so tenants can easily access a dedicated section that provides up-to-date information and guidance to help cope with the cost of living.

The section (www.apex.org.uk/cost-of-living/) features Winter Support Newsletters, details of the Welfare Advice Service and Floating Support Service, Apex Community Supermarket, campaigns and useful websites.

Outcomes and achievements

During the 2022-23 year, 602 tenants benefited from Apex's Welfare Advice Service. These tenants were helped to access £435,627 in additional benefits and £18,484 in additional grants and energy vouchers. 76 starter packs were also obtained for new tenants facing financial hardship.

One of Apex's Welfare Advice Officers, Clodagh Lynch, supported a tenant with ill-health to access £18,300 in backdated missing severe disability premium on her ESA who is now £76.40 better off per week:

"Clodagh changed my life in a phone call. This amount of money is like nothing I could have ever dreamed of, it will make such a difference to me and my family. I

will be forever grateful for her advice and support."

The information campaigns led and supported by Apex have also been received very positively:

"I was finding it hard to get by with rising costs of living, so I took the advice on the Apex Winter Support Newsletter I got through my door and booked in for a benefit check. I couldn't believe it when I got all the extra money! I am so glad I reached out for help".

The online campaigns to mark Talk Money Week, Energy Saving Week and the Move to UC reached an estimated 8,800 people and prompted engagement on social media from more than 300 people.

Partnership Project

Lead organisation: Circle Voluntary Housing Association

Partner organisations: Irish League of Credit Unions, Ballyfermot Inchicore Credit Union and the Social Finance Foundation



Statement of support

With the cost-of-living crisis affecting many community members, Circle sought to look at areas where it might be able to provide support to tenants. A worry that many tenants have is accessing credit, especially in times of emergencies or at occasions like weddings, confirmations, and Christmas. Feedback for Tenancy Services Officers and Income Management Officers noted that some tenants were using short term high interest rate loans for these occasions, as accessing credit from established financial institutions was not an option for them.

In 2023 Circle, in conjunction with Irish League of Credit Unions, Ballyfermot Inchicore Credit Union and the Social Finance Foundation piloted a scheme to engage with tenants who may have no affiliations with community financial services, no history of saving or perhaps no/poor credit history. This pilot scheme is rooted in the desire to assist tenants of Circle access affordable credit, build a credit history and allow them 'graduate' to standard lending products. This

also served as an opportunity for tenants to become volunteers and participate in their community.

This initial proposal focused mainly on offering tenants an incentive to join the Credit Union. The pilot was to be rolled out in three phases:

1. The onboarding of tenants in the Ballyfermot Inchicore area.
2. Opportunities for tenants to become involved/volunteer in their local credit unions.
3. The loan guarantee opportunity.

Circle's interest in this pilot was to give tenants an opportunity to engage with an approved lending institution, availability of a loan facility for those with no or very poor credit history, seek opportunities for tenants to get involved or volunteer in their local credit union. Circle agreed to guarantee a limited number of loans and provide an incentive voucher system for a pilot scheme, in partnership with Ballyfermot Inchicore Credit Union, for tenants in the Inchicore area. The project is overseen by the Social Finance Foundation, who are also a reporting conduit between Ballyfermot Inchicore Credit Union and Circle. They ensure that the loan guarantee is administered in line with agreed procedures, which monitor the way the funds are utilised, what triggers a guaranteed payment, monitoring of the initiative and the timeframe involved. GDPR concerns were addressed by tenants providing proof of address and current tenancy agreement to the Credit Union and Circle sent the funds for vouchers directly to the Credit Union.

In June 2023 Circle undertook to hand deliver a welcome pack to tenants and explain the purpose of the pilot. These packs included a €15 voucher as an introductory offer to households in the catchment area to join the credit union. It also included information on the local credit union offices and the services they

provide. In total 144 households in the area could access the offer. As part of the incentive Ballyfermot Inchicore Credit Union also offered discounted insurance for tenants who signed up to the pilot. The

pilot is monitored by monthly meetings and will be reviewed after a 12-month period. This is a pilot that we would like to see expanded across other Credit Union areas moving into 2024.

Outcomes and achievements

- 144 tenants were given the opportunity to access a community financial institution with the help of Circle VHA, in the knowledge that their personal financial details would not be shared with Circle VHA.
- A loan guarantee is in place for those who do not qualify for standard loan products, and this is monitored independently.
- Circle tenants have been offered an opportunity to become active participants in their wider community through involvement in this pilot project. Local credit unions allow communities to save together and lend to each other at a fair and reasonable rate of interest. This aligns with Circle's values and purpose, which is to deliver quality homes and innovative, integrated housing solutions to families in Ireland.

There have also been very informative learnings from the pilot which will be applied for future initiatives in others areas, such as where English is not a tenants first language. Circle has learned that many tenants are existing members of the Credit Union and so the scope for future projects will be broadened to target wider members of the household and more credit unions nationally.

Killarney - "Mind the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves"

Lead organisation: Clann Housing

Partner organisations: Bill Genie, ALONE, and Sage Advocacy



Statement of support

Clann Housing takes pride in its commitment to enhancing the lives of residents, especially in the realm of financial wellbeing. Clann's recent initiative to improve the energy efficiency of homes for older

residents in Killarney, across three age-friendly housing schemes, has yielded remarkable results. Clann also collaborated with several external providers to empower residents with valuable knowledge and resources on financial well-being.

Our Clann team linked the residents up with 'Bill Genie'. 'Bill Genie' is a free utility consultation service. Residents experienced firsthand the positive impact of the 'Bill Genie' initiative, which goes beyond mere energy bill reviews. 'Bill Genie' conducted comprehensive consultations, evaluating not only energy bills but also telephone and broadband expenses. By delving into market comparisons and exploring different plans, they ensured that residents secured the best value and tailored plans aligned with their specific needs. In addition to the 'Bill Genie', residents were invited to further workshops by ALONE and SAGE Advocacy. These sessions provided valuable information and guidance on energy-saving, social welfare entitlements such as fuel, telephone and living alone allowances as well as proactive planning for funeral costs.

Outcomes and achievements

These initiatives addressed both financial and practical aspects of daily living, fostering a holistic approach to community wellbeing. The combined efforts of Clann Housing, 'Bill Genie,' ALONE, and SAGE Advocacy have created a comprehensive support system, empowering our residents to not only save money, but also thrive in a community that cares for their holistic wellbeing.

The initiative has had transformative effects on our residents, many of whom navigate life on fixed, low incomes. The key benefits include:

- Financial Savings on Utilities: Residents witnessed tangible savings on their utility bills, providing immediate relief to their financial burden.
- Budgeting Assistance: 'Bill Genie' offered invaluable assistance in budgeting, empowering residents to manage their finances more effectively.
- Increased Financial Security, providing residents with a sense of stability and peace of mind.
- Improved Energy Efficiency: Residents gained insights into energy efficiency practices and technologies, leading to a more sustainable and comfortable living environment.
- Education and Awareness: The initiative fostered a culture of education and awareness, empowering residents with knowledge to make informed decisions about their utility expenses.
- Health and Comfort: Adequate heating and access to essential services contribute to the overall health and comfort of older individuals, ensuring a higher quality of life.

Cost Saving Tips and Tricks

Co-operative Housing Ireland



Statement of support

Inspiration for a focus group and guide on cost saving for CHI Member tenants came about during the peak of the cost-of-living crisis in 2022. The cost-of-living crisis over the last two years, due to the Russia-Ukraine War and the residual impact of the pandemic, among other factors, resulted in inflation of almost 8% according to the CSO, with Housing, Water and Fuel hitting a peak of 20% in 2022. Inflation in Ireland in 2023 is estimated to be 5.3% according to the European Commission. This rise in costs has put undue pressure on low-income households across the country. CSO findings highlight how significantly housing costs impact on the living standards of renters, in particular low-income families who live in social-rented homes. Post housing costs, one in every two of these low-income households has an income below the poverty line, compared with one in five for the whole population and one in ten for households who are owner occupiers.

As part of the CHI Bi-annual survey, CHI Member tenants are asked what their biggest household concern is. Results from the survey in late 2022 indicated cost of living as the main issue for CHI households. To alleviate some of the financial pressure on families and individuals, CHI's Community Engagement team piloted 'Cost Saving Tips and Tricks' focus groups.

It was imperative to CHI's Community Engagement team that knowledge sharing around the issue of cost of living and budgeting came directly from Member tenants when undertaking the project. This approach, as opposed to a top-down one, aligns with CHI's ambition to empower Member tenants and communities to be active players. As a general needs provider, CHI endeavours to facilitate knowledge sharing within the community on issues that affect them. It is the organisation's aim to increase the voices of Member tenants at all possible junctures.

The initial aim for 'Cost Saving Tips and tricks' was to share communities' experience and knowledge of cost saving and household budgeting. Contact was made with Member tenants by email, text, and via post on the Members Facebook to organise focus groups. CHI Community Engagement Specialists reached out to engaged community members, such as those involved in their local co-operatives or Member Associations. Two focus groups were held over Zoom. All participants generated and brought materials to support the conversation. A "Cost Saving Tips and Tricks" document was then compiled from the sessions. Initially meant to be a one-pager, it became a comprehensive document with sections on utilities, groceries, socialising, and childcare. The document

also points Member tenants to financial support services, such as MABS and the CHI Financial Inclusion Team.

CHI's Financial Inclusion Team is a team specialised in helping Member tenants with money matters in addition to managing rent and sundry debt income collection, and arrears management. The team was introduced as part of CHI's Housing Services restructure in March 2023 which saw the organisation

move from a geographical based housing services provision model to a specialism-based model in a move to improve service to Member tenants.

The "Cost Saving Tips and Tricks" booklet was included via QR code in CHI's Autumn Newsletter to households and emailed to staff and Member tenants alike. It was also posted to the CHI Member Facebook group, which has over 960 members.

Outcomes and achievements

"I wanted to take part because of the times we're in, everyone is trying to save money and live economically. Life is getting tougher, everything is more expensive. I wanted to learn tips and pass on the ones I have to others. I like doing things online because I'm a busy mam with kids and prefer not to have to go in person. We got to speak to people and the group was the perfect size.

It was great to learn about changing contractors, who you have your bills with, making sure you're on top of them. That has really helped. I learned that if you're out of contract your bills may increase significantly until you're back in contract with them. So, I keep on top of it now.", said one participant.

This work has been coupled with providing further information to Member tenants around supports available to them after the announcement of Budget 2024 in September. The Cost Saving Tips and Tricks initiative is a stepping stone towards other activities to support income and financial inclusion for Member tenants, such as a MABS workshop scheduled for January 2024 for communities in South Munster.

The Community Engagement team, in partnership with the Income and Financial Inclusion Team, are also planning a workshop with Citizens Information to help Member tenants navigate and utilise their resources.

Community Investment Network- Cost-of-living Guide for Tenants

Lead organisation: Housing Association Charitable Trust

Partner organisations: NIFHA, Housing Executive, Ark Housing, Apex, Choice, Connswater, Habinteg, Rural Housing Association, Radius, Woodvale & Shankill, Triangle, Clanmil, Grove NB Housing, Supporting Communities, and Age NI



Statement of support

The Northern Ireland Community Investment Network was set up in 2020 as a way of bringing together social housing sector organisations such as NIFHA, NIHE, Supporting Communities and Housing Associations from across Northern Ireland. The Network organises

campaigns which address issues impacting social housing tenants across Northern Ireland, including the identification of community investment projects designed to advocate positive change for social housing tenants.

Between Jan and March 2023 the Network delivered a Cost of Living Crisis Campaign, which saw the creation of a "Keeping Warm on a Budget" guide for tenants. This resource was developed following a research piece by the Network which aimed to proactively identify the top concerns of tenants. Tenants from across different Housing Associations/ NIHE were asked to complete a survey aimed at highlighting the top issues impacting them as social housing tenants during the cost-of-living-crisis. The survey indicated that the majority of tenants who participated in the research were most concerned about rising electricity, oil, and gas costs with 90% of tenants choosing this option, this was closely followed by increases in grocery costs. Most tenants in the survey indicated that the money-saving advice they were interested in was information on what local councils were doing in their area to support them. This was closely followed by making sure they were on the right tariff, as well as energy saving tips and accessing fuel vouchers. Over half of the tenants highlighted these as their main areas of interest.

Based on the information provided by tenants the Network collaborated with energy companies and money advice organisations including The Energy Saving Trust, Consumer Council, Age NI, Phoenix Natural Gas, National Energy Action (NEA) and the NIHE's Energy Advice Service to develop a one-stop guide to reducing tenants costs within the home and keeping warm on a budget. By collaborating with experts in the field of energy savings and money advice, we were able to accumulate a range of information and resources aimed at empowering tenants with the skills and resources to save money within the homes and improve their financial circumstances. To ensure the "Keeping Warm on a Budget" tenant cost-of living guide truly met the needs of tenants we wanted to ensure tenants had the opportunity to input into the design of the resource, as a result the Network hosted a tenant workshop where tenants reviewed the guide page by page offering suggestions for changes, and Clanmil's reading group also provided feedback on the documents. As a tenant focused Network of organisation it was really important tenants reviewed the document before the final print to ensure it adequately met the needs of our service users.

The guide provides tenant focused information relating to key areas of concern such as helping tenants ensure they are on the correct energy tariff, tips on how tenants can reduce energy/ electricity bills through some simple changes within the home, benefits advice and support and signposting to sources of support.

Tenant Feedback evidencing the positive impact of the guide.

Esther, Grove Housing Association- I got a copy of this booklet from Grove Community Housing Association and found it very useful and informative and it is helping me make savings on a day-to-day basis.

Sylvia, Clanmil - Information in this booklet is very informative. It gives us a chance to obtain contacts to the right sources to help us.

Violet, Clanmil - By reading this leaflet you can help reduce your costs.

Maria, Clanmil - I found the booklet very informative and helpful.

Outcomes and achievements

- Hard copies of the "Keeping Warm on a budget" guide were distributed to over 10,000 Housing Association/ Housing Executive tenants across N. Ireland, and further copies were uploaded to each participating Housing Association's website.
- Over 110 social housing tenants from across both urban and rural communities in Northern Ireland participated in research to develop the content for the booklet including those tenants who completed surveys, participated in design workshop and those tenants who took part in reading groups to review the final content of the booklet.
- A total of 16 social housing sector organisations participated in the development of the resource. These were The Housing Association Charitable Trust, N. Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, Housing Executive, Ark Housing, Apex, Choice, Connswater, Habinteg, Rural Housing Association, Radius, Woodvale and Shankill, Triangle, Clanmil, Grove, NB Housing and Supporting Communities.
- Presentations on the guide were delivered at Clanmil's first Client Conference and HACT's UK-wide online webinar, sharing best practice, increasing reach to over 300 people.

Financial Inclusion Project Team

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

At a time when people are struggling through a cost-of-living crisis the Housing Executive has transformed the lives of many of its tenants through a multi-faceted approach to improved financial wellbeing.

One strand of this approach is our Financial Inclusion Team, a group of dedicated individuals with a high level of expertise across the finance and benefits sector. The team provide direct assistance to tenants referred by frontline staff, hold drop-in advice clinics in the community and undertake more proactive work such as identifying and contacting pension aged tenants who may be entitled to additional benefits, with over 850 tenants contacted in the last 12 months.

- Single parent of two children referred with arrears of £1,100. They worked part-time and received standard PIP and DLA for one child. Housing Benefit claim was closed as tenant failed to provide information on time. The team challenged the HB decision, and it was reinstated and a back-payment of £1,790 cleared the arrear.
- Completing a benefit check for one tenant, who was paying full rent and rates, resulted in an entitlement to pension credit of £64.71 per week and consequently, housing benefit of £56.72 per week. After the team assisted the tenant with the benefit applications, their income increased by £6,314.36 per year.
- A lone pensioner tenant was able to increase their annual income by £4,621.76 when an entitlement to full housing benefit and rates relief was identified.
- An elderly couple were delighted by an increase of £2,230 per year when an entitlement to the carers element of PIP was established with the team also helping to ensure the claim was backdated.

This small number of cases studies demonstrate the life changing impact this service has for our tenants.

An additional component of this approach is the Making Your Money Work service. This is offered by our Patch Managers and Income Collection staff who can provide direct advice and/or a referral to Advice NI for an accredited, confidential consultation. From December 2022 to December 2023 nearly 5000 tenants accepted the advice services. The combination of direct advice and the referrals have resulted in a collective reduction in rent arrears (£139.5k) and an extra £100k of Housing Benefit payments in the 6 months following the intervention. In addition, the recognised triggers for offering financial advice can also highlight other support needs and in the last 12 months 174 tenants have been referred for floating support services.

Underpinning these services is a new Income Analytics system which provides the ability to automatically process low level arrears using text messages to contact the tenants. It also enables us to collect and maintain more detailed, accurate and up to date personal details about tenants providing better and more targeted services. Additionally, the system enables different categories of arrears to be filtered and managed in a more effective and efficient way. By reducing system waste, we can focus more resources on enhanced customer contact and the specialist Financial Inclusion and Making Your Money Work services and as described above.

As well as the specific financial services on offer NIHE also provides grant funding to voluntary, community and charity sector organisations, the Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme is helping tenants to develop the skills and resilience to thrive in their tenancies. £1.5 million invested in projects to date (since 2021) has enabled 36 community, voluntary and charity sector organisations to support more than 630 tenants to develop the skills and resilience to better manage their tenancies. A further £1.5 million is to be invested over the period 2023-2025 to fund more projects to support tenants at risk of tenancy breakdown.

Outcomes and achievements

- The introduction of an Income analytics system enables the organisation to automatically process between 3,00 and 4,000 low level arrears weekly.
- The Financial Inclusion Managers provided direct assistance to over 4000 tenants between December 22 and December 23, unlocking £1.8 million in additional benefits.
- In the same period over 8,500 Making Your Money Work consultations were offered to tenants, with around 5000 accepted.
- With Pension Credit being one of the most underclaimed benefits a proactive approach resulted in 850 pensioners being identified as potentially entitled and contacted in the last 12 months.

In the period since Income Analytics was introduced the number of MYMW referrals made has increased by over 500 and the number of acceptances has increased from 51% to 57%.

EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sponsored by:  **Tuath**
Housing

This award focuses on excellence in the areas of fit for purpose housing, adaptations and services. We are looking to hear about organisations that have developed activities, services, policies, or strategies that contribute to the positive health and well-being of tenants, residents, or the wider community.

WINNER - Brain Health Village

Lead organisation: Respond

Partner organisation: Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI)



Statement of support

The Brain Health Village is one part of a wider partnership between Respond and the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI) which aims to examine our understanding of brain health and how it can be applied to housing design and to the provision and the development of sustainable communities. The Brain Health Village, currently in its pilot phase, is based at 'Rathcoran', a Respond development in Baltinglass (Wicklow). The development features 56 homes located next to a primary health care centre and accommodates individuals, families of all ages and refugees from Iraq and Syria as part of the Refugee Resettlement Programme. This initial phase of the project aims to introduce the 'Brain Health' concept to tenants, staff and the wider community at

Rathcoran, create a framework for the key components of a brain health friendly community to be applied, and to identify both short and medium term initiatives and areas of focus.

The Brain Health Village is a "proof of concept" project which aims to show that by providing high quality housing, and practicing excellent community development (promoting creativity, health & social connectedness) that there are long term benefits for brain health.

Innovative Partnership for Holistic Development

The collaboration between Respond and GBHI is a unique blend of expertise in housing, community services, and brain health. This partnership is driven by a shared vision to redefine the concept of housing and community development through the lens of brain health. The Brain Health Village is not just a housing project; it's a holistic approach to creating environments that nurture the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive well-being of individuals.

Understanding the Context of Brain Health

At the core of this initiative is the understanding that brain health transcends the mere absence of disease. It is intimately connected to our living conditions, including the quality of our housing. Traditional housing models often overlook this critical aspect. Respond, through this partnership, is addressing this gap by integrating brain health considerations into the design and development of sustainable communities.

The Brain Health Village Framework

The Brain Health Village Project is underpinned by a robust framework, developed with international expertise across various domains. This framework is a conceptual model that guides the development of brain health-informed communities. It is founded on principles of co-creation, ensuring that the solutions are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of local communities.

Pillars of the Framework

Life Course Approach: This pillar emphasises building awareness and understanding of brain health among community members and policymakers. It focuses on collective actions to promote brain health and reduce stigma.

Stakeholder Engagement: Recognising the community as part of a broader network, this aspect involves navigating political and policy landscapes to secure resources and support for brain health initiatives.

Equity and Security Values: This pillar aims to create equitable, safe and inclusive communities. It emphasises the importance of personal identity, social inclusion and the balance between stability and change.

Intergenerational Community and Creativity: Fostering a community that values contributions from all ages and encourages creativity and arts as tools for well-being and community building.

Built and Natural Environment: Applying universal design principles to create sustainable, accessible, and pleasant spaces. This includes integrating natural and digital elements to promote social interaction and reduce stress.

Service Availability and Integration: Ensuring access to a range of services and resources, including leisure, cultural, educational, and healthcare services, and integrating these into the community fabric.

Outcomes and achievements

The Brain Health Village project has achieved significant milestones in its pilot phase, demonstrating the profound impact of integrating brain health into housing and community development. The project's success is evident in the enthusiastic response from tenants who participated in workshops led by brain health experts. An impressive 92% reported an enhanced understanding of brain health, while a unanimous 100% agreed that brain health should be a priority for social landlords. Furthermore, 92% participants committed to making positive changes in their and their families' lives, reflecting the project's immediate and practical impact.

This initiative goes beyond local implications, offering a globally relevant, values-based framework for

addressing the challenges of housing and sustainable community development. Its person-centered, equity-focused approach, grounded in social justice principles, aligns seamlessly with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically targeting health and well-being, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities (SDGs #3, 10, 11). The Brain Health Village model is not just a local solution but a potential blueprint for global application, influencing policy at various levels. It advocates for a comprehensive approach to brain health and housing, emphasising the importance of these factors in individual and community well-being at local, regional, and national scales.

Omagh Magic Basketball Team

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

Railway Court is a 23-bed supported living scheme in Omagh for adults with learning disabilities, managed by Apex Housing Association (Apex). The unit caters for tenants aged 18 plus who are encouraged to live as independently as possible with a degree of support. The tenants live their lives to the fullest with support from onsite key support workers and local health and social care staff.

People with learning disabilities have a right to be active members of their communities, however they can often experience social exclusion. The support staff in Railway Court work in partnership with tenants, their families and health and social care staff to develop, oversee and monitor services to meet the needs of these individuals. Services enhance their quality of life and enable them to become a significant part of their local community.

Omagh Magic is an innovative and inclusive idea from one such support worker, Robert Giles. Robert has worked in Railway Court for over seven years. In early 2023, football fan Robert began to follow a new sport – basketball. It soon reeled him in, and he became hooked.

In his role as support worker, Robert was tasked with identifying an activity that the tenants might enjoy during the year ahead. Following his recent interest in the sport, Robert came up with the idea of a tenant basketball team.

Primarily, this was considered an activity for the more active tenants; however, it has also resulted in participation by all tenants from the scheme. Whilst everyone may not be able to play basketball, this activity has allowed all tenants and staff to become involved by watching and supporting the team at matches. Robert recognised that sport, whether played or watched, is important in promoting good physical and mental health for everyone.

Adults with learning disabilities can be impacted significantly by social isolation and tend to have smaller social networks within their own communities. This can lead to loneliness, and equally to an increased number of health risks such as depression and increased challenging behaviours. Having an active social life can help people with a learning disability to feel happier, included and valued, which in turn can reduce reliance on specialist support services. Inclusive activities are key to making those with learning disabilities an integral part of their community.

Being part of Omagh Magic has given the tenants of Railway Court a sense of belonging and empowerment. Omagh Magic is made up of several male and female tenants who live in Railway Court who train and play matches on a weekly basis. What started as an in-house led activity with just Apex staff and tenants, has now expanded and sees tenants playing against a Mencap basketball team, and holding their own against other local community teams.

The name Omagh Magic is based on the NBA team 'Orlando Magic'. Robert and the team at Railway Court believe that all the tenants of Railway Court are magical and special in their own way, especially when out on the court, therefore the name seemed appropriate.

The development of the basketball team has had a significant positive impact on the confidence, wellbeing and abilities of all the tenants involved. During games, tenants are laughing, smiling and having fun whilst playing, yet still expressing themselves in a competitive manner.

Outcomes and achievements

Omagh Magic has created a great opportunity for the tenants of Railway Court to show what they can contribute to their local community, as well as provide that community with a better understanding of what it is to be a person with learning disabilities living in Omagh.

The development of the basketball team has had a significant positive impact on the confidence and wellbeing of the tenants involved. Being part of the team has helped build a link for the tenants with the Omagh community, provided social connections and friendships all of which continue to enrich the lives of the tenants.

Omagh Magic has enabled tenants to feel happy and included. It has helped improve tenants' self-esteem, communication skills and allowed them to socialise with other people within the Omagh community. These are all important aspects in helping an individual with learning disabilities to live a more independent lifestyle - which is the heart of 'supported living'.

"Playing basketball is good. I like it. It's good craic. I like going every week and meeting friends. I feel good when I put the ball in the net." - Paddy Kelly, Railway Court tenant

Working together to promote healthy lifestyles

Lead organisation: Clanmil Housing Association

Partner organisation: Cancer Focus



Statement of support

Clanmil understands that some communities do not get the chance to thrive because of the pressures that society continues to face, with a challenging economic environment, and the current cost of living crisis. We believe there are many ways in which we can support people and their communities beyond simply providing good homes. We are committed to delivering a range of initiatives that will make a positive difference to the lives of people who live in our homes.

A priority for Clanmil is to enhance the health and wellbeing of people living in Clanmil homes. We seek to do this by collaborating with voluntary sector organisations.

Pressures such as the cost-of-living crisis and lack of resources can mean that for some people, health and wellbeing are not prioritised. This can prevent people from thriving and can limit their life expectancy and quality.

In summer 2023, Clanmil partnered with the Northern Ireland charity Cancer Focus to provide free, confidential health checks by appointment in their mobile 'Keeping Well' van for our customers within

their local area. The aim of the programme was to encourage participants to adopt healthier lifestyles (mentally and physically) and to support them in making informed health choices.

Cancer Focus bring health checks, cancer awareness and healthy lifestyle information directly to people in their community through this service. It empowers people to take control of their own health and take steps to lower their risk of cancer. By providing easy access to medical advice and screening, it removes any barriers such as trying to get a GP appointment or having to travel a long distance if transport isn't available. Appointments can be booked easily by phone or email.

We arranged for the Keeping Well van to visit Clanmil's Housing for All developments in Newcastle, Crossgar, Dundrum, Belfast, Newtownabbey, Banbridge and Cookstown.

Funding for the health check van service came from the NI Executive. They provide funding to housing associations like Clanmil to develop Good Relations plans to encourage positive community relations and promote health and wellbeing initiatives in and around shared neighbourhoods.

We promoted the service through leaflet drops and on our social media channels, and we worked with statutory and community organisations in each area who kindly supported the initiative by allowing the van to be parked in their carparks/open spaces. Many community groups also helped promote the service and assisted anyone who needed help to book their appointment.

Each health check included a body composition analysis that measured body fat percentage, BMI, visceral fat rating, hydration levels, muscle mass, bone mass, metabolic rate, and metabolic age. Information was provided around positive lifestyle choices and advice given on how to reduce cancer risk.

In addition, all participants received blood pressure, blood glucose and O2 level checks and relevant advice. They also received information on the signs and symptoms of certain gender specific cancers and were made aware of screening programmes available.

Each person was given an information pack with physical activity and nutritional information and were set individual goals. The onsite nurse offered advice about self-examination and general cancer awareness.

Many of the 303 people who attended were referred to their GP for follow up checks, for conditions including high blood pressure, diabetes and chest pains. There were some people who displayed early symptoms of cancer, so the check up at the Keeping Well van resulted in potentially lifesaving interventions for some of our customers.

Outcomes and achievements

303 people in total attended the Keeping Well van between March and September 2023, including 95 men and 208 women. 14 were aged 17-25, 178 were aged 26-59, and 111 were aged 60+.

A total of 88 people were referred to their GP for further diagnostic checks including: 35 for high blood pressure, 18 for a Stop Smoking clinic, eight for gender-specific cancer symptoms (including prostate/ovarian), five for high blood sugar, four for a mole that had changed size shape or colour and two for changes to bowel habits.

Feedback from those who attended appointments at the Keeping Well van was very positive, with many people expressing gratitude that they were able to get advice and, in some cases, referrals for further checkups. For some people, having test results from the checkups in the van made it easier to get a GP's appointment, while others commented that the health advice they received was a 'wake-up call' to kickstart a change in lifestyle.

Ageless Clann - Nurturing wellbeing and tackling health inequalities for older residents and their communities

Lead organisation: Clann Housing

Partner organisations: ALONE, Alzheimer's Ireland, Multiple Sclerosis Ireland, HSE - Public Health Nurses & Occupational Therapists, Focus Ireland, Irish Cancer Society, and Local Authorities across the country.



Statement of support

During 2023 Clann created and delivered a health and wellbeing programme for residents living in age-friendly housing, and general needs residents with mobility, sensory, emotional, or mental health challenges. Some of the key projects include:

Health and Wellbeing Community Campaigns - Clann developed a monthly calendar of health and

wellbeing campaigns for all residents and connected each campaign or event to Mental Health Ireland's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. Some examples of wellbeing campaigns include:-

- Fidget Fingers @ St Joseph's Court, Connemara, Co. Galway - In memory and in honour of the many tenants who have left St Joseph's Court because of dementia, residents came together to make Fiddle Blankets for distribution to nursing homes, families living with dementia and children at the local national school with additional needs. These blankets soothe dementia sufferers who are in an agitated state and provide movement and comfort for idle hands. The local SNA is delighted with them and finds them therapeutic for her pupils. Making the blankets also provides company and artistic outlet for the makers and provides an all-round feel-good factor!
- Gentle Grooves Programme: Mindful Music for Older Minds in Killarney, Co. Kerry - Mindful music sessions were made available to our residents living in Killarney's three age friendly schemes, with the relaxing sounds of the harp and singing bowls. This sessions promote emotional, cognitive, social, and physical well-being. Residents reported the following benefits following the sessions:-

- Reduction of stress and anxiety, increased sense of calm and relaxation.
- Listening to the music evoked positive emotions and memories.
- Engaging with the music helped stimulate various areas of cognitive function.
- Participating in the sessions created a sense of community among older residents, fostering social connections and reducing feelings of isolation.
- Residents have shared that they experienced improved sleep.
- Oriel Lodge Resident Social Club, Co. Cavan - Oriel Lodge Social Club promotes the health and wellbeing of residents by providing social interaction through events and workshops throughout the year. This club has reduced isolation by providing a platform for residents to connect with their neighbours, fostering a sense of community. They have also advocated for the needs and rights of their neighbours, addressing common concerns such as healthcare, safety, and accessibility. Members of the club have offered emotional support, shared experiences, and provided practical assistance to one another, creating a supportive network. The club have also organized health-related programs, exercise classes, and wellness initiatives, promoting a healthier lifestyle for older residents.

Housing Adaptations - Clann worked with Local Authorities to adapt residents' homes and

neighbourhoods to promote independence, minimize safety risks, and support the overall well-being of older residents. By making these modifications, older residents have been able to age in place—remaining in their familiar and comfortable homes and continuing to live independently, rather than having to move to nursing home care. This person-centred work is aligned with residents' specific needs and has helped maintain their sense of dignity and self-worth.

Embedding the delivery of daily and weekly wellbeing calls - these calls focused on the resident, their personal situation and needs. The content of the call varied from putting practical measures in place to support the resident, to providing comfort or emotional support to those in distress, to just a chat and a friendly voice. These calls did not focus on rent or other housing issues, instead putting the resident's wellbeing at the centre.

Relationship building with key partners in community health & wellbeing including :-

- ALONE
- Alzheimer's Ireland
- Multiple Sclerosis Ireland
- HSE - Public Health Nurses & Occupational Therapists
- Focus Ireland
- Irish Cancer Society
- Local Authorities across the country.

Outcomes and achievements

Nearly 550 health and wellbeing campaigns took place across the country and 3,724 well-being calls were made.

Sixty small adaptations were carried out, including spyholes, easy to use taps, grabrails Larger adaptations included 41 level access bathrooms; one hoist installation; two stairlifts; one side extension; one wheelchair ramp; and three automated doors. All these helped residents remain living independently in their home and community.

Following these well-being projects, we have received the following feedback from residents and family members:-

- Improved physical health and better management of existing health conditions, reducing complications and alleviation of depression and anxiety through physical exercise and health awareness workshops.
- Less fear and anxiety of having to move into nursing care, since their homes are now fit for purpose through adaptations.
- Increased social interaction/support and a sense of community, development of new friendships and reduction in feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Increased self-esteem and confidence in their abilities - a sense they still have something positive to contribute to society.

It Takes A Village To Raise A Child

Irish Wheelchair Association



Statement of support

This project showcases the successful partnership between an Approved Housing Body and an array of Health Service Executive frontline services which enable a person with a high level of spinal cord injury to live independently in the community of her choice.

At the age of 24, Yvonne Fahy had a road traffic accident which resulted in extensive injuries to her spinal cord (C5-C6) which caused quadriplegia leaving permanent paralysis from the chest down. Due to her own determination and support from services Yvonne now lives in a fully wheelchair liveable home provided by Irish wheelchair Association (IWA) and receives extensive support services to enable her to live independently with choices and control over her life with full inclusion in her local community. "Living independently did not just fall on my lap" says Yvonne and this application will showcase how this became possible because of the integration of accessible housing and allied health services.

Yvonne's journey of recovery started in the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire where she spent thirteen months. Shortly after returning home, Yvonne had the courage to trial living independently in one of Irish Wheelchair Association's transitional houses. She later moved into her own forever home in Galway.

Yvonne says "65% of my life is crap due to the nature of my disability but the other 35% is great because of the support of all the services". In our discussions she uses the scenario of "it takes a village to raise a child" and likens it to her own life. That village consists

of wheelchair liveable housing, digital and assistive technology, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, general practitioner services and community mental health nursing. The health services are all provided by the Health Service Executive. Integrated support services are a key aspect of living independently.

Housing is another key cornerstone of health and wellbeing. Yvonne says "my home means everything to me". Irish Wheelchair Association is a small Approved Housing Body which specialises in wheelchair living homes. Yvonne is an IWA tenant for over 20 years who receives regular support from our National Housing and Property Officer. "It helps to be able to pick up the phone and talk when I have a maintenance issue with the house". Yvonne was successful in her application to the Department of Housing for the Housing Adaptation Grant and built on an accessible bedroom and bathroom which was project managed by IWA.

Assistive and digital technology also contribute to Yvonne's health and wellbeing. Tools such as Alexa, an internal alarm system, tracking hoist, automatic window and door openers make living independently possible.

Personal Assistance is often described as the tool which allows people with disabilities to live independently. Yvonne says that "without personal assistance support I couldn't have gone to college or go on holidays". Yvonne's personal assistance service is provided by Irish Wheelchair Association. It includes an overnight service where PAs turn Yvonne each night at 3am.

To conclude, Yvonne's journey epitomises excellence in health and wellbeing.

This statement of support will finish with Yvonne's words which formed part of IWA's Home Truths video campaign:

"It's such a great sense of achievement to feel you have come this far but I am always so grateful for the support I get. My home is everything to me. I love to have friends over, have a place for my nieces and nephews to come and visit me. I don't want them to remember their aunt in a wheelchair in a nursing home. I want them to remember their aunt in a nice home. That's important to me."

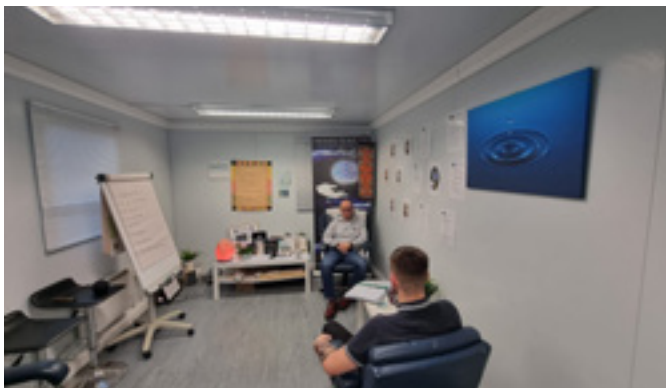
Outcomes and achievements

1. Living independently in an accessible home with supports.
2. Completion in further education. Yvonne successfully completed a master's degree at University College Galway in Public Advocacy and Activism. The personal assistance service was funded by the Department of Education.
3. Yvonne's participation in the Housing Agency's video awareness campaign for the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027. Yvonne said "Independent living isn't just about having an accessible house. It is also about the supports that come with it."
4. Yvonne's participation in IWA's "Home Truths: Because everyone deserves a place to call home" campaign. Yvonne's video was played at the Irish Council for Social Housing annual conference in 2023.
5. Holidays abroad which started with a trip to Lourdes where Yvonne says she got the strength to travel and later went on to numerous holidays abroad.
6. Collaboration between Irish Wheelchair Association and Health Service Executive. Pauline O Dwyer, Yvonne's HSE Case Manager says that "living independently is made possible by the input of four community clinical disciplines from HSE Primary Care and Mental Health Services . However, the cornerstone that pulls all these services together is the PA service and Housing service provided by Irish Wheelchair Association".

MIND (Mentoring, Interventions; Nurturing, Development)

Lead organisation: Northern Ireland Alternatives

Partner organisation: Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

The MIND project provides targeted mental health interventions for Housing Executive tenants to increase the sustainability of tenancies for vulnerable and at-risk people and families. The project has successfully recognised the range and complexity of factors which impact on the stability and duration of tenancies, and the delivery model is designed to be responsive to this, while focusing on issues around mental health.

MIND is grounded in Northern Ireland Alternatives restorative ethos and underpinned by trauma informed practice and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) framework, therefore ensuring that individuals and families accessing the service have a range of sustainable and positive relationships and connections within their community.

By helping to develop these, MIND further increases the likelihood that tenancies will succeed, increasing positive outcomes for individuals and families. The project provides a range of services including one-to-one counselling; havening and intensive support. It also holds group work sessions including mindfulness, restorative circles, suicide awareness, men's health, women's health, risk-taking behaviours.

Over 75% of those referred to the project have received additional wrap-around support including accessing the onsite gym, money and debt management, foodbanks, and benefits advice due to experiencing some level of poverty including increased living costs, working poor and low wage employment.

The testimonials below (provided by NI Alternatives) are from tenants who have engaged with the project and demonstrates it is making an invaluable difference to tenant's lives and is working to achieve the best possible outcomes:

"This time a few months ago I was having multiple panic attacks a day, felt incapable to cope with everything that was going on around me and overthought all the time. ... Thanks to the havening clinic I have been able to cope with things better and have seen a real change in myself. ... Now I feel that I have received the help I was seeking and feel so much more confident, calm and happy."

"I wrote this letter just because I wanted to thank you for helping me change my life for the better. When I first came to see you, I had no hope left in life, I was that low that if my mother hadn't had been alive, I

would have seriously considered suicide. Now I have a clear hope for the future, I have a business plan that could really take off as there is nothing like it in Northern Ireland. I'm also happier than I have been in years. I've now got a voice, confidence to speak up, I'm actually grateful that the PSNI caught me because I would have never faced up to my demons. I hope everyone gets as far as I do that comes to see you, I'm a different person now and I'm clean so thank you."

"It has been really good to come here and get this support. I had been isolating myself for years and I

never talked to anyone about my bereavements or situation before. I have found more reasons to think about the future now since coming here, I would never have thought about the future before this. I am getting out more, I'm taking part in the Alternatives walking group and have started going to classes in the local women's centre and meeting and talking to people there also. My work with the house is progressing, I'm not quite there yet but I hope to be soon with decorating and clearing things out so I can have my grandkids stay over again as one of my goals for the future."

Outcomes and achievements

The project was funded to support 115 households and 1500 beneficiaries (April 2023 - March 2024) and this has been exceeded

- 203 individuals received counselling, havening, intensive support.
- 200 individuals engaged in group work sessions including mindfulness, restorative circles, suicide awareness, men's health, women's health.
- Over 2200 beneficiaries including family, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

All tenants supported via the service were at risk of tenancy breakdown on referral. Intervention by MIND has resulted in more than two-thirds of those tenancies being successfully sustained with a further number of tenants assisted to access accommodation more suitable to their needs, thereby increasing their chances of achieving tenancy sustainment in the longer term.

An independent evaluation covering the first 18-month period highlights:

- The primary mental health issues most prevalent and problematic for tenants are personality disorders, addiction, trauma, suicidal ideation, and anxiety.
- Secondary issues include bereavement, relationship breakdowns and risk-taking behaviours, all of which impact the ability to sustain tenancies.
- The use of coping mechanisms combined with counselling support is enabling referrals to enhance their mental health and emotional wellbeing long after the initial intervention.

"Your Health is Your Wealth" Initiative

Lead organisation: Oaklee Housing

Partner organisations: Irish Heart Foundation, local GAA and sports clubs, City of Dublin Education and Training Board, St. Johns of Gods, Mental Health Ireland, One Family, Money and Budgeting Services (MABS), Drugs and Alcohol Task Forces and Slaintecare



Statement of support

Comhar Housing is the consortium that delivered the first PPP Project for social housing in Ireland. 534 new homes delivered across 6 sites throughout the ROI. Oaklee Housing provides both Community Development and Housing Management services to the consortium.

Oaklee is proud to say that all homes achieved an A2 BER rating. All homes were designed to significantly reduce heat loss and have PV panels to help reduce energy costs. Oaklee has adequate green spaces, communal rooms, Multi Use Games Area and playground spaces on site.

Oaklee Housing understands the importance adequate housing plays as a social determinant for tenant's health and wellbeing. By providing and maintaining a high quality of housing, Oaklee ensures that people are living in above average and an affordable standard of housing.

The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) published research in 2023 about the correlation between Housing, Health, and Happiness. Ensuring people feel safe and a part of a community can greatly influence their health and wellbeing. In the project,

Oaklee has a designated Community Development worker who meets monthly with the tenants to support and instils the importance of community development values of inclusion and integration to foster a strong community spirit.

One of the important social determinants of well-being is a sense of community connectedness and belonging. The housing team have organised numerous events and initiatives with the tenants to encourage people coming together through cultural food sharing events (breaking bread), social gatherings, bingo in the courtyard, seasonal events etc. The objective being to ensure that the tenants can form a connection and know that they can make an impact to their community, while instilling a sense of belonging.

Through working with the tenants, it became evident that people were reluctant to access health services in the area. People had many obstacles to face, such a fear of services, lack of transport and low confidence. By working in partnership with tenants and local service providers, we have been able to bring some of the services on site to try to break down barriers and to build relationships with the tenants. This ensured more people could access these services and felt more comfortable availing of them in a space that they were familiar with. Oaklee often hosted these initiatives as coffee mornings to make it informal and a friendly inviting space that encouraged people to come along.

Working in partnership with local agencies such as Irish Heart Foundation, local GAA and sports clubs, City of Dublin Education and Training Board, St. Johns of Gods, Mental Health Ireland, One Family, Money and Budgeting Services (MABS), Drugs and Alcohol Task Forces and Slaintecare services Oaklee has been able to facilitate numerous health days, information days, First Aid courses, mental health course, cooking on a budget course, parenting classes, chair yoga and mindfulness courses.

Following some of the information days people have joined different Further Education And Training Authority Courses (FETAC) such as Social studies and Addiction studies. Oaklee Housing funded willing tenants to progress and further their education. They have become a great resource and support the community meetings with the knowledge gained from these courses.

Outcomes and achievements

A great example of services coming onto site was during our 'Health Day'. Together with the Irish Heart Foundation, Oaklee organised for the health mobile unit to come and to carry out health checks. One of the tenants attending very beneficial visit. Michelle stated 'I went along with my neighbours for the coffee morning and visited the health van. I am nervous about attending the doctor as I only ever go when there is something wrong, but I went to get involved along with my neighbours. During my health check, it turned out that I had high blood pressure and was advised to see the doctor that evening. I am now regularly attending my doctor to keep on top of it and have been given advise to manage my blood pressure.

Oaklee invited Northside Partnership to attend, who provided an arrange of information about their Health and Wellbeing courses. People signed up to stop smoking courses, money management workshops and arranged follow up appointments while also getting a free health screening. Oaklee saw many people who hadn't attended a doctor for a health check in over 30 years going along and many signing up to courses.

The local GAA club have also reached out to confirm they have seen increased number enrolling in the club following some of the information provided at some of our community events.

EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING INNOVATION

Sponsored by:



An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta
The Housing Agency

This award is aimed at programmes or projects which can clearly demonstrate how they have developed an innovative approach which has made a real difference to the lives of tenants and customers. This could be any new product, service or technology - being able to demonstrate innovation is the key.

WINNER - Springville House 'Rightsize' Development

Lead organisation: Tuath Housing Association

Partner organisation: Cork City Council



Statement of support

Springville House is an office retrofit 'Rightsize' development in Blackrock, Cork City, owned and managed by Tuath. It stands as a shining example of how combining various innovative housing solutions can result in a unique development that lays the groundwork for future projects. The conversion of a 1970s vacant office block into a 35-home residential building is a testament to pioneering approaches that can make a tangible difference in the lives of residents and the wider community.

The successful transformation of Springville House into a modern residential complex is a result of a carefully coordinated combination of innovative solutions, from the tender process to the final implementation. This

adaptive reuse project not only addresses housing challenges but also contributes significantly to the decarbonisation of Ireland's built environment. Approximately one-third of the development was funded through a CALF loan from the Department of Housing, with the balance coming from funding via the Housing Finance Agency. Significant works were required to strip back the building to its core structural elements before the space was divided into individual units. The BER A rated homes include spacious balconies and wide windows creating light-filled, energy-efficient apartments which are unrecognisable from its original form.

Springville House has been purpose-built as a 'Rightsizing' development. 'Rightsizing' refers to a voluntary scheme aimed at residents, aged sixty years and over, who would like to move from their current property to one that is more suitable to their needs. The benefits of this scheme are twofold; it supports individuals and families by offering top-quality warm, safe, and suitable housing, while also freeing up existing homes that may be under occupied and some of which may be sold back to the Council.

One of the key elements contributing to the project's success was Cork City Council's innovative use of the EU Competitive Dialogue procurement process. Through open dialogue with potential bidders, architects, and local communities, stakeholders were engaged early in the process. This approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, fostering

collaboration and transparency. The input received during the dialogue phases significantly enriched the project as a 'Rightsize' development by facilitating effective and earnest stakeholder engagement throughout the project. The consultation phase with future residents ensured that their specific needs were realised, including energy efficiency, privacy, and security and the creation of a self-contained yet community-integrated space. The positive outcomes are reflected in the satisfaction of tenants and the project's contribution to community well-being.

The process played a crucial role in securing the buy-in and trust of the local Blackrock community. Collaboration with local councillors and ongoing communication with residents ensured a transparent process, transforming a commercial space into a residential haven. A chief outcome was to ensure the development was in keeping with the streetscape of the area. The architects ensured that the design was complementary to the existing facades and nature of the surrounding houses. The development density was increased at a low level by including 4no. bungalows, rather than adding more apartments.

The project also addresses the problem of isolation and loneliness which yields health benefits and social value for residents and the immediate community providing a social mix and long-term boost to the economy in the wider area. The development has a designated Housing Services Co-ordinator who provides onsite clinics and collaborated with resident to develop relationships with local garda, existing services within the community and supports the Tenant Engagement Officer with Community Engagement Initiatives. A resident's association has already been established and residents from the surrounding homes have become an integral part of this.

Helen Bygrove, a former schoolteacher, said "It has been transformative. ...This new space feels spacious, airy, extremely well-designed, there is a wonderful flow between the rooms - a lot of it is open plan. It is designed for people to live in, rather than people having to live in little boxes, and this psychologically is wonderful. It is a marvellous example of how an industrial building can be transformed into a really cosy and comfortable space."

Outcomes and achievements

Springville House is case study for adaptive reuse, emphasising sustainability and revitalisation. By combining thoughtful design, community engagement, sustainability, and a commitment to meeting the needs of an aging demographic, this development serves as an exemplary model for excellence in housing innovation:- achieved by the reuse and repurpose of an existing building, in the design to create a place where residents are delighted to call home, in the competitive dialogue process used by Cork City to ensure transparency and consultation, and the Rightsizing model to create the type of homes older people want and need freeing up larger family homes in the City.

The use of air-to-water heat pumps and high-quality insulation resulted in a BER A rating, maximising energy efficiency and reducing operational costs for occupants. The incorporation of environmental sensors in all homes monitors ongoing air quality, contributing to a healthier living environment.

Coupled with the cost benefits for those participating in the Right Sizing initiative, Springville House reaffirms its long-term sustainability, enhancing the existing community and breathing new life into derelict buildings.

Tuath recently undertook a lifecycle analysis (LCA) of a similar office to residential conversion. The LCA measures environmental impact, comparing refurbishment of an existing building against (a) full demolition and rebuild; and (b) a new build of comparable residential building. The results indicated an embodied carbon saving in excess of 80%. The LCA demonstrates the incredibly positive environmental impact of a renovation project like Springville House.

Springville House brings life to the old adage "the most sustainable buildings are those already built." It is an innovation solution capable of meeting urgent housing demands, demonstrating excellence in housing innovation through all stages of the project's life.

Floating Support Service

Ark Housing



Statement of support

In the face of a rising tide of homelessness, Ark Housing isn't just weathering the storm - they're building bridges to new shores. Their innovative Floating Support Service, launched in 2021, stands as a testament to their commitment to providing transformative support that extends beyond temporary accommodation.

Prior to the Floating Support Service, Ark's support primarily focused on families within their two Belfast hostels. Recognizing the need for wider outreach, they pivoted to a model that transcends physical boundaries. Now, their dedicated team of Floating Support Officers work with families across a spectrum of housing situations - hostels, social housing, private rentals, and even single lets.

This innovative shift has yielded remarkable results. Capacity increased from supporting 41 families to a staggering 201 at no extra cost to the funder. But the impact goes far deeper than numbers. By engaging with families facing eviction, domestic violence, family breakdowns, and other challenges before they reach breaking points, Ark empowers them to prevent homelessness, not just react to it.

Each family receives personalized support tailored to their unique needs. Whether it's navigating benefits applications, accessing healthcare, fostering community connections, or stabilizing their tenancy, Ark's compassionate team walks alongside them every step of the way.

The success speaks for itself. This year alone, the service supported 318 families. At exit, a stunning 80-100% of families achieve positive outcomes, from securing permanent housing to maintaining tenancies, feeling secure in their homes, and accessing crucial benefits, education, and healthcare.

The service's reach extends beyond traditional demographics. Responding to rising refugee and migrant applications, Ark's team provides bespoke support in navigating unfamiliar systems, securing housing, and finding their footing in Belfast. Their dedication even shines through shortened timelines for NTQ-funded accommodation, ensuring no family falls through the cracks.

The impact is deeply personal. One client expresses heartfelt gratitude, saying, "We would have no idea how to do things without your help... thank you for supporting us to integrate into this wonderful country." Another echoes the sentiment, describing Ark as a "godsend" that helped them rise from "feeling completely broken."

Ark's Floating Support Service is not just a program; it's a beacon of hope for families struggling to stay afloat. By embracing innovation, tailoring support, and expanding their reach, Ark has demonstrably improved the lives of countless individuals and families. They deserve recognition for their unwavering commitment to building not just homes, but bridges to a brighter future, making them a truly deserving candidate for the Excellence in Housing Innovation Award.

Outcomes and achievements

For families:

- **Reduced homelessness:** The service empowers families to overcome challenges and prevent homelessness before it occurs.
- **Improved housing stability:** 80-100% of families achieve positive housing outcomes upon leaving the program, securing permanent housing or maintaining tenancies.
- **Increased security and well-being:** Families feel safe and secure in their homes thanks to the service's support.
- **Enhanced access to essential services:** The team helps families navigate benefits, healthcare, education, and other crucial resources.
- **Empowerment and resilience:** Through tailored support, families develop life skills and confidence to manage challenges independently.
- **Integration and inclusion:** Support for refugees and migrants helps them settle in Belfast and access housing, services, and community connections.

For the community:

- **Reduced demand for emergency housing:** By preventing homelessness, the service eases the burden on the housing system.
- **Stronger families and communities:** Support strengthens families and contributes to a more stable and resilient community.
- **Positive impact on local economy:** Families with secure housing and access to support can contribute more effectively to the local economy.

For Ark Housing:

- **Increased reach and impact:** The service significantly expands Ark's reach and ability to assist families in need.
- **Stronger relationships with funders and partners:** Demonstrated effectiveness can attract further funding and collaboration opportunities.

Choice and Rio Ferdinand Foundation

Lead organisation: Choice Housing Ireland

Partner organisation: Rio Ferdinand Foundation



Statement of support

In January 2023, Choice became the first housing association in Northern Ireland to partner with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation (RFF), a youth and community charity that has worked across the UK since 2012.

The RFF, set up by former Manchester United and England defender Rio Ferdinand has worked in Northern Ireland (NI) since 2016 and provides mentoring and employment pathways to help young people in economically deprived communities. The themes of RFF's work align perfectly with Choice's community investment themes and our mission of 'enriching lives through great homes, services and communities'.

Choice invested £40,000 in a programme which ran from January - June 2023 to deliver a pilot project using sport, media, and arts to build positive relationships, leadership, skills, and opportunities for young people living in South and East Belfast whilst tackling racism, sectarianism and inequality at a community level.

Our partnership with RFF complements the work Choice is already delivering on the ground across our communities.

Rio Ferdinand, founder of the RFF:

"The partnership is a fantastic addition to our work, offering training and opportunities to young people and communities in Northern Ireland.

"Partnerships and joined-up work are central to the Rio Ferdinand Foundation's work. Working with associations such as Choice helps us identify the communities where our programmes can have the most impact, extending our reach and helping us to support more young people in Belfast and beyond".

The objectives of the partnership were met and exceeded as evidenced through the high engagement of young people:

- 215 participants (aged 13 - 19) engaged in positive activities involving twice weekly sports and youth activities and personal development projects including Community Football Tournament, Refugee Integration Cup, Digital Skills Workshops, and Graffiti art projects.

- 69 accreditations achieved in Community Sports Leader Award Level 1; Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion; Digital Skills Level 1; and Mental Health & Wellbeing.
- 199 participants engaged in social action projects.
- 98 participants engaged with motivational and careers events.

In South and East Belfast a diverse group of young people participated:

- o Gender: 66% Male / 34% Female
- o Ethnicity: 76% White Irish/Northern Irish / 24% BAME
- o Religion: 48% Protestant / 29% Catholic / 23% Muslim/Other

According to the HACT Social Value Calculator Tool, this project has a return social value of £5,553,565. (£1: £139.84 SROI).

Case Study from East Belfast Cohort

"LFC is 15-year-old Protestant boy from East Belfast. LFC attends a local Boys High School and takes part

in a RFF cross-community group. LFC has a lot of potential and is a clear leader within the group but struggles with anger issues and confidence in his own abilities.

"LFC has been suspended from school on several occasions for fighting and local 'community leaders' have warned that his anti-social behaviour is attracting attention that may lead to serious trouble in the future.

"Further investigation into LFC's background shows he was the victim of a serious sectarian assault which led to a prolonged hospital stay. Teachers at the local Boys High School have reported that LFC's work with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation is making a difference in his outlook on life and confidence".

Case Study from HAPANI Cohort

"Participant S is naturally a very shy and quiet person. Participant S explained that there were not many opportunities for her to take part in sport growing up and as an asylum seeker. During the CSLA Participant S delivered a full training session and helped plan and deliver the 4-A-Side Girls Community Football Tournament. Participant S is interested in further opportunities to develop their employability skills".

Outcomes and achievements

Our partnership with RFF complements the work Choice is already delivering on the ground across our communities. RFF has developed strong partnerships across local sporting and community organisations and we are pleased to be the first housing association in NI to be working with them. The project has made a meaningful difference to the lives of the young people participating:

- o 79% of participants said they felt more comfortable meeting new people and had built positive relationships.
- o 85% felt an increased sense of belonging to their community.
- o 100% were more physically active.
- o 80% showed improved emotional and mental wellbeing.
- o 82% said they felt more able to bounce back from setbacks.
- o 85% felt the programme helped improve or maintain confidence levels.
- o 67% felt they had developed new skills.
- o 92% stated they now knew what plans they needed to put in place to achieve their goals.
- o 98 young people (46% of participants) engaged with career events.
- o 80% are keen to progress onto wider progression pathways.
- o Three young people are now employed with the RFF on a part-time basis.
- o 50 young people (24% of participants) completed training and volunteered in their community.

Quality in Our Diversity Coordinating Group

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

As part of Circle's development of the Quality in Our Diversity project (a partnership project with two other approved housing bodies (AHBs)) an especially dynamic and progressive project Coordinating Group has emerged. This includes 5 tenants from diverse backgrounds and 10 staff from across the organisation including human resources, leadership, and housing services. This group are now seen as the guiding lights, advisors, and mentors in the organisation to oversee the changes that need to happen and to hold Circle to account in its delivery of the project - with the tenant voice at the heart of all changes that need to happen. This project is particularly important in the current climate where we see a negative narrative towards ethnic minorities emerging.

Circle partnered with Cultúr Migrant Centre in Navan for the learning and training delivery stage of their journey. Circle worked with an excellent facilitator who delivered training and workshop sessions from a lived experience and from the perspective of a frontline worker specialising in migrant integration, currently working with minority and racialised groups. An ethos has emerged throughout the development of the project to seek guidance, expertise and training from those with lived experience of the biased and barrier ridden areas of Irish systems, those who work with the most marginalised in order to truly inform and uphold the values of Circle and to maintain a strong human rights and community development approach to this inclusive work.

The Coordinating Group members strongly and actively participated in 19.5 hours of training that involved in-person team building and project

development sessions, along with a combination of online and in-person workshops on Cultural Competency, Understanding Unconscious Bias, Understanding Privilege, Understanding Migration and Anti-Racism. Tenants generously gave of their time to assist the organisation to learn and worked shoulder to shoulder with staff and facilitators to give their perspectives, suggestions and solutions to issues that might arise.

Throughout the process Circle's Coordination Group debated and discussed tenant needs and how to improve service provision. They identified clear ways to support tenants from minority ethnic backgrounds, to integrate into their communities, to ensure that they feel safe and valued and to be free to express and share their culture. Ensuring inclusion is at the core of all actions and changes that happen.

The Coordination Group designed and developed a workplan with key actions on policy development, operational and review processes. This ensures Circle looks at everything through an inclusive lens, to develop understanding on how to include and support more tenants to become involved. Building capacity with staff through targeted training, and identifying ways to create engagement opportunities in instances where more support is needed were delivered.

The development of a language strategy, a key element of this being Circle's implementation of the Recite Me toolbar which has been available for the past year on the website. This toolbar is a game-changer for the organisation in terms of communicating with tenants where English is their second language. An example of the impact of the toolbar is the ability to translate documents such as the tenancy handbook into available languages - this was done recently in Arabic for newly nominated tenants from Syria who came through the Refugee Resettlement Programme, at the touch of a button the staff member was able to immediately meet the new tenant's needs. The development of standardised "fingertip" language/interpretation supports systems, translating key tenant documents into the main in-demand languages has been ground-breaking and has had a significant positive cost benefit impact when compared to bespoke translation of necessary documentation.

Outcomes and achievements

Some strong practical examples of how the Coordinating Group have been effective:

- Circle is now a fully active member of INAR (Irish Network Against Racism) and actively participate in supporting Anti-Racism work nationally as stakeholders and collaborators. A powerful statement that Circle is an antiracist organisation.
- Circle's staff conference provided an opportunity for staff to understand the concept of cultural competency and how to be more inclusive as an organisation.
- Collaborative work - Circle has started creating shared practice spaces to embark on collaborative work such as the "Data Guru" partnership which will help and guide the project's inquiry step.

- The work of human resources to develop policies around recruitment and inclusive practice in hiring, role advertisements, and understanding immigration requirements.
- Crossover in the ongoing tenant engagement work. The benefits and learnings from this project are being embedded across the tenant engagement workplans.
- The Recite Me toolbar reports metrics and other useful information to better understand how tenants engage and communicate with Circle.

All actions and outcomes have come about through working side by side with tenants. The experience has been incredibly valuable, rewarding and will help Circle progress with sustainable plans and approaches to all its work with minoritised tenants.

Co-Own for Over 55s

Co-Ownership



Statement of support

Our population is ageing. By 2045, one in four will be over 65, up from one in six now. The sector needs to consider whether we have the right homes to support people across Northern Ireland to live independently as they become older.

Co-Ownership helps people to become homeowners, and until recently we helped first time buyers and those returning to the market. However, in 2022, we launched Co-Own for Over 55s. A first for NI, this innovative, new shared ownership product supported and funded by the Department for Communities, helps people move to a more suitable home to meet their physical and emotional needs as they age.

Based on our main Co-Own product, applicants to Co-Own for Over 55s use the equity from their home or savings to fund their share of a new, more suitable property. Co-Ownership covers the remaining share.

To ensure the product was accessible to older people, we engaged Age NI and the Commissioner for Older People. Customers can choose to apply online or face to face and have a member of the team support with their application.

We initially launched the product to help people to move closer to family and friends; address health or mobility issues; or have a home that is cheaper and easier maintain. The product can help people over 55 with a lump sum who are not yet homeowners to fund a share. Eighteen months on and the product is having a far greater positive impact on wellbeing than predicted. It is providing a solution to a longer list of housing and financial problems such as:

- Relationship breakdowns - often split household assets have not been enough for a person to buy a home on their own. Customers had found themselves in rented accommodation or living with friends and family, worried that they'll never again afford a secure and safe home.
- Clearing debt - by selling their existing home and using some of their equity to clear debt, we were able to help them buy a new home and move on with life debt free, more financially secure and without the burden of financial stress.
- Family home being sold - carers over 55 live with elderly parents, and after they pass away, the family home has been sold and the proceeds shared among siblings. This can render the person living in the home homeless, with only a portion of value of the home available to them to start again. We've helped people in this situation find a new home with their lump sum.

Customers have shared their experiences of Co-Own for Over 55s.

"I was a little apprehensive about applying but nothing from Co-Ownership side could have been done better. We were informed at every stage - no stress. A life changer for both of us."

"We were on an interest-only mortgage that was just going up and up. It was due to be paid back and we

couldn't afford it. We would have had to rent and that is expensive. It has taken away a lot of stress and anxiety."

"My husband left me after many years. I thought I was secure, but I wasn't. This product has now made me more secure. Everyone I spoke to from the very start

and the whole way through was very helpful. I could not fault anything. It's nice having my own four walls. I aim to fully buy back the rest."

Outcomes and achievements

This product is still in its infancy, and we're already on target to help 30 people into their new homes by April 2024.

The outcomes to date show that we're meeting the housing needs of people across Northern Ireland. We're helping 15 move out of the private rented sector into a secure home of their own. A further 6 were living with friends and family and are now on their way to owning their home.

70% of our applicants have been aged 60 - 69, however we've also helped five people aged 55 - 60, and seven people aged 70+, showing the range of people who are thinking about their housing options and are looking for a better option.

Province-wide awareness of the product has been achieved with applications received from ten out of eleven council areas.

As an organisation, we've learnt how we can support a wider section of society than we were previously by matching innovation against housing need. Crucially, the infrastructure for the product is now in place and with an ageing demographic in Northern Ireland, Co-Ownership is future proofed to provide options to a generation who associate home ownership with security, health and mental wellbeing.

Main St, Randalstown

Lead organisation: Rural Housing Association

Partner organisations: Daly Renewables, GM Design Associates, and Bell Contracts



Statement of support

As the housing sector comes under increasing pressure to reduce carbon emissions and identify innovative solutions to achieving net zero, RHA's Randalstown scheme (completed in Nov 2023) is an example of how innovative approaches to developing greener homes, can reap benefits for both us as an organisation and our service users.

Rural's apartment scheme in Randalstown (9 homes), is an example of a development which prioritises sustainability and sensitive rural design. As part of our sustainability strategy and our path towards Net Zero, we developed a build which utilises greener technology to provide heating, whilst also creating a scheme which reflects the principles of our Rural

Design Guide for Social Housing. To successfully achieve this, we partnered with Daly Renewables, GM Design Associates and Bell Contracts to drive forward a truly unique housing solution.

In terms of sustainability the scheme saw the installation of Rural's first Communal Geothermal Heat Pump System, providing a greener, more energy efficient means of providing heating and hot water to tenants. This innovative approach to reducing our carbon footprint was implemented through a successful partnership with Daly Renewables.

The use of natural resources from the earth, as a means of providing heating to the apartment scheme, is much more environmentally friendly than traditional heating systems such as oil and gas. This technology not only helps us reduce our carbon footprint, but it also provides significant savings for our tenants living within the scheme, by helping reduce energy bills. Never has this been more important than during a cost-of-living crisis.

Rural's innovative approach to design, has included the creation of our Rural Design Guide in partnership with G M Design Associates. Alongside the scheme's commitment to sustainability, we've ensured the aesthetics of the scheme are in-keeping with the surrounding rural character of the area. The scheme's architecture has been designed to reflect the style of the Old Bakery, which was previously located on the site, this innovative approach to design captures the heritage of the local area and is an example of best practice in the delivery of social housing schemes.

Rural surveyed tenants living within the scheme to track levels of satisfaction in relation to the ground source heat pump system installed within the apartment complex. 100% of tenants surveyed indicated they had noticed significant savings in relation to their energy bills compared to their previous home. These high levels of customer satisfaction are indicative of the improved outcomes this type of technology has for our tenants.

“Saving on my heating bills has helped reduce my money worries and enabled me to spend the money I save on other essentials such as food. This has made a huge difference to my circumstances. My home is warm and welcoming, whereas previously I had to try to wrap up warm to save money for food.” RHA Tenant

Ryan Daly (Daly Renewables)

“When you look at what Rural has done in Randalstown, they’ve set the bar high. These technologies have been used in Scandinavian countries for some time now and we need to start looking at these technologies here in N. Ireland. We’ve Net Zero targets to meet. By RHA installing this technology in their scheme, they have shown faith in geothermal heating technology. Credit to Rural, they trusted us to go with a communal system. This is a step forward in the use of this type of technology in apartments schemes and negates the needs for tenants to let contractors in to service their boiler on an annual basis, whilst also providing significant cost saving for residents. This technology is the way of the future.”

Outcomes and achievements

Reduction in carbon emissions: The coefficient of performance (COP) rating for the communal heat pump is 4.9, that means for every 1 kilowatt used in electricity to run the pump, the other 3.9 is coming from the heat source. This provides an efficiency rating of approx. 490%, if we compare this to an oil or gas boiler, COP rating of around 90%, the heat pump is much more efficient.

Value for Money: A cost comparison between the annual running costs of an oil boiler and a ground source heat pump was conducted to provide evidence of value for money.

For a 9 unit, 2-bed apartment scheme the approx. annual running cost of an oil boiler with an efficiency rating of 85% was calculated at: £4,732.51 per year. In comparison the running cost of the heat pump based on current daytime/ nighttime electricity ratings was calculated at £2722.69 leading to an estimated saving of £2009.82. This represents a 42.47% saving in annual running costs per year.

Reduced Borrowing Costs: This scheme is part financed through a Dankse bank sustainability-linked loan, with associated ESG KPIs, this type of loan has helped us benefit from reduced interest on borrowing.

Creating Homes

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

While the causes and consequences of homelessness are many, availability of housing and barriers to access are increasingly the most significant obstacle to ending that homelessness. Recognising those obstacles, as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations Simon Community NI launched a new ‘Creating Homes’ initiative to buy and manage 50 homes for people and households who are experiencing homelessness. We believe that the Creating Homes

Initiative is a valuable service to our communities and a great candidate for the Ireland Housing Award of Excellence in Housing Innovation.

Tenants of Creating Homes will have security of tenure at an affordable rate, with access to support where it is needed. In addition, Creating Homes sets high-quality standards for homes, ensuring that people exiting homelessness have the home they deserve and can be proud of.

Creating Homes breaks the barriers of housing access for people exiting homelessness there can be many obstacles to accessing private renting. There are increasing numbers of people competing to be tenants of a decreasing number of homes, pushing those most marginalised homeless people further away from access. Rents and inflation increases while LHA and housing benefits rates have largely been frozen; making rent unaffordable for many. The need for deposits and rent in advance means that the least financially well off cannot compete. Many landlords will seek to protect their investment by letting to young professionals and people with savings.

Creating Homes bridges this access gap. No deposits or rent in advance is needed. To the contrary, a deposit

is paid on tenants behalf, to be returned to them if they wish to end their tenancy, allowing mobility of tenants.

Creating Homes sets rent rates at an affordable rate for tenants, below market rate and generally at the housing benefit rate. This prevents accrual of cumulative debt and gives certainty to the tenant. Where possible homes are let as a 'home for life', for as long as the household wants and needs.

In addition to being a professional and conscientious landlord for people, Simon Community NI is able to work alongside Creating Homes to support and encourage our new tenants. As Northern Ireland's leading homeless charity, Simon Community understands the impact of homelessness on people. Our Housing Solutions team regularly checks in with our tenants, are alert to signs of housing stress and always available to support Creating Homes tenants as needed, particularly in the transition from emergency accommodation to tenancy.

The work carried out for Creating Homes requires a broad cross section of skill and expertise. This

includes legal, technical and financial expertise in the house purchase and project governance; technical and construction skills in management of renovation and maintenance of properties; careful tenancy management; and providing expert advice and support for people moving from homelessness to tenancies.

The Creating Homes project team ensures that the rental process is seamless and hassle-free for our tenants, compliant with legal regulations and operates with a strong social conscience dedicated to ending homelessness.

Under the expert guidance of the project lead Áine Robinson and stewardship of the Creating Homes Board of Trustees, Creating Homes has a strong project team of experts in necessary fields. Creating Homes has been able to draw on 50 years of Simon Community NI experience working with those experiencing homelessness but also bring in experts in legal, financial, construction and social care sectors. We expect Creating Homes to continue to progress with great volume and scale across all of Northern Ireland over the next few years.

Outcomes and achievements

We are in a homelessness crisis. The NIHE's own statistics show that homelessness services are currently not meeting demand, and that demand is predicted to grow in the coming years. This initiative is a response to that crisis.

To the beginning of December '23 Simon Community have purchased 17 homes, for people who are homeless and are letting those properties at below the market rate to make sure they are affordable for tenants. These 'forever' homes are renovated to a high standard including goods, furnishing and fittings, with the input of tenants.

We support tenants during the transition into their new homes to help them settle into their home and their new community.

To Date Creating Homes has:

- 10 current tenants with 'Homes for Life.'
- 10 clients provided with deposits and other support.
- Multiple families taken out of homelessness including 3 children born while living within Creating Homes.
- 7 homes in the process of purchase and renovation bring the total portfolio of homes to 17.

St. Josephs, Manor Hill, Waterford

Waterford City and County Council



St. Josephs, Manor Hill, Waterford

Photos of Completed Project



Statement of support

St. Joseph's, is a former religious convent encompassing various outbuildings on a 2.29-hectare site in the heart of Waterford City, holding historical significance, with the main building dating back to approximately 1900 and serving as the Convent for the Little Sisters of the Poor. Despite minimal use since 2010, except for a brief period as temporary school accommodation.

All structures on the site are acknowledged in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and are protected structures under the Waterford City Development Plan.

Waterford City and County Council with a private developer appraised the suitability of the building under the Repair and Lease scheme. The Repair and Lease scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties which cannot afford or who do not have access to the funding required to bring these properties up to the rental standards. The Repair and Lease scheme tackles the issue of vacancy as well as having the additional benefits in terms of regenerations, employment and investment in the local area.

Centrally located in Waterford City, this development has promoted and supported independent living and ageing in place for older people through the refurbishment and reuse of vacant buildings. The proposed housing scheme has been thoughtfully designed to offer age-friendly and adaptable apartment layouts within the existing structure of the buildings.

A total of 71 units has been carefully designed, with 50 units situated within the main building and 21 within the various outbuildings clustered on the site. Comprising of 64 apartments and 7 dwelling houses,

the breakdown includes 42 one-bedroom units, 28 two-bedroom units, and 1 three-bedroom unit.

The site's prime city centre location ensures convenient access to a comprehensive range of local services and facilities. Proximity to bus stops serving seven different routes within 250 meters facilitates easy travel to the city centre, Waterford University Hospital, primary health care centres, libraries, shops, and more.

The dwelling units are complemented by well-designed external spaces, fostering a strong connection to the outdoors for both recreation and functional needs, including a community garden and allotments. Despite the site's topography, gently sloping walkways interconnect various areas and establish a seamless connection to the surrounding community, including the well-established Barracks Street and Cartridges Avenue.

The below provides a detailed breakdown of the residential typologies all of which were over 55 years in age:

- 20 units cater to Transfers (medical and downsizing),
- 34 units are allocated through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme.
- 14 units are designated for Open Applicants.
- 2 units fall under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).
- 1 unit accommodates a participant in the Safe Home Programme.

The allocation of 20 transfer units facilitated the strategic reassignment of existing larger residences to families in need, in accordance with the Waterford City and County Council's Rightsizing Policy. In the context of WCCCC's Rightsizing Policy, "Rightsizing" refers to the deliberate action of transitioning to more suitable housing later in life. Additionally, it stands as the most substantial age-friendly unit in the South East of Ireland, if not the largest in the entire country, and is a catalyst for all future projects.

Furthermore, the main building houses a multipurpose day room within the old chapel, offering potential for hosting gatherings and entertainment. This facility is intended to operate in collaboration with the local authority adding an enriching dimension to community life.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=475485004690189>

Outcomes and achievements

This groundbreaking project marks a pioneering initiative in Ireland, presenting a unique opportunity to revitalise iconic buildings, aligning closely with the key objectives outlined in both Rebuilding Ireland and Housing for All. The strategic reuse of vacant structures further aligns with the National Re-Use Strategy and the Waterford Vacant Homes Action Plan.

Positioned as an exemplary undertaking, this site not only facilitates city centre living for older individuals but also serves as a pilot scheme for implementing a Rightsizing Policy for local authority tenants along with age friendly strategies. In response to the 2020 Summary of Social Housing Assessments, revealing

that 22% of qualified households were aged over 50, and 57% were single-person households among 1,267 eligible households, the development's unit breakdown is tailored to address these demographics.

While repurposing existing structures poses challenges in delivering Universal Design features, the adaptability of these buildings, coupled with their proximity to amenities, underlines their significance as viable housing options for older individuals. The completion of 71 units under this scheme ensures the provision of comfortable and spacious homes, fostering a vibrant community within the building and its immediate vicinity.

MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR



Sponsored by:

North & East
Housing Association
Building & Supporting Communities

This award recognises organisations or projects that have demonstrated commitment to tenant involvement, to help improve services or neighbourhoods. We are looking for organisations who are involved in empowering tenants or capacity building as catalysts for delivering real change within a community. Typically, these organisations will be at the forefront of delivering innovative and effective ideas for tenant involvement and strive to empower their tenants to be involved in both the management of their housing and the wider community.

WINNER - Creative Community Art Project

Lead organisation: Radius Housing Association

**Partner organisation: Belfast City Council SEUPB
Peace IV Team**



Statement of support

Radius Diversity Empowerment Project - The Diversity Empowerment Project delivery has taken a practical approach to achieving outcomes in a range of ways using a range of mediums to evoke positive change, reduce fear, and empower tenants to take action to improve their own lives for the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities they live in. This project reflected how bringing tenants together from a range of cultures and backgrounds and providing a safe space with a common goal can create a more healthy, happy and more cohesive community and empower tenants as a collective driver for change.

Background

The Diversity Project was designed and delivered in partnership with tenants from the Ravenhill Shared Development including Global Crescent, Ravenhill Avenue and Cantrell Close and as a result of feedback from a tenant consultation process. The area had seen paramilitary unrest, placement of paramilitary banners and flags, negative media coverage within the Ravenhill area. Tenants demonstrated an interest in Art, Environmental and Childrens Programmes. This was used as a medium to engage and empower tenants to create positive change and address some of the current issues they were dealing with locally through the design and development of a Diversity Empowerment Programme.

Workshops were created, codesigned and facilitated with a hands-on and interactive community-based and tenant-led approach supported by the Radius Communities Officer with Radius. It included a range of workshops across 4 separate diversity programmes to improve, enhance and make their area a safer, more diverse, and welcoming place to live with a focus on tenant empowerment.

1. Diversity in Art
2. Diversity in Bloom
3. Diversity in Drama
4. Creative Community Art Project

Diversity in Art facilitated by artist Dee Craig, Belfast Mural Arts and partners including SEUPB/Peace IV and Belfast City Council.

- Belfast Artwork Tour
- Creative Art Workshops
- Groupwork Sessions
- Residentials
- Launch Events
- Good Relations & Cultural Events
- Community Fun Days
- Removal of paramilitary banners & flags in the area
- Regular Street Clean Ups

Design and Installation of Artwork -

- 14 cultural banners on external posts
- 12 community art panels internally within the apartment block
- 1 x 123ft Art Panel in Global Crescent & 1 x 35ft Art Panel in Cantrell Close both promoting safe, culturally diverse, and inclusive communities.

Promotion and Publicity

- Production of a Video to showcase the project accessed via QR Code
- Press Releases
- Design of a Creative Community Art Booklet

Diversity in Bloom - further enhanced the area and complemented the artwork. Tenants attended training and upskilled themselves through delivery of environmental enhancement programmes. This was delivered in partnership with Conservation Volunteers, Willowfield Church, Orchardville, Keep NI Beautiful, Live Here Love Here and Belfast City Council -

- Radius Biodiversity Programmes
- Make and Donate Workshops
- Make and Take Workshops
- Registering with Live Here, Love Here as an Adopt a Spot area.
- Completing regular tenant street clean-ups.
- Installation of 2 communal community gardens.
- Won the Radius Community Garden of the Year Award

Diversity in Drama- this was a children's afterschool's and summer programme facilitated by CMAC Drama academy to teach new skills, build the self-esteem and confidence of children of Radius tenants in the Shared Development and the wider community and delivered in partnership with Willowfield Church Youth Team to give children a voice.

- Afterschools Drama Programme
- Summer Drama Programme
- Christmas Community Pantomime
- Cultural Parade and Festival

Training & Education

- First Aid Certificate
- Child Protection Training
- OCN in Youthwork
- OCN Level 2 in Good Relations
- Driving Programme
- OCN Level 1 in Community Development
- Governance Training
- ILM Level 3 in Leadership & Management
- OCN Level 1 in Conflict Resolution
- OCN Level 1 in Peace & Reconciliation

Outcomes and achievements

- 300+ participants
- 130+ tenants involved and empowered.
- 127 accreditations achieved by tenants.
- Better Cohesive Community Relationships have been built and maintained.
- Restorative Practices Implemented through training, resulting in reduced escalation of neighbourhood issues.
- New Lifelong Skills Gained (3 tenants have secured employment in the local community which will improve life outcomes and tenancy sustainment).
- Raised Cultural Awareness and Understanding of Difference creating a more cohesive, inclusive, respectful neighbourhood.
- Tenants Feel More Empowered and Heard
- Reduction in Reporting of incidences of ASB and crime to PSNI

- An improved sense of community safety
- Increased tenant involvement with tenants signing up to Tenant Forums

Quote - female tenant

'This project enhanced the importance of working together and sharing thoughts and our personal aspirations to create a stronger bond with each other and build a stronger, safer and more empowered neighbourhood'.

100% of participants on the Creative Community Art Project agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they are more likely to take part in future activities with those from different backgrounds as a result of participating in the Diversity Empowerment Programme.

87.5% felt that they had developed a more positive relationship with their neighbour as a result of the project.

Stock Transfer

Choice Housing Ireland



Statement of support

In 2020, Choice and Victoria Housing Estates (VHE) finalised a stock transfer. Due to lack of investment over many years by VHE, hundreds of their properties fell below the Decent Homes Standard and required significant upgrading works. VHE tenants had long campaigned for improvements to their homes and following extensive consultation with former VHE tenants, a stock transfer was agreed resulting in 301 VHE properties and tenancies moving to Choice with the expectation that their homes would undergo extensive refurbishment.

The properties are located in;

- Cherryhill, Dundonald
- Harmin, Glengormley
- Riverdale and Finaghy Road North, Belfast
- Hollywood Road, Belfast,
- Worcester and Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor
- Silverstream, Belfast

Key objectives included:

- Completion of initial phase of refurbishment works to void VHE properties to provide quality temporary decant accommodation;
- Completion of all refurbishment works to void and occupied properties by Summer 2024;
- Provision of a secure tenancy to all residents.

Challenges included:

- Multiple locations of properties;
- Decanting of tenants;
- Transfer of stock and tenancies from VHE, a private landlord, to Choice, a social landlord;
- Tenant age profiles;
- Condition of properties;
- Some properties did not meet regulatory standards.

A complex programme was developed to deliver the works over a three year period (2021-2024). Phase 1 focused on refurbishment works to void properties to support temporary decanting of tenants. Phase 1 is now complete, with over 70 void properties fully refurbished.

Works to occupied properties are being delivered in Phases 2-9 of the project, via multiple works contracts, four of which have completed (Cherryhill, Harmin Phases 3 and 4, and Riverdale). To date, Choice have completed refurbishment works to over 60 of the occupied properties.

Circumstances varied across the areas. A large number of tenants had been in their homes for many years, and were an active part of their community with strong community relations. Community engagement and buy in was, and continues to be, a key factor in the successful delivery of this project.

Initial engagement was through public meetings. Ongoing tenant and local community engagement includes;

- Dedicated Tenant Liaison Officer
- Issue of VHE Newsletter
- Consultation Letter Updates
- Telephone and face to face communications with VHE delivery team
- Local Elected Representative updates

Engagement has been to the core of this project. As works progress to on-site stage, engagement between tenants, Choice and our main contractors is carefully co-ordinated ensuring the decant process progresses efficiently. This also ensures that tenants' requirements are met in terms of the works including finishes and approval of samples.

Choice's Tenant Liaison Officer plays a vital role, acting as the point of contact for tenants. At Riverdale for example, Choice hold a weekly Tenant Surgery, where tenants and others can call in to address any concerns, ask questions, choose their finishes or just have a chat and a cup of coffee.

Eddie Neeson MBE, Choice Tenant (Riverdale):

"Being back in my own house is a great feeling, memories are still there, but the house is refurbished and in great condition. Choice have been great, Lorna (Tenant Liaison Officer) was the point of contact and it was great."

Paul Maskey, MP for West Belfast:

"The difference that Choice have made to the Riverdale area after taking ownership of the properties is a very positive one. They have engaged with residents and worked out a plan in conjunction with tenants to refurbish their homes.

The work that has been carried out on the refurb has made a massive positive difference to the properties. The tenants are now living in homes that are fit for purpose, warm, modernised and this has made major improvements to the quality of people’s lives who live there.”

Outcomes and achievements

This project has been particularly outstanding due to:

- multiples works contractors and phases; and
- extent of works and decanting requirements.

In addition, the initial transfer of stock and tenancies from private to social meant this was a unique project from the outset that required an innovative approach to ensure successful delivery demonstrated through:

- Over 130 properties fully refurbished, including 70 previously void properties (now available for allocation to reduce Social Housing Waiting List);
- Completion of full refurbishment works to 2 properties to enhanced retrofit specification including External Wall Insulation (EWI), enhanced roof and ground floor insulation, triple glazing, Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery system and Solar PV;
- Improved energy efficiency reducing costs for tenants through installation of new heating systems, insulation and double glazed windows;

- Successful completion of decant and recant to over 55 occupied properties;
- 4 extensions/adaptations completed, providing long term, enhanced accessible living accommodation;
- Average construction period 16-20 weeks per property;
- Achieving zero defects handovers through continuous site inspections, rigorous snagging and de-snagging process and clear pre-handover and handover process; and
- Stakeholder buy in and continued engagement, recognising individual tenant needs and circumstances.

Overall, this transformative regeneration project has resulted in major improvements to the quality of tenants’ lives.

Tenant to Board Pathway

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Circle Voluntary Housing Association’s (VHA’s) Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy, written by tenants, sets out a tenant engagement structure with 14 ways for tenant involvement in Circle VHA. The final opportunity for delivery states that Circle and the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) will “carry out a process that will enable tenant representation on the Circle VHA Board” by the end of 2024.

A process to achieve this was developed by the TAG. In 2022 the TAG’s eight members undertook facilitated workshops to consider the steps to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence to support tenants becoming Board members. Members of the TAG spoke about the learnings taken from the previous year, how they managed challenging meetings, membership and identifying and responding to gaps within the TAG’s Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference.

Alongside their normal meetings and services oversight, the TAG developed an eight-step process across two work streams running concurrently with Board member actions to enable learning, knowledge sharing and support to the TAG, staff, and Board.

Steps 1 & 2: TAG members attended committee and Board meetings in 2023 as visitors, to experience how meetings are conducted and understand the administration, discussion, and decision-making processes. TAG members, alongside staff, presented their eight-step process at the Board away-day in March 2023. This was hugely influential in securing Board support and contributed to a real sense of

achievement and confidence in the TAG. Tenants, Directors, and frontline staff discussed their own housing journeys and the shared experiences growing up and/or currently living in social housing, its benefits and supports. The learnings from this process and consideration of the resulting questions were imbedded in the 8-step process.

Steps 3 & 4: A review of Board member inductions occurred with the TAG and feedback from Board members included. In particular, the question of how Circle could introduce the lived experience of tenants into the onboarding process for new members. This has supported building capacity with committee and Board members, allowing real insight into how Circle deliver homes and services from a tenant and staff perspective. The TAG completed professional boundaries training to help develop professional skills and understand the role and commitments to become a committee or Board member.

Steps 5 & 6: TAG members drafted a skills analysis, identifying in-depth governance and conflicts of interest training as a requirement. A partnership was formed with the Wheatley Group Glasgow and their Board Chair, with their subsidiary Chair, visited Dublin to speak to tenants, staff and Board members

at Circle's staff conference, sharing experienced of tenant representation on their Board. In turn, two TAG members, David, and Brightness, visited the Wheatley Group to meet their tenants, staff and Board, share ideas and reflect on shared challenges and accomplishments.

Steps 7 & 8: The pinnacle of the year was the work the TAG undertook in developing the scope of a new committee reporting to the Board where the tenant experience is considered, monitored, and reported upon. The TAG created a Terms of Reference, considered the purpose, membership, Chair, and key responsibilities. The Terms of Reference were presented to the Board in October 2023 and approved unanimously. The Tenant First Link Committee is to be established in March 2024, with membership of Board members, the Board Chair and at least two tenants. TAG member, Lorraine, presented a review of the TAG's 2023 work and their workplan for 2024 to the Circle Board in December, cementing the relationship and continued commitment.

We are exceptionally proud of the work of our TAG members; April, Brightness, David, Gerry, Lorraine, Pauline, Samantha, and Siobhan.

Outcomes and achievements

"Tenant communication and engagement are about how our tenants can voice what we as an organisation do. We want to empower our tenants to be involved in running their homes and communities whilst having a say in the shaping of the areas where they live. We want to give tenants a choice in how they take part at different levels of engagement" Circle Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy 2021.

The TAG's achievements include:

- Presenting their strategic work at the Circle annual staff conference.
- Undertaking professional boundaries training.
- Achieving 97% completion rate of the Tenant Communication and Engagement work plan in 2023.

- David and Lorraine presented TAG's work and shared learnings at the Supporting Communities All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference in Dundalk.
- Approved ten tenant led policies in 2023 and oversaw satisfaction surveys and actions addressing dissatisfaction.
- Presented work plans and the work of the TAG to Circle's Board, leading the 2023 Board away-day.
- Developed and achieved Board approval of the Terms of Reference and established a new Tenant First Link Committee reporting to the Circle Board.
- Delivered Tenant Engagement Training in person to Circle staff.
- Reviewed and redeveloped induction procedures for Board members.

Killarney

Clann Housing



Statement of support

Nestled in the foothills of the Kerry mountains, Clann Housing's trio of age-friendly schemes - Holy Cross Gardens, Oakwood, and Coill na Darach - showcase a community that goes beyond the conventional notion of mere bricks and mortar. These housing developments are more than simply somewhere to age in place - they embody a collective spirit that brings residents together in a shared sense of belonging. The scenic location, coupled with proximity to Killarney's heart, creates an environment where residents not only find comfortable homes, but also form meaningful connections, turning these housing schemes into vibrant communities that thrive on mutual support and shared experiences. Our Scheme Managers have supported and encouraged residents in developing the following community initiatives:

Music and Well-being Activities: Recognising the therapeutic power of music, residents have benefitted from a series of activities that go beyond entertainment. From curated music sessions to well-being workshops and weekly coffee mornings, these initiatives have not only lifted spirits but have also contributed to the overall mental and emotional well-being of our residents.

Reminiscence Project: In the world of social housing, residents often face unfair stereotyping. Clann has taken up the challenge to rewrite this narrative, drawing inspiration from Simon Brooke's commitment to altering perceptions in the social housing realm. Supported by the Creative Ireland Kerry (CIK) Creative Community Grant Scheme, this heartfelt endeavour has sought to honour the unique stories within our community. Residents shared their life journeys,

reflecting on history, achievements, challenges overcome, and contributions to their communities. Captured in poignant reminiscence videos, this project has been a catalyst for a notable increase in emotional well-being, boosting self-esteem, and fostering a deep sense of acknowledgment and value. Through shared stories, our community has become a tapestry of diverse experiences, fostering a strong sense of unity and mutual understanding.

Dedicated Gardening Group: Our green-fingered residents formed a vibrant gardening group that beautified our surroundings and played a pivotal role in securing for the schemes a coveted Killarney Looking Good Award. The gardening group's efforts have not only enhanced the appearance of the development but also instilled a sense of pride and accomplishment among our residents. They are currently working on a swift conservation project for the scheme in partnership with Killarney Tidy Towns and Swift Conservation Ireland.

Money Saving Workshops: Empowering our residents with practical financial skills, our money-saving workshops have been a resounding success. By partnering with financial experts, we've equipped our community with invaluable knowledge, fostering financial well-being and ensuring that our residents thrive in their home environment.

Four Seasons Calendar: For the past three years, Clann has been inviting residents to participate in the Four Seasons Photography Competition, a unique endeavour that spans the entire year. With four competitions aligning with the seasons, the project culminates in the creation of a printed calendar featuring the winning photos. This calendar is not just a visual delight; it serves as a heartfelt gift to over 1,000 Clann residents nationwide and key stakeholders. With 12 winners throughout the year, the project ensures inclusivity, acknowledging the diverse perspectives and talents within the Clann community. The printed calendar, distributed to every Clann resident nationwide, becomes a symbol of collective celebration. It not only showcases the residents' artistic endeavours but also reinforces a sense of belonging and shared accomplishment.

Collaboration with Alzheimer's Ireland and MS Ireland: Strong partnerships with these organisations enable regular coffee mornings on the schemes providing invaluable information and support to residents.

Outcomes and achievements

These Clann age-friendly housing developments stand as a testament to the transformative power of community engagement, collaboration, and holistic well-being. The outcomes of these projects are both tangible – the Reminiscence Project, Four Seasons Calendar and the Killarney Looking Good award – and intangible. Since participating, residents have reported improved mental wellbeing, self-esteem and community integration, with reductions in feelings of loneliness and isolation. They have also reported that the money saving workshops have improved their financial wellbeing.

The initiatives implemented are not merely projects; they are ongoing expressions of our dedication to creating a living environment that enriches the lives of our aging residents and extends a positive influence in the wider community.

We believe our innovative initiatives, fuelled by tenant participation, community engagement, and collaboration with external organisations, exemplify the highest standards of excellence in creating thriving, interconnected, and well-supported living environments for our residents. We are more than just bricks and mortar.

Empowering tenant engagement in Dungannon with the Tenant's Regional Panel

Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)



Statement of support

The unprecedented challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions meant that Habinteg's Housing and Community team had to create effective ideas for continuing their excellent tenant engagement and support in a restricted environment. Bringing together two schemes in Dungannon, Castle Gardens and The Cloisters, through online activities became a catalyst for a still thriving Community engagement which has had far reaching impacts on the tenants.

In introducing activities online such as health and wellbeing, photography, healthy eating, mindfulness and reminiscence, the tenants - many of whom suffer from complex health concerns including insomnia, fibromyalgia, addiction, rheumatoid arthritis and mental health issues - found an ideal opportunity to build relationships in a safe and supported environment.

Following the easing of restrictions tenants met in person and with the support of Communities team organised events in the Habinteg Community Hub at Castle Gardens. Tenants chose the activities and projects and were keen to take part in available

courses and training. In January 2022, a Habinteg tenant completed OCN Level 2 Community Capacity Building training which brought in new skills to identify and plan a community project, develop and monitor its progress and design a marketing strategy! The training group was made up of tenants from across Northern Ireland and it was a great opportunity to build skills and relationships with other Habinteg and Radius Tenants.

These skills really empowered tenants to think about the challenges of living in Dungannon and what types of activities they could organise to meet the needs of the residents living there. Habinteg engaged with the tenants and established 'Dungannon Tenant Regional Panel' with the aim of promoting tenants involvement with proper structures in place to represent tenants effectively. The first meeting was held in February 2023 with seven tenants attending to discuss local issues with staff from Habinteg. The key themes of discussion included getting to know tenants from different cultures who live in Dungannon, engaging children and young people, the cost-of-living crisis and maintenance concerns relating to their homes. Habinteg embraced the challenge and co-designed a programme which would secure funding and help to deliver a multi-faceted approach to address all the issues raised. Below is an outline of the programme which has been very successful in empowering tenants and delivering real change:

- A Romanian tenant, keen to pass on her skills in knitting and crocheting, to the young (and other tenants), and another tenant with a keen interest in arts and crafts have set up weekly meetings in the Community Hub. They advertised their sessions as an opportunity to bring tenants together. These weekly classes are ongoing with tenants coming along for skill sharing and socialising.

- Habinteg submitted two funding applications: the Police Property Fund Grant Scheme to deliver a youth engagement project; The National Lottery to deliver a health and wellbeing programme addressing the cost-of-living crisis. Habinteg were delighted that both projects received funding. This would not have been a success without the co-design model involving tenants at the heart of the projects.
- In June 2023 tenants met with Habinteg Planned Maintenance Manager for engagement over their concerns around maintenance issues. They received an update regarding the programme for planned works to be completed at both Castle Gardens and The Cloisters schemes.
- Weekly photography workshops started in October 2023, which aimed to provide individuals with a creative outlet for self-expression, personal growth, and learning. The programme encouraged participants self-reflection and group discussions with trained facilitators who created a supportive environment for participants. Participants continue to meet weekly and are looking forward to hosting an exhibition of their photographs in the new year.

Outcomes and achievements

Feedback from programme:

- “Excellent programme for supporting my mental health, this has really been positive for me”.
- “The course was hosted online, and I was able to attend from the comfort of my own home. I’ve learned so much from taking part which has helped build my confidence to take part in community activities”.
- The knitting and crocheting group now display their crafts and knitting in the community hub and many of the tenants who were experiencing isolation due to their health or language barriers are now attending weekly sessions and no longer need the regular support of their community psychiatric nurse.
- In July 2023, Habinteg reported to The Police Property Fund Grant Scheme that they had engaged:
 - 78 participants aged 7-10 years
 - 59 participants aged 11-18 years
 - 22 workshops were held
 - 15 participants gained level 2 accreditation in Sports Diversity
 - 3 short films were recorded on family crisis
 - 137 participants were less likely to engage in ASB or other risk-taking behaviours
 - The National Lottery programme is ongoing and 14 participants in Dungannon have just completed a six-week healthy eating programme which participants received a weekly £5 Tesco voucher and end of project slow cooker or air fryer.

Bringing Spring to Springbank - Springbank Drive Community Greenspace

Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)



Statement of support

Habinteg launched its Community and Sustainability strategies early in January 2023 which detailed outcomes for increased community greenspace on our schemes. Coinciding with this launch, a Habinteg Housing Officer suggested the development of a small piece of derelict land within the Springbank Drive scheme. The area had been fenced off approximately 20 years ago, due to anti-social behaviour, had remained untouched and had thrived in its abandonment, allowing nature to reclaim it with native grasses, trees and insects making it their home.

Habinteg undertook door to door surveys to gather views of how the community would like the space to be utilised. Tenants were very keen to see something positive done and encouraged the Association to create something which could be shared and enjoyed by the community. Tenants also felt there would be benefits of partnering with Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP) and Good Shepherd Primary School which resulted in the decision that the space should be used as a community education area for local projects and an outdoor classroom for local school children.

Habinteg's further engagement with the community, school and tenants resulted in three priority objectives to be met:

- Tenants living close to the site reported that during heavy rainfall, the site would become saturated, leading to excess runoff that often inundates their properties.

- Good Shepherd School needed a space that was both accessible and large enough for a group of schoolchildren.
- CNP had requested a raised bed to allow them to teach the local community the value of home-grown vegetables.

Habinteg appointed the Turnaround Project, a local charity that provides work experience opportunities for ex-offenders to improve their employment prospects, to carry out the works required on site. Working in partnership with the Turnaround Project, the project was completed meeting all objectives and requirements of the community including an accessible pathway leading to a raised classroom area, the removal of non-natives species to provide space for the raised bed, and the installation of a SUDs (Sustainable Drainage System) that would passively manage rain runoff onsite while increasing biodiversity. The site is now a practical multipurpose green space enjoyed by the whole community, bringing them together in a variety of ways. One tenant who had reservations about the project commented that they were "really proud that something like this could be ours, something special we can all use".

Habinteg's community team have continued and grown their connections with CNP and Good Shepherd Primary School by:

- hosting environmental sessions at Habinteg's Brianswell Community Hub in partnership with CNP
- delivering climate awareness sessions to the schoolchildren
- CNP engagement with the school on a project to create artwork for the completed site

The space has become a source for wider education, with Queens University MSc students currently using the development as a case study of best practice for future investment in social housing greenspace as a climate action measure.

Outcomes and achievements

Habinteg set out to make use of a derelict space but it was with collaboration and an empowering connection with the community that delivered the successful outcomes of the project.

- Turning a derelict eyesore into a multipurpose greenspace which has benefitted Habinteg tenants and the wider local community.
- Enhanced engagement opportunities with tenants and gave them the opportunity to input into the design and use of the space.
- Connecting with the local community and maintaining new key relationships.
- Partnering with Turnaround Project in order to reinvest into society in line with the Association's Vision of Homes, Lives, Communities.
- Maintaining as much biodiversity as possible and ensuring this was a space for all living creatures, great and small - leaving space for nature while providing raised beds, pathways and learning space.
- Creating an educational hub where schoolchildren learn, the community learns and university students study as best practice in social development.
- Increasing community green space within schemes and delivering on Association's Community and Sustainability strategies.

"Embracing Community: The Enduring Legacy of Iveagh Trust's Kevin Street Estate"

The Iveagh Trust



Statement of support

Ireland's oldest social housing complex; Ireland's largest social housing flat complex; some of the densest housing in Europe; a vibrant neighborhood; a Dublin landmark; an architectural heritage site, and one of the city's closest communities: the Iveagh Trust's Kevin Street estate reflects the vision of the Trust's founders and the spirit of generations of families who have grown up in this remarkable city-center estate.

It is one of the many projects that reflects the vision of the founding father of the Iveagh Trust - to build estates that not only provide housing for people in need but also have what it takes to make communities thrive.

Those supports and services have morphed into communities taking ownership and responsibility for the activities and contributing to the day-to-day running of the estate.

Kevin Street residents elect a committee to represent them and to work in a spirit of collaboration and

partnership with the Iveagh Trust; this serves as a cornerstone for dialogue, addressing estate issues, and ensuring that concerns are promptly acknowledged and addressed.

Begun in 1894 and among the oldest of Dublin's social housing estates (and the oldest in continuous use), the Kevin Street estate has housed generations of families. With a total of 474 homes in the heart of the city, Iveagh Trust and the residents at Kevin Street have built an inclusive and diverse community for all ages with the active presence of the Trust's staff.

In 2018, an interagency group including the Iveagh Trust, residents, Dublin City Council, and the Gardai, set out to reclaim the adjacent Cabbage Patch Park, which had been a hotspot for antisocial activities. The work of the group helped to restore the park as an asset to the community for events like Family Fun Days, Pet Shows, and Halloween Parties, among others.

The sense of community among the residents was never more prominent than during the COVID-19 pandemic. With lockdown and movement restrictions imposed, residents at the estate came up with creative ideas for people to interact with one another and celebrate the spirit of the community. During the summer months of 2020, residents organized "Balcony Bingo" which not only allowed residents to renew old friendships and reconnect with one another but also raised over €20,000 for charities across Dublin.

Arising from this renewed community spirit, some residents formed a garden committee. This remains an active part of the working of the estate, providing attractive, biodiverse spaces in a dense urban environment. The Garden Committee also facilitates opportunities for enhanced social interaction, activity, and combatting loneliness; and through

the involvement of children for education and new experiences.

Historically, the Iveagh Trust has provided various opportunities for self-development and education. To further accommodate the new activities, the Trust refurbished the Kevin Street community room which acts as a space for multiple uses, ranging from weekly community activities like Bingo Nights for older residents, Youth Club for the younger residents, or

sometimes just as a space where residents gather to have a friendly chat.

Bricks and mortar hold buildings together: the community here is held together by bonds of friendship, neighborliness, and generations growing up together, welcoming newcomers and passing down traditions of the neighborhood and the spirit of Iveagh Trust communities.

Outcomes and achievements

1. 2019 - Won City Neighbourhood Award by DCC & Community Environment Initiative Award in conjunction with the Cabbage Interagency Development Group
2. 2021 - Won 1st place for City Neighbourhoods Awards by DCC
3. 2022 - Won 1st place in Apartment Complex Category & Runners up in Residential Category by DCC
4. 2023 - Won Runners up in the Residential category by DCC

PROMOTING SHARED AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

clanmil
HOUSING

Sponsored by:



This award recognises housing and related initiatives that encourage the integration of people and communities from different backgrounds. Housing can make important contributions to social integration and has a key role to play in achieving community cohesion. We are looking for organisations that can demonstrate thoughtful development and innovative local engagement schemes to promote diversity in terms of race, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, housing tenure or other categories. We are looking for entries that promote shared spaces, increase positive interactions within communities, and help tenants/residents to integrate and make meaningful contributions to community life.

WINNER - Bringing people together through Culture Calendar 2023

Woven, formerly Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster)



Statement of support

Habinteg is committed to providing accessible, affordable, inclusive homes and excellent services to enrich the lives and communities of all tenants. They believe that by supporting and encouraging neighbourhoods where everyone in the community is valued and respected, and where diversity is

celebrated, they can help build a shared and safe society that is enriched by cultural diversity. To do this, Habinteg puts tenants at the heart of their services and invites participation and tenant involvement. All Habinteg tenants sign a Good Neighbour Agreement outlining a commitment to show respect to neighbours and treat everyone fairly.

During 2023, Habinteg organised a whole range of initiatives in collaboration with tenants, community groups and statutory organisations to increase community cohesion among tenants and the wider communities around their housing schemes. Among this range of initiatives are the many projects co-designed with Advisory Groups - representatives from local community groups - along with elected representatives and statutory organisations. The key to the success of the Advisory Groups is the grass roots approach to delivering good relations with people from the community having knowledge of local issues, able to identify relevance of themes and gaps in delivery. This knowhow helps to reduce duplication of events, activities and services, and flags programmes

which complement existing local services.

A good example in 2023 was the Culture Calendar - delivered to tenants across Northern Ireland in partnership with Radius Housing and ArtsEkta. The launch of the project was celebrated in Good Relations week in September, working with four primary schools from across Coleraine and Portrush, one of Habinteg's Housing for All neighbourhoods. Over 100 children of P7 age joined dozens of tenants for the event in Portstewart, to learn about cultures from India, Eastern Europe and Mexico - celebrating traditional music, art, and dance.

Following this successful launch event, the Habinteg communities team delivered 200 culture boxes and calendars to tenants, advisory group members and primary schools in Portrush and Holywood - another of Habinteg's Housing for All communities. The culture boxes included crafts, recipe cards and information cards on customs from around the world and the calendar provided information and interesting facts on a different country each month.

Quarterly events through 2023 helped to sustain the culture calendar, with primary schools, local community and residents in Habinteg's Housing for All regions, coming together to experience the customs, arts, foods and cultures of China, Poland, India and

Spain.

Feedback from the events provides evidence of the success of the projects:

"It was wonderful to see tenants coming together from different schemes from around the Northwest to celebrate diversity and inclusivity. We had a wonderful afternoon learning about the different Indian traditions and cultures and loved the Indian cooking demo followed by lunch."

"I would love to see a lot more of these types of events celebrating our commonalities and differences from across the North."

Feedback from teacher Leanne Penn, Mill Strand Primary School - "A very enjoyable event that the children gained a lot from. It is extremely important for the pupils to be accepting of people who are different from themselves while respecting and celebrating the differences in all people. It also encouraged the children to build friendships with other children from other Portrush Primary Schools."

Feedback from Primary 7 Mill Strand Pupil - 'I have realised that we're all humans living in this world and despite our differences in how we look or dress, or what we eat or how we talk, we should all accept the different cultures from around the world'.

Outcomes and achievements

Habinteg's core effort continues to embody our important contributions to social integration within our schemes, the local community and it has a key role to play in achieving community cohesion. Habinteg believe their Cultural Calendar programme was innovative in its engagement, promoting diversity and involving the widest range of people and groups in terms of race, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, and housing tenure. Habinteg worked closely with community groups to help with promotion among tenants and tenants from the surrounding communities both rural and urban.

Through all of Habinteg's events they have promoted shared spaces and provided support to tenants, where everyone has the opportunity to make positive contributions to their community, developing a sense

of belonging and community ownership. Habinteg strives to bring together people from diverse communities and are focused and motivated in training activities where good relations is an inherent part.

Statistics from the Culture Calendar Programme:

- Advisory Group involved in the co-design meet 3 times per year and is attended by 12-15 participants
- 200 cultural boxes distributed
- 200 culture calendars distributed
- 4 primary schooled involved
- 1,500 participants benefited from taking part in the project

Northern Lights – a celebration of NI culture

Lead organisation: Apex Housing Association

Partner organisations: Department for Communities, NI Housing Executive, Radius Housing. Community Relations Council and 10 other housing associations (for Belfast concert)



Statement of support

Apex Housing Association (Apex) recognises that housing alone cannot address the division that exists in our society. It's necessary to work in partnership with government departments, statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector to improve opportunities for people in segregated areas. Diverse communities are more sustainable and will attract people to live side by side, whilst generating the conditions for greater sharing and integration.

Feedback from stakeholders in the 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme highlighted that there was an emphasis on celebrating other cultures within communities, but that people coming to live in our country were not always familiar with the culture of Northern Ireland. This led to the conception of Northern Lights – an entertaining event to communicate and celebrate our local culture.

Apex began working with Peter Corry Productions to develop a piece of theatre to promote Northern Irish music, dance and spoken word. Jointly developed, Northern Lights positively promoted the culture and history of Northern Ireland to those individuals and families that have settled here but are originally from another country and background. Initially delivered in Dungannon, the audience feedback was that they enjoyed an uplifting and entertaining event and went away with a deeper insight into Northern Ireland's culture and history.

Ian McElhinney (Granda Joe from 'Derry Girls') was

compère and introduced the audience to a raft of talented artists, including Irish and Highland dancers, a Highland and Uilleann Piper, traditional Irish singers and musicians and a showband. Also among the performers was Lambeg Boogie, who fuse Irish, Ulster Scots and bluegrass music, with a Lambeg drum and electric guitar.

The A-Z of typical words synonymous to Northern Ireland was presented by the compère and assisted by an intercultural choir. It presented Northern Irish humour while informing the participants that SCUNDERED actually means embarrassed. One minority ethnic participant told organisers that she had been living in Northern Ireland for two years and had heard some of the words, but now knew what those words meant.

The production was able to incorporate an intercultural choir, developed by Apex and Radius Housing in Dungannon. In November 2021, St Patrick's College and Drumglass High School, supported through the shared housing programme, came together to form the first joint choir in Dungannon between a predominately Catholic and Protestant School. When the choir was formed, it represented 14 nationalities and entertained the late-night Christmas shoppers in Dungannon by singing Carols in the town centre. Friendships were formed and encouraged and the members participated in a number of events outside of choir practice, including lantern making workshops and extra-curricular activities, including showcasing how other cultures celebrate Christmas and how to say Merry Christmas in different languages. Participation in the Peter Corry event gave the choir a platform to perform with international singers.

Following the success of the initial Northern Lights event in Dungannon, Apex went on to deliver a further two concerts in East Belfast, in September 2022, and in Antrim in February 2023.

The culmination of the Northern Lights project was a large-scale event held in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast to celebrate Good Relations week in September 2023. Apex, Department for Communities, NI Housing Executive and Community Relations Council worked together with 12 other housing associations to organise the event. Tenants from 69 shared communities in Northern Ireland attended, with invites also extended to community groups, ethnic minority groups, advisory groups, and political representatives.

Outcomes and achievements

1,158 people attended the Northern Lights productions, including people from 19 different cultural backgrounds. Feedback from attendees showed that the various cultures enjoyed coming together to learn about the Northern Irish culture.

The event showcased the similarities between the Irish and Northern Irish communities and the British and Northern Irish communities. Minority ethnic families stated that they loved hearing about various aspects of the NI culture, and it gave them an understanding of the unique humour of the people of Northern Ireland.

Tenants said they loved meeting people from other

shared communities from across Northern Ireland's 11 different council areas. The project allowed them to share stories and create friendships, as well as enjoying the events.

The intercultural choir from Dungannon was incorporated into all events. The climax for them being that they were given the opportunity to perform at the Waterfront Hall. A well-deserved platform for this fantastic multi-racial, cross-community school choir, whose members have formed lifelong friendships.

2min video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_Ydvog_PFc

Community FUNd Newtownards

Ark Housing



Statement of support

Ark Housing's Community FUNd Newtownards: A Catalyst for Inclusive Communities

Housing's Community FUNd Newtownards project proudly stands as a beacon of hope, demonstrating the power of participatory budgeting to foster inclusivity and strengthen community cohesion. This innovative initiative, implemented in Newtownards, empowers local residents to take ownership of their community's development, bridging divides and fostering a shared sense of purpose.

At the heart of the Community FUNd Newtownards project lies a simple yet profound concept: giving local residents the power to decide how public funds are allocated to address their community's needs. This participatory approach dismantles traditional power structures, empowering marginalized groups to have a direct say in shaping their surroundings.

The project's success is evident in the tangible outcomes it has achieved. Ten local groups received funding of £1000 each, enabling them to implement imaginative and engaging projects that brought people together from diverse backgrounds. These projects fostered a sense of unity and belonging, strengthening community connections and relationships.

Beyond the immediate impact on individual projects, the Community FUNd Newtownards initiative has instilled a sense of ownership and agency among local residents, empowering them to take charge of their community's future. This empowerment has fostered a spirit of collaboration and partnership, with groups working together to identify shared needs and develop mutually beneficial projects.

Ark Housing's commitment to inclusivity is further demonstrated by the project's inclusive design and application process. The events and workshops held to promote the project were open to all groups, including constituted and non-constituted organizations, ensuring that the most marginalized voices were heard. The uncomplicated and flexible funding process further empowered communities to participate and make meaningful contributions.

The Community FUNd Newtownards project is a prime example of how participatory budgeting can be a powerful tool for promoting inclusivity and cultivating a sense of shared ownership within communities. Ark Housing's dedication to this innovative approach has transformed lives in Newtownards, creating a more vibrant, cohesive, and inclusive community.

Outcomes and achievements

For individual projects:

- Ten innovative and engaging projects implemented: £10,000 awarded to diverse groups across Newtownards, tackling a range of needs and interests, from youth sports programs to environmental initiatives and cultural events.
- Tangible improvements to the community: Projects directly addressed local issues, bringing positive changes to the physical and social landscape of Newtownards.
- Increased participation and engagement: Residents took ownership of their community by actively voting and supporting projects, leading to a stronger sense of ownership and connection.

For the community:

- Strengthened community bonds and relationships: Collaboration on projects and participation in voting created new connections and friendships, building a more cohesive and supportive

community.

- Empowered citizens and a sense of agency: Residents actively participated in shaping their community, developing confidence and skills to take initiative and contribute to future projects.
- Increased civic engagement and democratic participation: The project provided a platform for residents to experience participatory budgeting, promoting the value of active citizenship and responsible decision-making.

For Ark Housing:

- Demonstrated commitment to community engagement and inclusivity: Innovative approach showcases Ark Housing's dedication to empowering residents and valuing their voices.
- Strengthened relationships with residents: Open and collaborative process built trust and positive partnerships with diverse community groups.

Listen Up

Lead organisation: Choice Housing

Partner organisations: Ark Housing, and All Lives are Precious



Statement of support

Across the UK, the suicide rate is highest within Northern Ireland, at 17.8 per 100,000 young people aged 15-24 in 2018; England was the lowest at 8.1. (Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health)

Choice and Ark Housing play key roles in the delivery of the Department for Communities and Northern Ireland Housing Executive's 'Housing for All programme'(HFA), which aims to support diverse and inclusive communities. In 2023 a HFA Housing Advisory Group in Lisburn, facilitated by Choice & Ark Housing, identified suicide and in particular youth suicide as a serious concern. HFA promotes inclusivity through shared communities and brings unity through common issues, such as health & wellbeing.

This initiative demonstrates the transformative power of collaboration creating strong bonds across community divides.

Poor mental health can affect anyone at any time. Recognising the escalating waiting lists for counselling services and the overwhelming stress faced by parents, Choice & Ark Housing embarked on a mission to create a resource and provide training, funded by the HFA programme that would directly address this issue.

Partnering with All Lives are Precious (ALPS), a leading organisation in suicide prevention, a cross community approach brought together four schools - Malone College, Saint Colm's High School, St. Patrick's Academy, and Lisnagarvey High School - to engage students from diverse backgrounds in the creation of a video that would resonate with young people and their families. In this powerful video, teenagers come forward with an urgent plea to parents to address the challenges of their generation on the harrowing topic of youth suicide. The young people worked closely over 8 weeks to create a practical resource with a strong message for the adults in their lives.

Ronan Gilchrist, ALPS-

'Through heartfelt narratives and drawing parallels with the larger struggles of their community, these young voices emphasise the importance of timely intervention, the need to ask uncomfortable questions, and the imperative of keeping homes safe. This is more than just a video—it's a call to action, and a plea for understanding.

In the beginning this was a small project in one area, it expanded to a cross community, cross border effort with a final piece that can be watched all over the world.'

The resulting video, Listen Up, is a poignant demand by young people asking their families to support their mental wellbeing. The video has been widely shared on social media, reaching across traditional divides and providing much-needed support to families facing similar struggles. The message in the video was followed up with training in youth suicide prevention for all teachers at the 4 participating schools.

Roisin Clarke, VP, St Patricks Academy

'The video has empowered our staff to have the confidence to ask a student how they are feeling and what action to take if they are feeling suicidal. This has significantly added to the lifelines available to students

in crisis as staff are now trained and competent in dealing with this complex situation. Further resilience training has also been scheduled to support the wellbeing of our young people.'

Listen Up stands as a shining example of how collaboration can create change and build a healthier future for our communities. By listening to the needs of young people and their families, ALPS, Choice and Ark Housing have developed a resource that has the potential to save lives.

This ground-breaking initiative engaged young people from diverse backgrounds. By working together on such a significant project, the participants have created new connections across traditional boundaries. Listen Up stands as a beacon of hope, and is an example of how differences are forgotten when addressing such a critical issue.

Outcomes and achievements

Listen Up - <https://t.co/H3E17YT9m7>

Listen Up's impact extends beyond its significant digital reach. The video has been incorporated into the educational curriculum across Northern Ireland. Listen Up is a central resource in the Education Authority (EA) publicity plan for Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in February 2024.

Suicide prevention training is being offered to all teachers in the four schools, to enable them to support students experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Roisin Clarke, VP, St Patricks Academy

'The video was launched on World Mental Health Day and has been so well received that the Education

Authority for Northern Ireland will be holding a special event on 7th February 2024 to highlight the importance of this message and to make a plan with our young people to push suicide prevention education to the top of the mental health agenda for Northern Ireland.'

Carol Ervine, Group Director, Choice

'The video's ability to connect with young people and their families, while also providing practical guidance and support, makes it a powerful tool in the fight against suicide. We firmly believe that this cross community collaboration has and will leave a lasting legacy one that crosses community divides and can potentially save lives.'

Clanmil and Partisan Productions bring housing to the stage with Shared

Lead organisation: Clanmil Housing Association

Partner organisation: Partisan Productions



Statement of support

At Clanmil, we believe that shared housing that give people the choice of living alongside people from

many backgrounds and traditions in neighbourhoods that are safe and welcoming to all, is a route to a more shared society in Northern Ireland.

Segregation between the two main religious communities is a long-running issue in the political and social history of Northern Ireland and is often seen as both a cause and effect of the 'Troubles' and of post-conflict tensions.

We currently manage nine shared housing schemes across Northern Ireland and we are developing a further three.

Over the past two years Clanmil has worked closely with Partisan Productions to develop and stage an innovative and engaging 'forum theatre' production called Shared?, exploring the experiences of those living in or around shared neighbourhoods.

Funding for the project was provided by the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Executive's "Housing for All" Shared Housing Programme. The programme has its origins in the NI Executive Together: Building a United Community Strategy which reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society.

Forum theatre encourages audience interaction and explores different options for dealing with a dramatized situation or problem. It is often used to engage socially excluded and disempowered groups. It provided an innovative way to encourage discussions about shared housing, with Clanmil customers and stakeholders using techniques that enabled the audience to talk about issues and share their experiences and aspirations in a safe space.

This was the first time it has been used by a housing association in Northern Ireland to explore issues related to housing.

The aim of the project was to highlight the issues and difficulties that communities and individuals face in shared neighbourhoods, such as clashing identities, problems with symbols and emblems, and managing cultural celebrations, to stimulate debate around these issues and identify ways forward.

There are also broader issues to consider around social housing including the Housing Selection Scheme, economic and class differences and actual or perceived processes of gentrification within communities and areas. All of these topics were discussed in the research, script writing process

and performances of Shared? and at post-show workshops.

In creating the play, Clanmil worked with Partisan to carry out interviews and gather research to form the basis for the script and identify key themes. We talked to individuals, groups, community partners and statutory stakeholders in and around the Ormeau Road area of Belfast, including residents, sports clubs, political representatives, and business owners.

As well as contributing to the script development through interviews, other opportunities were offered to the community to get directly involved in the production through stage design and management, acting, and 'front of house' on the evening of production.

A group of performers/technicians worked with local participants to develop and shape the material to create an entertaining and engaging presentation built around a series of relatable, everyday scenarios. Scenes included a young care-leaver struggling to adapt to living independently, an idealistic couple trying to navigate the 'points' system, and many more. With each performance the audience was invited to intervene in the action, to comment on the material and to develop and clarify storylines and situations. Clanmil staff often joined actors on stage to respond to and discuss audience comments as part of the play.

Audience input was absorbed by the performers and provided new starting points for the next presentation. As a result, the show was continuously re-shaped to reflect the specific concerns of its audience over the course of its run.

Outcomes and achievements

Shared? was highlighted as the flagship initiative that launched Good Relations Week 2022, the Community Relations Council's annual celebration of peace-building and cultural diversity.

It ran for four consecutive nights in Ormeau Park, Belfast at almost full capacity and generated widespread media coverage online, in local press and broadcast outlets.

The production toured Northern Ireland during Good Relations Week in 2023 and shows were staged in venues near Clanmil's shared housing schemes in Cookstown, Newtownabbey, Banbridge and Newcastle. Post-performance workshops enabled further discussions to take place about issues raised.

1160 people attended a performance of Shared?, with many more being involved in the research interviews and workshops.

As well as offering an innovative and lively experiment in forum theatre, Shared? generated honest discussion and debate and contributed many new insights and suggestions towards the development of housing policy.

Some post-event comments reflect the overwhelmingly positive reception to the show:

"A brilliant show that was well written and acted. It demonstrated the complexities surrounding housing and how not one solution can be expected to meet all needs. Very thought provoking"

"Excellent production covering a multitude of scenarios and issues. It made me think about how complex things are for people."

Celebrating Neighbours and Diversity

Co-operative Housing Ireland



Statement of support

In early 2023, the Community Engagement team established a fund to support Members who wished to celebrate the individuality of their communities and mark 'Neighbours' Day' and 'World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development' which both fall in late May. The team wanted to empower Member Associations (Resident Committees) to take the lead on community events. One of the main aims of the initiative was to instil co-op principle number nine 'concern for community'. The team felt this was a great opportunity for the community to take the lead on celebrating diversity and creating sustainable and flourishing communities.

One of the prerequisites for availing of the funds, was that the community had a Member Association set up. Nearly 30 Member Associations have been set up to date with the support of the Community Engagement Team, and almost one-third, eight of these, participated in the 'Neighbours and Diversity day' initiative. In addition to the Neighbour and Diversity Day fund, all established Member Associations receive €12 per household per year to run community initiatives and events. For some communities the 'Neighbours and Diversity' day fund was bigger than their community fund which meant they could do something extra special.

The team endeavoured to make the application as easy and accessible as possible. Although the initiative was inspired by the days in May, Member Associations

were allowed to run the event whenever suited them, as long as it met the criteria of bringing the community together and celebrating diversity.

Member tenants were encouraged to come up with creative ideas to bring their neighbourhoods together. This encouraged communities to think outside the box, sharing food, games from their childhood or their cultures. Although money facilitated activities, encouragement, creativity and enthusiasm were more important. Tunde, a Member tenant from Brookhill, Cork, had the following to say about the inspiration behind their event, "Nowadays most kids grow up with technology so the team decided to go back to our roots to our own childhood and show our kids how much fun you can have with others playing outdoor games."

Pinewood, Balbriggan, had a sports day with inflatable football targets, and an inflatable jungle gym. Riverside, Dun Laoghaire, organised food, karaoke, and hung up bunting of international flags representing their community. It was their first community initiative and provided a template for future events they have since held. In all cases, there was a member of the Community Engagement Team to support each. Graigue na hAbhainn, on the Carlow/Laois border, had a barbecue in which neighbours were invited to bring a dish from their culture. The Member Association at Amharc Muileann, held an international street feast where neighbours cooked and shared dishes from their culture. There was music, face painting and henna tattoos for adults and children alike to enjoy.

One of the key desired outcomes was to have as many events as possible to ensure a spread across the country. Another desired outcome was to inspire and empower other CHI communities to take part in future 'Neighbour and Diversity day' initiatives. There was also a desire to share these to inspire and empower other communities, so Members shared their experience and photos on the Member Engagement Facebook group and in the quarterly newsletter. The most important things were that the initiatives celebrated diversity and inspired Member tenants to build a wider cohesive CHI community.

Outcomes and achievements

Speaking about the engagement from CHI Communities. Anthony Burrowes, the Community Engagement Manager, said, "It has shown the power and commitment of Members in Co-operative Housing Ireland by them taking the lead on these initiatives."

Mr Burrowes continued, "We hope that this motivates other communities to take part in such events and to see that this is a one step forward in creating inclusive communities."

Speaking about the effects of their 'Neighbour and Diversity' initiative on the community at Móinéir,

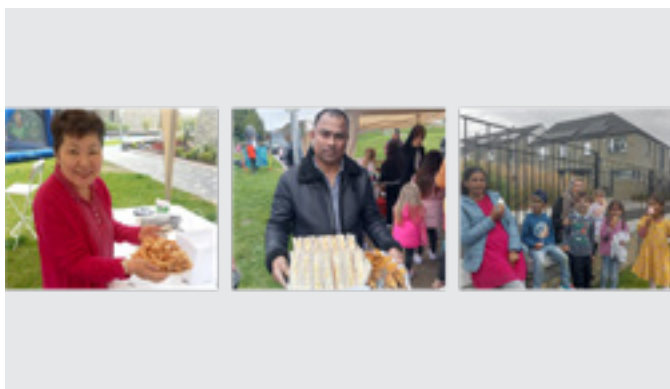
Limerick, Member tenant, Sarah Power said, "The turnout for our event was spectacular. Everyone enjoyed it. It gave everyone a sense of belonging to their community and the kids made friendships. During the day of our event a lot of members wanted to join our association which was absolutely brilliant! We were delighted to get new people on board."

Reflecting on the event, Member tenant, Tunde, said, "We hope our kids will remember this event when they grow up and talk about who they played with, who they did the sack race with, which kids could jump with the sack and those that fell but still kept smiling."

Scribblestown - Promoting Shared & Inclusive Communities

Lead organisation: Oaklee Housing

Partner organisations: Oaklee Scribblestown Tenants, and City of Dublin's Education and Training Board



Statement of support

Scribblestown Rise:

A garden is a place to share with others and create memories.

A cup of coffee can create a community.

Scribblestown Rise is a 70-unit apartment complex. It is situated in the suburban area between Royal Canal Park and Finglas West. Scribblestown Rise has a central communal courtyard that overlooks the Royal Canal Park. There are several universal design apartments in Scribblestown Rise, that have been allocated to a number of people with different disabilities.

Scribblestown Rise have been coming together over the past year to garden and plant around the communal areas. They have added seasonal flowers, a communal bench, and an accessible picnic table to ensure that everyone in the estate can come together and feel included.

Following the sad passing of one of the residents who was heavily involved in the community the residents group put together a memorial area and planted a tree in her memory to remind people that they will always be a part of the community.

There is a core group of residents who meet regularly, one of their objectives was to try to get more people involved and taking part in community events. They arranged a series of coffee mornings to encourage more people to come out and say hello to increase participation. As part of the coffee morning people were encouraged to bring along any cultural food dishes to share with one another. One lady from Kazakhstan brought along traditional hats for everyone and others brought cakes and dishes. These coffee mornings saw people coming along who previously didn't engage in any community activities and beginning to form a relationship with one another.

Following on from this, a mutual interest that emerged from these coffee mornings was that people enjoyed gardening. The tenants met each week to do some gardening around the communal beds. Each week saw more and more people joining. The gardening group then sought a grant with the City of Dublin's Education and Training Board to further their skills together. They were delighted that they were successful in obtaining a course of horticultural classes that would take place on site in their courtyard. They created an allotment area and planted fruits and vegetables as a communal area. Many people learning new skills along the way.

A number of the residents that joined the group had hearing impairments. Some of these residents had moved from a setting with no previous community involvement and were worried about integrating with wider community. They are now living in their own apartments independently with support.

This transition was a huge milestone for the individuals. It was vital that they felt a part and valued member of their new community.

Many of the tenants with a hearing impairment were able to teach their neighbours how to communicate through sign language while gardening and having coffee. Each week there was also a great atmosphere with often more laughing and messing taking place

than gardening. It also saw people becoming more aware and mindful of how they can do different community events etc to ensure that people who are deaf or wheelchair users can be involved with any future events. The residents organised for the local men shed to make a wheelchair accessible bench so that everyone could sit around the table together in the courtyard.

Outcomes and achievements

There has been a number of really good outcomes involving this group. There had been some opposition to the development from local residents before the development was build but following the community integration to the area and the positive impact, they are making this has led to events being attend by not just out tenants before residents from all over the area.

There was a group trip organised and to help try include everyone, the group took into consideration peoples disabilities, age, cultural background etc. they all agreed a trip to Dublin Zoo Wild Lights best fitted the bill as it was accessible for limited mobility, kids

with sensory processing needs and people's culture don't celebrate Christmas.

Our annual conference is held for all tenants. This is an opportunity for the different resident groups to come together to share their experiences. One residents' group who have adapted apartments for people with disabilities in their scheme advised they learned so much from this group at Scribblestown. It has made them more aware and mindful to try include everyone in events and meetings going forward and the positive effect it can have not just in people's lives but in the wider community.

Stella Maris Star of the Sea Artwork Regeneration Project

Lead organisation: Radius Housing

Partner organisation: Stella Maris



Statement of support

This project saw the replacement of focal artwork in Sailortown, Belfast in conjunction with local groups to build relationships and develop capacity through art workshops and exploring shared history.

This project was a collaboration between Stella Maris, Sailortown Regeneration Group and New Lodge Arts who worked with Eleanor Wheeler an architectural ceramicist and sculptor. The project was co-ordinated through Radius Housing and supported through funding from Radius Housing, the Arts Council and in-kind support from CTS services via their social clauses. Radius Housing are Joint Management Partner for Stella.

The new artwork includes the large ceramic triptych on exterior front wall of Stella Maris building (6x4 meters), circular artwork pieces (x15) sited on Stella Maris and Sailortown Regeneration Office and a composite tile panel located in St. Joseph's Church.

Stella Maris opened in 2005 as the first 'wet hostel' in NI to accommodate street drinkers with chronic alcohol difficulties. The local community has had historic issues with Stella and this project offered the space and opportunity for service users and members of the wider Sailortown Community to come together to work on a project together providing time to develop respect and understanding. Street drinkers are amongst the most socially excluded members of our community. Creating a home around them provides the opportunity for a sense of belonging and the ability to consider change. This project served to integrate the service users at Stella Maris with the wider community and feel at home in their local community of Sailortown.

Using art-based workshops, the project engaged residents of Stella Maris with Sailortown Regeneration Group and the wider community giving a common identity and sense of belonging. The project explored connections between the present and the past supporting residents of Stella Maris by giving them a voice and identity, explored connections to history through working with Sailortown Regeneration Women's Group and linked to the wider community through the workshops with young people from New

Lodge Arts. The maritime theme of the new artwork is consistent to what went before, which connects the maritime community of Sailortown to Stella Maris, a place of refuge.

Catherine McGarrell, Project Group Manager, Stella Maris, Depaul

This mural collaboration has been a really positive experience for each of our service users at Stella Maris, giving them a sense of belonging within the Sailortown community and showing that the community is a safe place. The experience of homelessness can be disenfranchising, but this project has helped break down the visible and invisible barriers people who are homeless face and given community members an opportunity to know them as individuals. A lot of our service users are highly skilled/educated but have fallen on hard times, many of us could find ourselves in this situation. When people have a stake in their community, great things can happen. Our focus now is

strengthening these relationships and solidarity within the Sailortown community.

Terry McKeown, Project Manager, Sailortown Regeneration

Sailortown Regeneration were delighted to work with Stella Maris on their new mural. Our older residents and young people had the opportunity to assist in its design, brilliantly facilitated by Eleanor. Stella Maris has a long history in Sailortown of caring for those at sea. We look forward to accompanying them on their current journey supporting those trying to find their way home.

Orla Hawkins, Youth Worker, New Lodge Arts

New Lodge Arts were delighted to be part of this collaborative project. The young people learned a lot about their neighbouring community - Sailortown. As well as enjoying the art workshops and making pieces of art that will be around for years to come!.

Outcomes and achievements

Regeneration of people and place through de-stigmatising marginalised residents of Stella Maris.

Artwork

Replacement of 1 large artwork piece (6x4 meters) on the exterior wall of Stella Maris

X15 circular panels installed on buildings around Sailortown.

X1 large tile panel sited in St. Joseph's Church.

Participants

- Stella Maris Residents & staff x12
- Young people from New Lodge Arts x14
- Sailortown Regeneration Women's Group x9
- X9 workshops delivered
- Sailortown Festival drop in workshop x40 people made an individual tile

Total x75 people directly involved with making artwork
Launch

Over 60 people attended the official launch held in St. Joseph's Church on 8 September 2023. Launched by MP for North Belfast Pat Finucane.

Wellbeing

Increase in mental wellbeing of service users noted by Stella Maris Manager

Remembering and honouring those who have died in Stella. Over the duration of this project 4 service users and 1 member of staff passed.

Going forward

Ongoing work continues to build relations between Stella and the partner organisations involved - Radius + New Lodge Arts + Sailortown Regeneration.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



This award commends collaboration between organisations or groups that achieves the best possible outcomes. We are looking for organisations that have worked collaboratively to improve service delivery across geographical boundaries, sectors or client groups in order to benefit the people who use their services. The winning organisations will have evidenced good practice in setting up and managing the partnership, including establishing new ways of working.

WINNER - Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) Rapid Build Program

Lead organisation: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Partner organisations: Office of Public Works, Tuath Housing Association, John Sisk & Son, and United Nations Migration Agency (IOM) - Ireland, DePaul Ireland



Statement of support

The war in Ukraine has caused ripple effects across the world, the ongoing conflict has claimed the lives of over 10,000 civilians, including more than 560 children. According to UNHCR figures, the war's devastating impact has led to widespread displacement; with 5.1 million people internally displaced and 6.2 million refugees globally. Responding to the crisis, Ireland opened its doors to over 100,000 people displaced by the war in Ukraine, into what is already a challenging accommodation environment.

In March 2022, a Rapid Build housing program was initiated with the goal of providing short-term

accommodation for up to 2,800 individuals in 700 homes, across multiple sites on State-owned land. This collaborative initiative, undertaken by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Office of Public Works (OPW), John Sisk & Son, Tuath Housing Association, International Organisation for Immigration (IOM), DePaul Ireland and various contractors, stands as a testament to the power of partnerships in addressing urgent humanitarian needs.

By 2023, 310 homes were successfully completed across 7 sites nationally, offering a safe and secure place for 1,240 people who have received Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) status. This achievement not only addresses immediate housing needs but also symbolises an ongoing successful, collective effort and commitment to upholding humanitarian values. A further 390 homes are contracted for delivery in 2024.

Led by DCEDIY and the Office of Public Works (OPW), the Rapid Build Homes Programme prioritises the delivery of high-quality, modular homes utilising state owned land and innovative methods of construction to deliver much needed accommodation within existing communities. The developments have been completed to an excellent standard and include permanent infrastructure, high-quality public spaces, streets, water, waste, roads, pedestrian routes, lighting, landscaping, semi-private front curtilage and small private rear gardens. This has only been possible through working in partnership and realising a common goal of creating supportive living environments for those in dire need.

John Sisk & Son, the construction company overseeing the project, was appointed at end 2022 and a framework of five modular homes manufacturers was established. The homes designed by the OPW in consultation with relevant industry representatives, are manufactured to a high energy efficiency standard thus aligning with the OPW's strategic themes of sustainability and climate action. The homes are well-insulated 2-bedroom modular structures that comply with key building regulations and are designed for a 60-year lifespan. Manufactured off-site, they are transported and installed efficiently, minimising environmental impact.

Tuath Housing was appointed to oversee the tenancy and property management of the developments; and to provide assistance to the BOTPs with any concerns in their home. A specific Ukrainian accommodation team was established within Tuath. Recognising the psychological trauma experienced by many beneficiaries, the partnership with DePaul Ireland ensures trauma-informed care for individuals, couples and families who may struggle to adjust to their new surroundings.

A policy for allocating the homes was developed by DCEDIY who commissioned the UN agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to allocate the properties to families based on this policy. BOTPs living in the homes are required to pay

a contribution. To ensure a fair charging mechanism and to avoid pushing BOTPs into poverty, a differential contribution scheme was developed by DCEDIY with a flat rate utility charge which covers electricity, heating, water, internet and domestic waste collection.

A comprehensive communication and community engagement strategy was developed for each of the sites, with a focus on briefing local representatives and communities on the roll out of the Rapid Build programme in their area. DCEDIY also works with other Government Departments and agencies to ensure that all additional required resources (such as education and healthcare) are in place. Tuath, together with DePaul, also work to ensure that the BOTP are supported to integrate within the community, including providing access and sign-posting to additional supports, such as after-school care and language classes.

This pioneering project, the first of its kind, serves as a blueprint for future developments. Each phase has presented unique challenges, but the lessons learned will guide future initiatives, fostering a legacy of compassion, resilience, and effective collaboration. The collective response to the Ukrainian crisis exemplifies the strength and efficacy of partnerships, standing united in the commitment to addressing immediate needs and creating a sustainable model for future humanitarian efforts.

Outcomes and achievements

By the end of 2023, the project successfully completed 310 high-quality, well-insulated 2-bedroom modular homes across multiple sites, providing safe and secure accommodation for 1,240 individuals who have received Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) status.

The Rapid Build Homes Programme, led by DCEDIY and the OPW, prioritises the delivery of high-quality, rapid-build homes that enhance local environments. The developments include permanent infrastructure, high-quality public spaces, and landscaping, creating supportive living environments for those in dire need.

Tuath Housing Association, appointed for tenancy management, ensures effective administration and upkeep of on-site services. The partnership with John Sisk & Son and five modular homes manufacturers nationwide, along with adherence to energy efficiency standards, aligns with sustainability and climate action goals.

The allocation process, facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and contribution model ensures fairness, while the partnership with DePaul Ireland provides trauma-informed care for those experiencing psychological trauma. The rapid-build homes, designed for a 60-year lifespan, are manufactured off-site, minimising environmental impact during transportation and installation.

This pioneering project, the first of its kind, serves as a blueprint for future developments. Despite unique challenges in each phase, the lessons learned will guide future initiatives, exemplifying the strength of partnerships in addressing immediate needs and creating a sustainable model for future humanitarian efforts.

More than Mowers!

Lead organisation: Alpha Housing

Partner organisation: The Turnaround Project



Statement of support

More than Mowers!

It takes courage to work differently, but where organisations are willing to take risks and innovate, great things can be achieved.

In 2020 Alpha Housing took such a chance, appointing then 'rookie' social enterprise Outwork as its grounds maintenance contractor.

Knowing that investment in outdoor spaces helps improve tenants' wellbeing, Alpha Housing has been improving their sheltered housing schemes' grounds by: planting native trees and shrubs to encourage wildlife; and supporting tenants' gardening projects by providing raised beds and other planting areas.

Beyond all this, by engaging with the Turnaround Project (trading as Outwork) to deliver landscaping and grounds maintenance services, Alpha took their commitment to making a difference a step further.

The Turnaround Project supports people who have served sentences in prison or the community to turn around their futures. For many people who have been through the justice system, conventional employment can be hard to find and difficult to sustain. Offering training and employment experience before people complete their sentences, and a more supportive working environment afterwards, Turnaround facilitates real-work opportunities for people during a crucial period of transition in their lives. Alongside that employment, Turnaround provides its beneficiaries with strengths-based coaching, helping them identify their attributes and achieve life goals. Finally, it supports people to move on into mainstream jobs.

Through its social enterprises, Turnaround provides transitional employment opportunities which give people chances to enter the workforce, giving them vital practical and soft skills development, structure, and dignity. Building on research and evidence from people with lived experience, providing a supportive employment environment gives people routine, agency, and positive social interaction; it raises their self-esteem and improves their mental health, helps shift their identity, and provides the means to support themselves and contribute to society.

Having begun in 2020, the partnership between Alpha and Turnaround is now entering its fifth year. Outwork staff provide routine grounds maintenance services including grass cutting and weeding. But they also undertake significant landscaping and tree planting projects, using native plant and tree species to make Alpha's sites more nature friendly. Following tenant requests, Outwork has installed accessible raised beds allowing residents to grow vegetables and flowers. The feedback from tenants has been very positive. Outwork has been able to provide a responsive service, through frequent communication with tenants and Scheme Co-ordinators.

The partnership has greatly helped Outwork's growth as a social enterprise. Seeing the difference Outwork has made on Alpha sites, other organisations have wanted to replicate this impact on their own properties. And with that growth, Alpha and The Turnaround Project have been able to help transform the lives of over 80 people who, having previously served sentences, supporting them to take positive steps in building a new future for themselves.

Following Alpha's lead, other housing associations, charities, social enterprises, and private companies have taken up contracts with social enterprise Outwork, allowing the enterprise to grow from one crew to four crews. The learning from this partnership has influenced best practice around working with social enterprises to deliver services across the private and social housing sectors, including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who have engaged with Turnaround to make improvements to their social contracts.

At a time when social value is being prioritised in public procurement, Alpha Housing and Outwork's partnership powerfully demonstrates how innovation in public service delivery can improve the lives of service users as well as transform the life prospects of socially excluded people.

Outcomes and achievements

The outcomes and achievements of the partnership to date include:

- Creating attractive, well-maintained communal gardens for tenants to enjoy, supporting them to get outside and improve their health and wellbeing.
- Generating approximately 18,000 hours of employment for people furthest from the labour market, transforming their prospects:

“Before Outwork, I never had a job in my life. I was in prison with no hope. Outwork didn’t just give me a job, they opened up so many opportunities for me. I got to meet new people and visit new places. Outwork gave me a wage and a work ethic. Thanks to Outwork, I am now working part-time and studying my first course at technical college.” –

Outwork trainee

- Providing training in lawn care and maintenance, pruning, hedge trimming and cutting, hard surface maintenance, ornamental bed preparation, planting and aftercare to over 80 socially excluded people.
- Planting over 3,000 native trees and shrubs, in addition to maintaining ornamental planting and existing natural landscapes. Alpha managing sites for wildlife together with Outwork has led to greater tenant engagement and appreciation for nature.
- Fostering the growth of social enterprises as a pro-social partner in contract delivery, influencing the wider sector to prioritise social value in procurement.

Public Private Partnership

Lead organisation: Comhar Housing

Partner organisations: Choice Housing and Oaklee Housing



Statement of support

Comhar Housing is a consortium of companies including (TINC, Ebar, Sisk, Choice Services, Oaklee Housing and Choice Housing) who, working collaboratively with the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA), Dublin City Council and four other Local authorities (Kildare, Louth, Wicklow & South Dublin), have developed six new communities as part of the first Public Private Partnership (PPP).

Comhar Housing was appointed the preferred tenderer on 18 September 2018 by Ireland’s National Development Finance Agency initially with Macquarie and Sisk and subsequently TINC acting as equity provider, Sisk as design, build and Lifecycle subcontractor and Choice Services, a subsidiary of Choice, as Facilities Management contractor. Oaklee Housing undertakes tenancy management as a key partner.

The €120 million project encompassed the financing, design, construction and maintenance of six social housing development sites located in and around the Leinster region – creating 534 new affordable rented homes from one bedroom flats to family houses. The project forms part of the Irish government’s first tranche of a wider €300 million commitment to deliver a total of 1,500 social housing units and associated services via PPP.

Five years on, it is clear the innovative SHB1 PPP model for new social housing has delivered sustainable and thriving communities as a result of the collaboration and partnership working of all involved to deliver the best outcomes for all stakeholders.

The homes are built to high energy efficiency standards, with triple glazing, modern central heating, solar panels as standard and sedum roofs on the apartments. All homes meet the A rating of the Irish energy rating system.

The design stage considered how the developments could create communities and, as a result, the housing schemes are well integrated into their environment. The aim wasn’t simply to achieve numbers on site but rather to consider how people living in these communities interact, creating spaces that work for residents, the wider community and demonstrate a commitment for the longer term. A responsibility was also given to rehouse people from diverse backgrounds and some in need of support, or entering permanent homes from being homeless.

The needs of the wider community was integral to each scheme, the design of which includes a Multi-use Games Area, play parks, exercise areas and equipment, a crèche, and community rooms available for residents to book for community activities.

Tenants moved into their homes during 2020 and 2021. The project created 14 new jobs to support delivery of Housing, Community Development and Response Repairs. These staff are dedicated to the six schemes, allowing the development of relationships with tenants and local councils to deliver a comprehensive service.

To help improve the well-being of the communities, a thriving network of resident meetings is in place with resident associations formally constituted in each of the six schemes. Community development and engagement initiatives delivered over the year on all schemes were seen as positive, with many events taking place bringing residents together to help build stronger communities.

A tenant who moved into Eustace Demesne in October 2023 said: "I love living here, it's so peaceful and calm. Everyone seems to get along with one another and all the kids play together which is great to see. It's always kept so tidy and nice. I enjoy living here and couldn't find a more perfect first home to live in."

This tenant is heavily involved in the residents group who work closely with the Community Development Officer and has helped organise fun days and different courses for the kids living in the estate.

Through this innovative partnership, quality housing, care and support services have been provided where they are most needed.

Outcomes and achievements

This infrastructure project marked an important collaboration between key partners to help enable positive societal and economic development. The housing sector is at its most effective when it leverages the expertise and experience of a range of partners that share a common goal.

Positive outcomes include:

- PPP is now signalled as a key route to funding of further social housing in Ireland;
- High quality homes for 534 tenants;
- Good working relationships with all five councils who see the new homes as integral to meeting their housing needs locally;
- Energy efficient warm homes that fit with their surroundings;
- 14 new jobs for local people including housing, social development and maintenance staff;
- A high standard of service delivery and tenant satisfaction achieved as evidenced in the 2nd Tenant Survey completed in 2023 and reported to resident representatives at the Tenant Conference held in November 2023.

Question	Tenant Feedback 2022	Tenant Feedback 2023
Service provided by Comhar Housing	93%	96%
Handling of complaints	81%	84%
Estate Management (Landscaping and Play Parks)	90%	92%
Quality of home	90%	95%
Amenities (Car parking and exercise areas)	83%	83%
Response Repairs Service & interaction with Engineering staff	93%	95%

A Partnership Approach to Nurturing the Next Generation of Housing Professionals

Lead organisation: NI Housing Associations and NIHE

Partner organisations: North West Regional College, and Chartered Institute of Housing



Statement of support

Northern Ireland's social housing sector provides more than 142,000 homes and employs circa 6,300 people.

A skilled workforce is vital to addressing the complex housing issues that Northern Ireland faces. The sector recognises that to ensure long-term success, nurturing the next generation of housing professionals through investment in education and training is paramount.

Some years ago, the sector lost the NI based housing degree course, creating a gap in terms of entry to housing as a profession. Work to source a training partner and create a new housing career pathway started some five years ago but was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through collaboration and partnership working, bringing together North West Regional College (NWRC), CIH as the sector's professional accreditation body, NIHE as the sector's biggest employer, and several of Northern Ireland's registered housing associations, a new 2-year housing apprenticeship was introduced in 2023.

The new qualification offers an opportunity for aspiring housing professionals to access training and practical experience and secure guaranteed permanent employment in a growing sector that offers a wide range of rewarding careers.

As there was no NVQ or apprentice framework in place the partnership had to start from scratch to create an apprentice pathway that reflects the breadth and complexity of the housing sector. Learning from other sectors was used to create a route map into housing whereby people can branch off into specific disciplines (development, maintenance, community management, customer services etc). through a range of mandatory and optional modules and customise their learning to match their career aspirations.

Hybrid delivery involves trainers traveling to the housing associations as well as college-based and online sessions.

While NIHE, as a public sector body, were required to recruit separately a joint approach to recruitment was taken by the housing associations. This required agreement around common terms and conditions including a starting salary of c£21k. The desire was to offer attractive roles, even for candidates considering a career change.

Smaller partners benefited from being part of the combined recruitment process. The desire was to create sustainable opportunities for employment in local communities, so where smaller housing associations did not have resources to offer permanent posts following completion of the apprenticeship, larger partners agreed to step in and provide much needed permanent opportunities.

Summer 2022 school leavers were targeted ahead of approval by commissioning bodies. Interest was good and successful applicants could specify their preferred employer.

By the time recruitment was complete it was clear that programme approvals from accrediting bodies would not be achieved in time to start the programme as planned in January 2023. This left the partners in a difficult position. They had made a commitment to local communities re sustainable jobs, had successful recruits, but were unable to start the programme.

To bridge this 8-month gap, the partners worked closely to establish a package of in-house induction and learning that would complement the apprenticeship programme. Successful applicants began full-time employment in January 2023 with day release for shared learning.

Accreditation was achieved mid 2023. A joint celebration event was held by the partners in August to thank the apprentices for their patience and wish them well as they started formal academic training in September 2023.

The consortium is now working to introduce a level 5 foundation degree in Housing Practice in September 2024, accredited by the Open University, which will also be delivered by North West Regional College. This course will be open to those who successfully complete the housing apprenticeship and applicants with A level qualifications.

Outcomes and achievements

The first 16 apprentices are progressing through the programme. Successful completion will lead to OCN Level 3 in Housing and CIH Level 3 in Housing Practice as well as opportunity for permanent employment with a housing provider.

Planning is ongoing for recruitment in 2024. Recognising that sector and government support is essential to fully harness the potential of the apprenticeship and foundation degree, and to ensure they become part of the sector's fabric, sector leaders have committed to partnering with DoE Careers Advisory Service and the colleges to promote housing as a profession of choice, offering a range of challenging and rewarding careers.

Apprentice, Aodhan Thompson, says:

"Everyone at Newington has made me feel so welcome. Since joining I've already learned a lot and feel confident taking calls and assisting people.

"The course at NWRC has also been really positive, challenging me and developing my knowledge. Working with the other apprentices on team projects has helped build my interpersonal and teamworking skills whilst helping to increase my confidence.

"Working in housing has completely changed me. I've noticed that I now treat people with more empathy and respect. I feel I belong in housing and am the happiest I've ever been."

Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG): Mental health subgroup

Lead organisation: Galway County Council Housing

Partner organisation: HSE Community Healthcare
West Mental Health Services



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Statement of support

The Galway County Council Housing Disability Steering Group (HDSG) was initially set up in 2020 as part of the Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2017-2020 and further refined under the 2021-2026 plan). The largest cohort of housing applications under disability category are for mental health. Therefore, this subgroup was set up. It is a 'second layer' under the wider Housing Disability Steering Group.

The person-centred HDSG: Mental Health Subgroup allows for simultaneous progression of housing and support for people with enduring mental health issues who may otherwise struggle in navigating the various separate systems to;

- make an application for housing
- obtain a property
- access supports and
- maintain a tenancy

It is a partnership approach between Galway County Council - Housing and HSE Community Healthcare West Mental Health Services, to address the needs of people accessing both services, with their consent.

The group allows for discussion of each applicant's individual needs, will and preference, development of actions plans and bridging the gap between two large and complex systems; the Local Authority and the HSE. It offers a communication pathway and for decisions to be made. More importantly, it allows for people with enduring mental health needs to progress to having their own homes and tenancies utilising a rights and community based approach.

The MH Subgroup membership consists of staff from Galway County Council and HSE, namely:

- Senior Social Worker, Galway County Council
- Senior Executive Officer, Galway County Council
- Housing Coordinator, Mental Health Services, HSE
- Housing Liaison Officers (as required for specific cases in their areas), Galway County Council

Since 2020, approx. 72 people have been supported to date. Of those, 19 people were supported to transition from mental health hostels to independent tenancies with support and 10 people in insecure tenancies (who had previously been in hostels) to transition to secure tenancies.

The age range of people who have been supported to date is from 27 to 77.

The project has supported people attending Galway mental health services who are on the Galway County Council housing waiting list who are approaching the offer zone including;

- Those attending adult mental health services who have a housing need and do not require additional supports.
- Those in insecure tenancies (who had previously lived in mental health residences) to transition to secure tenancies.
- Adults with severe enduring mental health issues living with parents to transition to independent living.
- A small number of people in existing tenancies whose tenancy were at risk due to wider psychosocial issues impacting on their tenancy and mental health to receive support with these issues.

The subgroup allows for an interagency forum where 'Accommodation' and 'Supports' can be looked at collectively.

Part of this involves another partnership programme working with people who have both enduring mental health issues and a housing need, called the 'MyHome' programme. The MyHome Programme is a HSE West (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon) Mental Health led programme, in partnership with Galway Simon

Community and Councils in the area. The project was originally funded by the Slaintecare Integration Fund and now receives mainstream funding. MyHome provides social care supports to people in moving to their new accommodation and further developing their independent living skills and works in partnership with each persons' mental health team who provide clinical support.

MyHome' prioritises people attending mental health services with an enduring mental health issue who are in the offer zone for accommodation by the local authority, residents and in-patients of mental health facilities who cannot move on due to lack of suitable accommodation, and individuals currently in or considered for 'out of area' placements or in Specialist Rehabilitation Units who could live independently with the support of their mental health team and MyHome.

The 'My Home' project is now included in the Galway County Council's scheme of letting priorities which has become a beneficial process to support clients of mental health services seeking / needing social housing.

The work of the subgroup would not be possible without the passion and commitment of all involved - the people who wish to live a life of their choosing in their own home with support and the people supporting that - their families, friends and new communities, Galway County Council housing department, the Galway Simon My Home team and the mental health teams of County Galway.

Outcomes and achievements

The HSE Housing Coordinator works in partnership with the Senior Social Worker and Senior Executive Officer within Housing, as a 'conduit' for the mental health service and the local authority. Whilst the HSE Housing Coordinator is part of a wider HSE initiative, the subgroup with Galway County Council warrants acknowledgement as it has equal commitment by the local authority and the HSE.

Galway County Council has made a commitment to work on driving the agenda for housing for vulnerable applicants/clients underpinned by their Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026.

Outcomes:

- Access for people with enduring mental health issues to tenancies that are planned with supports from mental health services in place.
- Quality housing for applicants with enduring mental health issues - "Housing for All".

- Inclusion in policy: scheme of letting priorities. Galway County Council has disability, and mental health specifically identified.
- People with Severe and Enduring mental health issues are prioritised and housed in the mainstream community, not in institutional/ congregated residential settings.
- Existing public services working together.
- 'Value for Money' in terms of utilising existing resources to the best capacity.
- Preventing people from becoming entrenched in long-stay institutional and residential settings that are unsuitable, expensive and inappropriate for people's needs.

The work of the Mental Health subgroup is 'Equality & Human Rights in the Public Service' in practice.

House to Home

Lead organisation: Habitat for Humanity Ireland

Partner organisations: Greenview Group, and MACS



Statement of support

House to Home - in partnership with Greenview Group and MACS

Habitat for Humanity has worked in Ireland for 30 years; breaking down barriers, tackling deprivation and building community cohesion by bringing people together to tackle community-felt need, towards its vision of a world where everyone has a safe place to call home.

Today, through its network of Habitat ReStores (5 NI, 1 ROI), the charity's social enterprise, directly tackle poverty by providing access to low-cost home improvement materials, employability training for people of all abilities and diverts tons of material from landfill protecting the planet.

ReStore is a hub for the delivery of local programmes; including youth engagement, advocacy and the House to Home programme. Between 2017 and 2019 the model was tested, delivering 20 interventions in partnership with 4 support agencies and with a clear focus on supporting tenancy sustainment by providing tailored practical support for vulnerable people.

In 2020 support from NIHE's Homelessness Prevention Fund enabled further development of the programme. Since 2022 partnership with The Greenview Group, to deliver on the social value clauses in the contract has enabled the capacity to develop, deepen the impact and consistently deliver the programme.

House to Home is an innovative and practical response to a need identified by the homeless and housing sector. Whilst compliance issues are the responsibility of the landlord, day-to-day minor maintenance

and decoration fall to the tenant. This can prove challenging for those lacking skills, experience and budgets.

House to Home breaks down barriers by engaging volunteers in the solution; bringing the community together to tackle and understand better the complex issues of homelessness.

House to Home includes practical support to help with decoration or minor construction repairs, access to low cost household materials and Toolbox Training on basic home repairs. The client chooses what will help them feel more at home, there is an opportunity for them to be involved in the practical work where that's possible and broader opportunities for training and support through OCN accredited training in ReStore - courses include Retail Business, DIY Skills, Employability and Well Being.

What the partners say

'Greenview have consistently reached beyond our day-to-day business activities to create significant positive change for society. Giving back to the communities in which we work is the core of our identity and the partnership with Habitat for Humanity provides an opportunity to deliver for local people. The catalyst for the partnership, which began in 2022, was the requirement in an NIHE sector contract to work with a construction-based social enterprise, within the Lisburn and Castlereagh area.

Our team have been able to volunteer and have seen first-hand the transformation which the programme delivers for vulnerable people in our community.'

MACS who support young people leaving care is one of the House to Home support agency partners

'House to Home is invaluable to the young people at MACS, the Habitat team are warm, friendly and kind. They make young people feel valued and allow for a smooth transition into supported

living accommodation. Allowing young people to pick their own colours, gives them a sense of ownership and value of their new tenancy. Everyone at MACS speaks so highly of the staff and the service and the benefits that this offers to the young people.'

'Rab taking the time to discuss different aspects of health & safety in terms of where to turn off water, pointing out alarms etc; all of this was an added bonus to an already amazing job.'

Outcomes and achievements

House to Home is tailored to meet the needs of individuals; tackling some of the key issues for vulnerable people and deprived communities by providing practical support, essential home furnishing and opportunities for accredited training and employability support. The outcomes reported by support agencies include individuals committing to their accommodation, essential skills, and improved health and wellbeing.

Between 2019-22 Habitat delivered 61 House to Home interventions in partnership with 10 support agencies. Last year the organisation delivered 135 interventions alongside 20 support agencies demonstrating both a growing need for the

programme, an understanding of its impact and the funds which have been invested by Greenview Group to support.

House to Home engages volunteers in programme delivery; helping break down barriers and build better understanding of the complex challenges which can face local people. In 2023 more than 100 people volunteered to help people in our community make their house a home.

In 2024 Habitat has secured support to scale the House to Home programme to the Drogheda area and it is our hope to be able to deliver House to Home out of all 6 Habitat ReStores in Ireland.

Safe Houses Offaly

Lead organisation: Oaklee Housing

Partner organisations: Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services and Offaly County Council



Statement of support

Safe Houses Offaly is the successful model of partnership working at its best. Oaklee Housing, Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services and Offaly County Council successfully collaborated to create three safe houses within the county of Offaly, which were completed and operational in quarter 4 of 2023.

As part of the Domestic, Sexual & Gender based Violence Agency Bill 2023, to increase the development of refuge & safe house accommodation, Offaly Domestic violence Support Services, Offaly County Council and Oaklee Housing embarked on this journey to do so. All three partners had one shared goal; to ensure that every person has the right to live a life free from domestic abuse and violence.

Delivered by Oaklee Housing and run by Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services under a service level agreement, safe houses; provide a safe and confidential space for men, women (and their children where applicable) to seek emergency temporary accommodation from an abusive or violent relationship.

A formidable working group was formed with joint values, strategy, and mission to carefully consider the design and layout for this very bespoke service delivery. With several key elements at the forefront, being location and safety whilst also enabling the clients to live independently without disempowering them. Internal staff were trained on this project given the sensitivity, and confidential protocol measures were put in place to ensure the anonymity of the houses and clients by all partners.

Three houses were carefully selected as suitable after a stringent criteria process and purchased by Oaklee Housing with the support of Offaly County Council. Each house was upgraded and, in some cases, refurbished based on the design specifications set out to meet the high standards required, such as safety features - 24hr monitoring service, CCTV, alarm systems to Gardai, etc. whilst also ensuring each property was tailored to the needs of the clients.

With this high stand of safety features, it allows each client to continue to live independently with the assistance of a 24 hour wrap around support service, available from Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services. This wrap around service enables the clients to identify what options may work best for them, in terms of continuing safely back into the community. This service also offers a person-centred support programme, which is tailored to the individual needs of each client and ensures all support work is carried out in a planned and compassionate way. It may also involve advocacy, emotional support, along with the practical support.

There were many aspects to be considered in this project, ultimately there was the needs of the clients at the forefront, but there were also the needs of each partner from a care, regulatory, maintenance/management, financial, legal and so forth perspective. This was a new working model for all partners involved that will continue for many years into the

future. Therefore, meticulous planning, coordinating, and exploring was undertaken to ensure the correct agreements were put in place to allow this partnership to thrive. Regular performance meetings with all partners involved are carried out to ensure all required compliance is adhered to by all partners, ensuring this partnership continues to provide this safe space for victims of domestic abuse & violence.

Outcomes and achievements

This type of safe house accommodation is the first of its kind within the county of Offaly. It is also the first of its kind nationally to offer emergency temporary accommodation to men as victims of domestic abuse and violence.

Recent statistics for 2023 show there was over 54,000 calls made to Gardai to report domestic abuse. This is an 8% rise in reports of domestic abuse to Gardai on the previous year. Gardai have also reported that domestic abuse can be found across every village, town and city in Ireland across all sectors of society. Therefore, demonstrating the high demand for this type of service delivery across Ireland, which this

partnership is instrumental to contribute this type of service to.

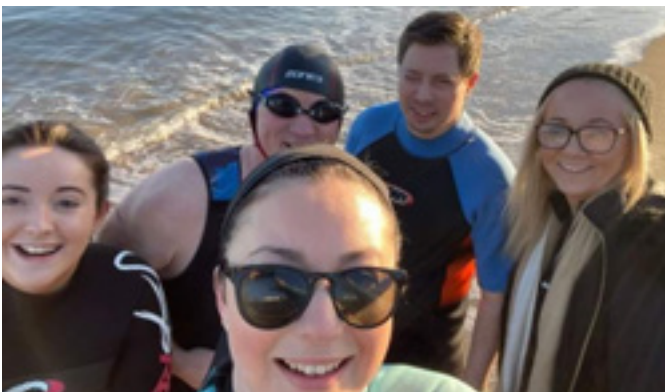
One shared aim of this partnership was to have this service over the line before Christmas which is an increased time of domestic abuse & violence. This aim was achieved and made a reality by all three partners involved. The final model that was delivered, captured everything that all three partners expected these three safe houses would be.

Please note due to the sensitivity of this project only certain information can be disclosed in this submission.

Housing First For Youth

Lead organisation: Simon Community NI

Partner organisations: Northern Health and Social Care Trust, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

Working in Partnership Award Nomination for Simon Community NI Housing First for Youth Service

'I believe that Housing First has been lifesaving and life-changing for the young people who access the service. I have watched their development in the project, initially challenging relationships, but the stickability of the staff and the service has enabled change. We have prevented death, homelessness, ensured that the basic needs of the young people are met, food, shelter, warmth. we have supported young people to make mistakes, and been the safety blanket' (Housing First for Youth Strategic Group)

Simon Community NI Housing First for Youth Service stands as a groundbreaking partnership initiative addressing the complex needs of Northern Ireland's most vulnerable young people in care. Developed collaboratively by Simon Community NI, NHSCT, and NIHE, this innovative project responds to the unique challenges faced by Looked After Children (LAC), offering a preventative approach to reduce homelessness and promote stability for those aged 16-18.

The service, operational since February 2018, intervenes early, providing flexible housing and support solution that averts the trajectory toward adult homelessness for this high-risk group. Young people, referred at ages 16/17, engage with the Housing First Team to identify their accommodation needs, which are then sourced through the NIHE. The service, available 24/7, employs a young people-centered strength-based risk strategy, addressing needs from safeguarding interventions to school attendance.

This preventative service is delivered in collaboration with the Northern, Belfast, and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts, NIHE, and Simon Community NI. It serves as an alternative pathway to chronic homelessness, offering vital support to a cohort of young people who faced the inevitability of chronic homelessness due to challenging life experiences.

The young people targeted by this initiative represent the most vulnerable group in society, often experiencing multiple placement moves, relationship breakdowns, secure accommodation or time in the

youth justice system. Housing First for Youth disrupts the cycle of continual placement crisis, providing stability and support that adapts to the young person's journey.

Since its inception, Housing First for Youth has been transformative. The collaborative effort has significantly reduced youth homelessness, improved living conditions, and enhanced mental wellbeing. By focusing on early intervention, the program has contributed to improved educational outcomes and increased employment opportunities for young people. It has also demonstrated a reduction in the use of emergency services and criminal justice systems.

The success of this partnership lies in its comprehensive and integrated services, addressing the intricate connection between health, housing, and the unique challenges faced by young people transitioning from care. The shared governance models foster transparent communication, strategic planning, and coordinated efforts, ensuring a collective approach to problem-solving.

This collaborative and inclusive framework reflects commitment to shared risk, where all stakeholders assume responsibility for potential challenges. Through this approach, decisions are made collectively, reinforcing stickability—the commitment to support young people until they are ready to leave, with no timeframes or limits.

The testimonials from the Housing First for Youth Strategic Group affirm the transformative impact of the service, describing it as both lifesaving and life changing. The collaborative effort between Simon Community NI, NHSCT, and NIHE has not only prevented homelessness but ensured that basic needs are met, providing a safety net for young people to make mistakes and grow.

In conclusion, Simon Community NI Housing First for Youth Service exemplifies the power of collaboration in addressing complex social challenges. This partnership initiative, with its innovative approach and tangible outcomes, is a deserving candidate for the Working in Partnership Award, showcasing the potential for collective action to make a lasting impact on vulnerable young lives.

Outcomes and achievements

A recent independent evaluation found the following:

- Housing First for Youth can positively influence the physical, psychological, and social health of vulnerable and at-risk young people.
- All young people have received and sustained accommodation within the community.
- All young people have demonstrated greater stability, periods of settled behaviour and reduction of risk-taking behaviours.
- Young people, staff and Senior Managers particularly note improvements in the mental health of young people, with many describing the service as 'lifesaving'. Housing First for Youth, as a model, has led to improvements in mental health and a reduction in hospital admissions.

- All young people note a connection back to training and employment to varying degrees.
- The intensive and 'non-conditional' approach to support is key to the success of the service. The separation of support from housing, meaning that challenging behaviour doesn't result in the withdrawal of the service, is key to developing positive outcomes.

Young People's Insights

'They stop me killing myself'

'Having 24-hour support is good -someone is always there; you can ring them at 3am when you head is melted, and you are scared'

'They know by my voice, and they come over here like Batman and Robin to save me'

NET ZERO IN HOUSING

Sponsored by:  Department for **Communities** | An Roinn **Pobal** | Department for **Commonities**
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

This award celebrates organisations that can demonstrate they have overcome some of the significant challenges in cutting carbon emissions. Applicants may consider new developments, retrofit projects or any other initiatives that have helped reduce carbon emissions.

WINNER - Rural Led Energy Transition (RULET) Retrofit Pilot

Lead organisation: Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Partner organisation: Ulster University



Statement of support

The Housing Executive is the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland and a landlord at scale, with approximately 83,000 properties.

The Housing Executive's vision is that "Everyone is able to live in an affordable, sustainable and decent home, appropriate to their needs, in a safe and climate-resilient place." In its Sustainable Development Strategy, launched in 2022, it sets a goal of being net zero in all operations by 2050 and focuses on the key impact areas of the built environment, the biosphere, sustainable communities and transport, as well as the need for educational empowerment, and improved health and wellbeing through sustainable living.

The Rural-Led Energy Transition (RULET) is an innovative retrofit whole house approach pilot with ten similar social houses, led by the Northern Ireland

Housing Executive and Ulster University. The pilots overarching aim was to reduce the risk of low-income households being left behind in the transition to clean, smart, integrated energy systems and to pilot retrofit of homes and the introduction of new technologies as we aim to achieve net zero in our organisation. Domestic electrical heating systems, when combined with energy storage and smart controls and operated at scale, have the potential to create significant system value and carbon reduction.

RULET builds on the work of previous pathfinder pilots delivered by the Housing Executive which tested low carbon heating and improved thermal performance). RULET is a collaboration of partners across the energy system, namely NI Utility Regulator, NIE Networks (DNO) Energia/PowerNI (energy supplier), heating manufacturers Grant & Sunamp, and smart heating control developer Climote.

The following was installed or introduced in homes in Omagh during spring 2022:

- Improved energy efficiency measures: a fundamental aspect of the retrofit focused on improving the insulation of both walls and windows within the dwellings. By enhancing the thermal performance of these structural elements, the initiative aimed to minimise heat loss and bolster overall energy efficiency.
- Low carbon heating systems: An Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) and thermal battery were installed in 4 houses and the remaining 6 houses had a hybrid boiler, being either a Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) and ASHP boiler or a gas and ASHP boiler.

- Tariff change, initially focused on time of use and dynamic tariffs.
- This innovative whole house approach had the desired outcome of improved fabric first energy efficiency measures, reduced heating demand/ carbon emissions and improved thermal comfort, all undertaken without the need for the tenant to decant. As a pilot, it allowed us to monitor different heating systems to provide key learning points to shape future retrofit programmes for the Housing Executive as both a large landlord and its influencing role as Northern Ireland's strategic housing authority to provide best practice to housing associations, local councils, homeowners, designers, students, policy makers and government bodies.

The initial learning from RULET has given the Housing Executive confidence and assurances to develop a larger retrofit programme. In October 2023, the Housing Executive commenced a 300 unit Low Carbon Retrofit Programme with the objective to provide options for a new Landlord Decarbonised Heating Policy by 2026 with a low carbon retrofit programme from 2026/27 in line with the Housing Executive's Sustainable Development Strategy and as strategic delivery partner for the current Northern Ireland's 'Affordable Warmth Scheme.'

Outcomes and achievements

This pilot utilised detailed quantitative monitoring which focused on energy use of the household. Temperature and humidity were monitored for a period of two years, and this was compared to the data collected during pre-retrofit monitoring. Pre and post retrofit fuel costs were also compared, and SAP reports were analysed to determine the reduction of carbon emissions and fabric heat loss.

Major reductions have been made to harmful emissions and wasted energy:

- All properties achieved SAP Band C (average SAP 76.4), from a starting point of SAP Band D & E.
- The properties achieved more consistent heating profiles by running heating systems at lower flow temperatures for longer periods, thereby improving thermal comfort and reducing damp risk.
- Reduction in primary energy demand by an average of 100 kwh/m² pa.
- Air permeability results range from 9 m³/h/m² to 6 m³/h/m² with minimal interventions.
- With comparison to the pre-retrofit SAP, the average reduction is approx. 4 tonnes per dwelling per year.
- In comparison with the cost of the pre-retrofit fuel (oil), ASHP with storage was 27% cheaper, gas hybrids were 6% cheaper, and oil hybrids 14% cheaper. Overall average saving was approximately 20% for householders.

HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by: **Co%ownership**

This award is for teams that have made an outstanding contribution to their organisation and the delivery of its objectives. We are looking for the achievement of something special as part of developing new services, improving existing ones or overcoming obstacles to achieve great results.

WINNER - Housing Solutions Team - Aisling Devine Service Manager

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

We would like to nominate Simon Community Housing Solutions Team for the Housing Team of the Year award. A core function of the Housing Solutions team is as a key interface with partnership agencies, especially local area teams of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, to ensure the best possible service and support for our clients/service users/customers.

In response to reduced housing options for homeless people, Simon Community Housing Solutions team recognised the priority need to increase move on options for people in emergency accommodation, particularly improving access to private renting. We have been able to contribute to rent deposits for anyone at risk of homelessness, allowing people to secure rental homes.

Alongside colleagues from across the organisation and in partnership with others in the sector, we have been able to secure funding to offer a broad range of support options including financial support.

Often the most effective homelessness prevention is to help people remain in their own home. To a Tenancy Sustainment programme was developed to help keep at-risk individuals in their own homes and help others. Through this, the Housing Solutions team do all in their power to help people stay in their current homes including financial assistance, expert advice through our Helplines NI partnership, housing advice and practical support.

Every client in Simon Community temporary accommodation benefits from a review of their move on options and we hold regular housing clinics in partnership with local NIHE Housing Advisors, to provide expert housing advice and respond to the needs of our clients. Through these clinics we have been able to improve our communication with clients and help them explore their move on options in a joined-up way.

One of our key innovations is the development of our move on volunteer service. In partnership with our Volunteer Manager the Housing Solutions Team matches clients with trained and supported volunteers, to help them when they move out of emergency accommodation. This volunteer can help the individual integrate into their new community, helping them access local amenities, shops, religious services and much more.

The work of the Housing Solutions team is part funded through the NIHE Homeless Prevention fund, ensuring that work to support our shared service users is collaborative. This can be seen with improved communication, shared housing clinics with client participation, shared housing plans for clients/customers and joined up working to help people escape homelessness. In practical terms, our clients/

customers feel the benefits with quicker access to temporary accommodation, less repetition of their stories, clear communication of move on options and shorter stays.

The partnership ethos of the Housing Solutions team lends itself to key collaborative initiatives like Complex Lives in Belfast, meaning we can work with other agencies to support many of those in most need of support in our society.

The Housing Solutions team works with other homeless services support providers and statutory

bodies such as the NIHE and Health Trusts to:

- 1) ensure placements into Simon Community-managed temporary accommodation are appropriate and prioritised for those most in need
- 2) Improve move on options for people in temporary accommodation, minimising length of stay
- 3) Improved partnerships with social landlords and private landlords to identify people at risk of homelessness and provide early intervention support.

Outcomes and achievements

We were contacted by a school with concerns about the wellbeing of a parent. We discovered that the parent had no money for food and their child was not entitled to transport to school. The child's mother was going without food and walking for hours every day to bring their child to and from school, foregoing their own needs to ensure the child could get to school. We were able to arrange transport to and from school, provide food and pay emergency bills. With our help, this allowed the parent time to get expert advice on their finances and benefit entitlement. The child was able to keep going to school without the long tiring walks and the parent given time and energy to look after their family.

More than 350 homeless people have received practical support from Housing Solutions to enter private rental tenancies since the induction of the Housing Solutions team, including more than 200 since April '22. Many of these people were able to avoid emergency accommodation entirely thanks to this support.

More than 260 clients were supported to move out of emergency accommodation and into their own tenancies between April 22 and September '23.

Ark Housing

Ark Housing



Statement of support

The team at Ark Housing is a shining example of service excellence in the housing sector, consistently delivering exceptional service and achieving remarkable outcomes for its tenants. The collective Ark Housing team, comprising the dedicated departments of Housing, Development, Finance, Homeless Services, and Property Services, stands out as a remarkable constellation, radiating its brilliance through harmonious collaboration.

The development team, led by Susan Gibson, spearheads the creation of new housing developments that address the pressing need for quality housing across Northern Ireland. Their projects,

like Ogle Street, Derrytrasna, and Railway Road in Coleraine, embody a blend of modern design and functionality, enhancing the living experiences of tenants and transforming neighbourhoods.

Under the guidance of Conor Taylor, the maintenance team ensures that every Ark property remains a haven of comfort and safety. Their prompt response times, meticulous attention to detail, and genuine care for tenants have earned them the utmost respect and admiration.

The housing team, led by Laura O'Dowd and Kelly Foster, places paramount importance on tenant participation and empowerment. They foster a sense of community and belonging within Ark's properties, ensuring that tenants feel valued, connected, and supported. Kelly Foster's leadership of the Housing for All program is a testament to the team's dedication to creating inclusive communities where people from all walks of life can thrive.

Ark Housing's steadfast commitment to addressing homelessness is evident in its dedicated Homeless Services department, led by Gail McLaughlin. This team manages two hostels for families experiencing homelessness and provides a robust floating support service, ensuring that families across the greater Belfast area receive comprehensive support and can quickly transition into stable housing.

The success of Ark Housing is deeply rooted in the collective efforts of its 43 outstanding employees. Each individual brings their unique skills, expertise, and passion to the table, forming a cohesive unit that consistently exceeds expectations. As the organization continues to grow and expand, this constellation of stars will continue to shine brightly, illuminating a path of best practice and service excellence.

With a shared vision and unwavering dedication, the Ark Housing team is determined to maintain their momentum, creating more quality homes and thriving communities in 2024 and beyond. Their commitment to excellence and their unwavering focus on tenant well-being make them deserving recipients of the Housing Team of the Year award.

Outcomes and achievements

For tenants:

- **Increased access to quality housing:** New developments like Ogle Street, Derrytrasna, and Railway Road provide modern, safe, and functional living spaces, addressing the critical need for housing in Northern Ireland.
- **Improved living conditions:** The maintenance team's promptness, attention to detail, and care ensure comfortable and safe homes for tenants.
- **Support for vulnerable groups:** The Housing for All program creates inclusive communities where people from all backgrounds can thrive.
- **Reduced homelessness:** Dedicated Homeless Services provide crucial support to families experiencing homelessness, helping them transition into stable housing.

For the community:

- **Regeneration of neighbourhoods:** New developments revitalize areas, improving infrastructure and quality of life for residents.

- **Enhanced social cohesion:** Ark Housing's commitment to creating inclusive communities promotes understanding and connection between diverse groups.

For Ark Housing itself:

- **Positive reputation:** Ark's dedication to service excellence and tenant well-being attracts recognition and awards, like the "Housing Team of the Year."
- **High employee morale and satisfaction:** Collaborative teamwork, shared vision, and focus on impact create a fulfilling work environment and attract talented individuals.
- **Sustainable growth and expansion:** Strong performance and community trust enable Ark Housing to continue growing and providing services to more people in need.

Services Department

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Following the completion of an organisational restructure in 2022, Circle's Services Department was established, incorporating customer services, income management, tenant engagement, tenancy services, and responsive repairs teams. The previous structure had served well in growing the organisation, however, it was agreed that in order to deliver new homes, the

organisational strategy and enhanced services to tenants, change was required. In the last 18 months Circle implemented a new management tier, which has delivered additional capacity and opportunity, transferred services and departments, and created a services division. In the post-covid world from which the Services Department emerged, real strides were made.

The achievements of the Services Department in 2023, despite the challenges of disruption and change, have been significant and can be attributed to the strength of each teams approach to working collaboratively. There are far too many to mention, but some of the collaborative projects which have made improvements to tenants lives and that the Services Department have delivered in the last twelve months are:

1. The cost of living crisis has posed immense challenges for tenants and, whilst the income and tenancy teams explored various ways to support tenants experiencing hardship, one of the key actions was engaging with the Irish League of Credit Unions to launch a pilot partnership

scheme. This scheme offered tenants in Ballyfermot and Inchicore an incentive to join their local Credit Union where Circle would provide a €15 credit and this was aimed at encouraging tenants who had no credit history or may have had credit issues in the past to engage with a community service rather than using the services of high interest or unlicensed money lenders. Circle provided a loan guarantee for tenants who could not access regular loan products.

2. Damp and mould in our homes has been a focus for Circle since the very public outcry over conditions of home in Rochdale, England in 2020. This brought significant changes in our approach to damp, condensation, and mould. The customer services, responsive repairs and tenancy teams developed policy, processes and engagement mechanisms for tenants, to address risk and ensure safe homes for tenants. The teams led a significant culture change within the organisation, recognising that the response of mould buildup being a “lifestyle” issue was unacceptable, inappropriate and harmful. The impact of this change can be seen throughout frontline services. Staff training was provided to all teams to identify and assess, find the root causes of the issues, rectify, and treat mould.

3. 2023 saw the Services Department embracing tenant feedback and utilising the expertise of the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) as a key resource. As part of Circle’s Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy, the TAG meet with the Services Department and all teams to offer advice on current strategy and the day-to-day business of the organisation. The teams have presented and sought input from the tenant Shadow Group on more than ten organisational policies that impact tenants. Members of the income, tenancy and tenant engagement teams undertook a site visit to Wheatley Group in Glasgow to learn about their “Think Yes” philosophy and how elements could be embedded in Circle’s services.

TAG members alongside staff presented their Board pathway process at the Board away-day in March 2023. This was hugely influential in achieving Board support to enable Circle tenants to become Board members. Both tenants and staff who had grown up in social housing, benefited from social housing or were current tenants themselves shared their experiences and in doing so demolished any perceived barrier which had existed.

Circle is particularly proud of how five teams have come together, responded to each individual departments requirements, and found ways of communicating and supporting new colleagues.

Outcomes and achievements

- A quote from Circle’s newest TAG member, Siobhan:

“I have been a Circle tenant for over 14 years, but in the last few years there has been massive improvements in the services and staff. That is why I went onto Circle’s website and looked for more information on tenant engagement.”

- Some results from Circle’s Satisfaction Surveys with tenants:
 - Satisfaction with overall services = 88% (Q4 2023).
 - Satisfaction with quality of the home = 92% (Q4 2023).
 - Satisfaction with Circle staff being easy to deal with = 89% (Q4 2023).
 - Satisfaction with repairs service they received 90% (2023).

- Over 10 policies approved by tenants and the Circle Board, leading to improvements in service delivery.

- Delivery of Circle’s first cost rental schemes in Donabate, Co. Dublin and Castletroy, Co. Limerick through collaborative work across all of the teams in the Services Department.
- 97% delivery of the Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy could only have been achieved through the combined efforts of all teams within the Services Department.
- Board approval of the establishment of a new Tenant First Link Sub-Committee, reporting to Board on all service areas, whose membership will be made up of current Board members and tenants.

Development Team

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Circle Voluntary Housing Association's Development Team has come an extraordinarily long way in the last two years. Before 2023, the team had never achieved its development target, in 2022 the total number of homes the team delivered was 56 against a target of 200 homes. However, following new direction and additions to the team in 2021 and 2022, the team started to build a pipeline that was more certain and develop relationships with larger developers that could provide both quality homes and better value for money as well as provide greater certainty in delivery. Coming into 2023, there was already a

strong sense that following two years of hard work, this would be the year that the team would achieve their target of 200 homes, however, with the rise in inflation impacting construction costs in early 2023 and fluctuating interest rates on lending during the year which threatened the viability of some projects, delivery continued to remain uncertain. Despite this, the team pulled together in 2023 and with a laser focus on their delivery goals for the year and huge amounts of determination, the team not only met their target, they beat it delivering a total of 228 new homes, this included the delivery of Circle's first cost rental homes in two separate locations. The team also brought to site Circle's first direct delivery construction projects which includes two separate developments that were designed and tendered during the previous year. Both construction projects are due for delivery in 2024. The work of the development team during the last three years has been transformative for both the team and the wider organisation. Delivery of new homes is essential to the financial stability of the organisation and supports our ability to invest in our existing housing stock and in our services to our tenants. The work of the team has given Circle the framework and the confidence to deliver even greater numbers of new homes in the coming years which will positively impact the communities and individual families we serve.

Outcomes and achievements

Achieved above benchmark performance for the delivery of new homes, with 228 homes delivered in 2023 against a target of 200 homes. Delivered Circle's first cost rental homes in two separate locations. Commenced work on site two direct delivery

construction projects under a public works contract which was also a first for Circle. Provided a framework for future delivery, with a potential pipeline of circa 2600 homes over the next three years.

Housing Services and Asset Management and Property services teams

Co-operative Housing Ireland



Statement of support

In late-October 2023, Storm Babet raged Ireland, badly affecting East Cork and Waterford and causing significant flooding. The ground floor of a recent CHI development, Cascade Apartments, Carrigtwohill, flooded as the nearby river, overwhelmed by rainfall, broke its banks. The allocation and launch of the 95 apartments at Cascade in early 2023 had been joyous for individuals and families moving in, many of whom had experienced homelessness or precarious living situations prior.

A CHI Maintenance Officer inspected the premises on the morning of 18th October due to rising water levels and assessed that there was a low risk of flood damage. Prior risk assessment of the complex deemed the risk of flood damage from neighbouring water sources to be low. However, later that day within a mere 14 minutes, eight ground floor apartments were flooded to ankle level, causing damage to the properties and personal affects, and damaging lifts in the building impacting residents on other floors. Response to this emergency was swift and required strong interdepartmental co-operation and communication. CHI colleagues across all departments were informed, particularly colleagues at the CHI Contact Centre - who deal with Member tenant queries and repairs- and Housing Services. CHI's Asset Management and Property Services Team

immediately liaised with Cork County Council and external contractors to tackle the flooding upon being alerted. Although it was impossible to block flooding from increasing, every possible avenue was explored in a timely manner to minimise damage.

CHI Regional Asset Manager, Seamus Gannon, liaised with Cork County Council and BAM the evening of the flooding and an action plan was rapidly put in place. Eight households were evacuated from their homes within a couple of hours of raising the alarm. Contractors were on site early the next day to assess damage and begin remediation works.

CHI's main priorities in the face of this emergency were to mitigate further damage to the homes and people's property, and to ensure that Member tenants affected had a suitable place to stay in the interim. Reaching the complex in the immediate aftermath of the flood was difficult. CHI Neighbourhood Delivery Manager, Niamh Lynch, had to turn back that evening due to widespread flooding en route. She liaised with hotels and reassured Member tenants over the phone that all necessary measures to protect their property further and secure a place to stay were being taken. She rang in excess of 70 nearby hotels, BnBs and accommodation outlets in order to house those affected. The flood was not an isolated incident and over 10,000 people in East Cork were affected, so securing accommodation proved challenging. In the end, accommodation was secured for all eight households by 9 pm the evening of the flooding.

Collaboration between CHI's Housing Services department and the Asset Management and Property Services team was crucial in ensuring that this urgent situation was dealt with as quickly and seamlessly as possible. CHI colleagues went above and beyond, working outside of office hours to deal with the issue as quickly as possible and assure Member tenants safety and comfort. Third-party contractors were also on call to respond to the emergency and worked tirelessly to turn around necessary remedial works in a mere eight weeks.

Outcomes and achievements

Success for this project is that not one person was left without accommodation for one single night. This is particularly crucial as each household that experienced flooding has a mental or physical disability and/or has dealt with a mental health or health issue and/or may be deemed vulnerable. It was imperative to all CHI colleagues that the potential negative effects to people's health and wellbeing were mitigated or minimised as much as possible.

Repair works were extensive. In the aftermath of the flooding, all ground floor doors had to be removed and dried. All beds, furniture and white goods were removed from the premises. New electrical circuits and air-to-water heat pumps were installed in each apartment. Apartments and communal areas were dried with industrial dehumidifiers. Floors, skirting boards, plasterboard and insulation were replaced.

Lift shafts were drained, lifts repaired, and new sensors installed. All fire alarm systems were retested. Furthermore, all ground floor drains have been cleared out by a contractor totalling four days' work.

CHI endeavoured to keep Member tenants as informed and updated at all points. Evan, the Neighbourhood Specialist (Housing Officer) responsible for the complex, has assisted in linking households with the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) for information on grant applications to help cover costs of items damaged such as white goods.

Remedial works were completed in December 2023 and all households returned to their home before Christmas day. The CHI Housing Team arranged hampers for all households with essentials to help them adjust back to life in their apartment.

CLAN team (Community Links, Advice & Network)

Crosscare/ CLAN



Statement of support

Crosscare Links and Advice Network (CLAN) work with clients who were previously in homeless services and have transitioned to independent living. We work with a very diverse client group; different cultures, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ethnic minorities, intellectual and physical disabilities, addiction, poor mental health etc. The CLAN team consists of two full time staff members: CLAN co-ordinator, a social care worker, and one part time group support worker who works 6 hours a week.

CLAN's approach is to promote independent living, and overall well-being through social supports. After the pandemic, CLAN focused on reducing isolation and loneliness. As a response CLAN began extra social, well-being and creative groups in the community. Clients who have attended these groups have reported feeling more connected and have built friendships with each other. CLAN has also found that it has allowed staff and service users build strong relationships. CLAN is a peer-led programme. We do

not have a time limit when working with clients and they are welcome to contact for support at any time once referred to us.

It was observed that many people who were previously homeless were feeling isolated and disconnected when they moved to their new accommodation. This often resulted in poor mental health, addiction and other issues which in turn caused tenancy breakdown and poor budgeting skills. CLAN focused on supporting people in relation to social isolation. CLAN organise weekly social events and outings for people who are new to living independently.

This year CLAN ran the following group activities:

Cinema trip, theatre play, fishing trip, visit to Botanic gardens, pool tournaments, holistic group, pitch and putt, craft group, museum tours, history graveyard tour, Halloween parade, Church crypt tour, games nights, bowling, Smithfield tower, CE scheme information sessions, Christmas markets and Christmas party.

CLAN ran specialised groups for diversity this year with service users involvement in organizing: Culture night celebration, Pride celebration and the Addiction Recovery celebration.

CLAN also invited service users to part take in the Crosscare strategy workshop that involved service users in our 5 year plan at Crosscare

CLAN also offer 1-1 support to service users to help them with specific issues. See below chart which explains the different types of support which service users received from CLAN in 2023:

A graph of different coloured bars

Staff supported 109 service users with addiction issues. 291 link ins around mental health. 176 were

supported with budgeting. 446 tenancy issues where supported. education/ employment 291. staff supported 266 physical health issues. staff had 797 interventions socially. CLAN aims to support individuals in their new communities to advocate and sustain their tenancy.

Description automatically generated

CLAN also help clients by sign posting them for specific services in their new communities. CLAN engage in interagency contact to best support the service user. CLAN also advocate for clients with issues such as getting the correct support they need,

tenant rights and social welfare entitlements. This is an important element when clients feel they cannot suitably advocate for themselves due to language barriers, intellectual disability and past trauma.

Staff met with service users for a one to ones 467 times in 2023.

Staff visited 54 service users in their home as some are unable to come to office due to health.

303 people have attended our social groups throughout the year.

1280 have contacted CLAN by phone for support this year.

Outcomes and achievements

CLAN help in the following areas: Homeless prevention, Mental health support and community integration, Support clients with education and employment, Strong interagency work on for the benefit of the service user, Lobbying and advocacy for clients.

We informed clients of service in their new area, community initiatives and introduce them to social and educational programmes to try to help integrate them into their new communities. CLAN also run our own weekly social group where clients interact with each other and build social networks.

CLAN helped 29 clients whose tenancies were at risk from January to December 2023. The reasons ranged from rent arrears, rent increases, personal

circumstances eg pregnancy, mental health issues, landlord the selling property. CLAN were able to support 26 of these clients to sustain their tenancy.

In the year of 2023, CLAN linked in with 30-77 service users every month.

CLAN have also supported social groups to achieve independence to facilitate their own peer led groups and friendships. For example: the Monday morning group and Short Story Club were formed 2 years ago. CLAN no longer facilitate these groups as the members are now running this themselves and have two weekly meet ups in the community. These two groups are now completely peer led.

Emma Geddis

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

The Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme is making a real difference to the lives of Housing Executive tenants, particularly those with vulnerabilities which may put them at greater risk of tenancy breakdown.

Through the provision of grant funding to voluntary, community and charity sector organisations, the Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme is

helping tenants to develop the skills and resilience they need to thrive in their tenancies.

Since the Programme's introduction in 2021, The Team has administered approximately £1.5 million to 36 tenancy sustainment projects in the community. Projects aim to support tenants to maintain their tenancy through the provision of:

- Help to those struggling financially due to the cost of living crisis
- Support the mental health and wellbeing of tenants and their wider households
- Practical support and resources to help tenants to manage and maintain their tenancy
- Projects that support Housing Executive tenants to manage their tenancies or engage with their local community and reduce their carbon footprint

Funded projects include:

- Social Supermarkets providing access to affordable food while allowing tenants to still exercise choice and control over their purchases. Additional support with benefits/budgeting and other issues is also provided to help service users to maximise their household income and improve their financial wellbeing.
- Young people projects - preparing young people for their tenancies and supporting them to develop the skills for successful tenancy management.
- Older people projects - provision of practical support to older tenants who may struggle to maintain their homes to their desired standard through repair/handyman/gardening assistance. Also, support for hoarding behaviour both in terms of assistance with clearing and deep cleaning and emotional support to address the underlying causes of the behaviour.
- Environmental and creative art projects - improving mental and physical health and wellbeing, encouraging social interaction while developing practical skills in furniture upcycling/gardening/landscaping. Creating spaces that can benefit the wider community
- Intensive support projects - supporting vulnerable tenants with complex needs including mental ill health and alcohol/substance dependency. Empowering tenants to manage their home by assisting them to work through any social/emotional difficulties they have and including practical interventions for budgeting, benefits, and health concerns.

The team's success through administration of the 2021-2023 funding programme had resulted in them securing a further £1.5 million to be invested in a further 3 year programme for 2023-2025 to empower more tenants to sustain their tenancies.

Statement of support:

"Kilkooley Pantry is set out like a shop providing a simulated shopping experience. Clients can choose at leisure from the shelves with a good level of choice across, food, cleaning, and personal care products.

There are no prices in the supermarket taking monetary pressure out of the shopping experience.

Dignity was a main factor in the decision to run with this model. People have said they feel ashamed or embarrassed to be in a position of need.

As such, all our visitors on the scheme are greeted with tea and coffee and treated with respect and kindness.

Shopping times and days are set to allow for privacy and our shopping bags are unbranded to avoid embarrassment.

Our Social Supermarket has proved to be a hub of activity and we have received excellent feedback from the community.

This vital service has been made possible thanks to the Housing Executive's generous funding towards a Project Worker."

Community Development Manager at Laurencetown Community Centre, commented: "Our wonderful and growing team of 15 volunteers help deliver the Handyman Scheme and concentrate on small, non-electrical jobs. These include things like cutting hedges, fixing small household items or moving small items of furniture.

"Many older people in particular are not able to do physical jobs around the house and this is a great service for them.

Our Repair Café encourages people to bring in items in need of fixing. Sitting with one of our 'Fixers', not only do they get their items fixed but they learn new skills that may help them repair things themselves in future."

She added: "These schemes have been really well-received by people of all ages in the community. It is a trusted and credible service that people can rely on without having to pay a fortune.

We have now carried out a variety of jobs both inside and outside people's homes, which have been much appreciated. This vital project has been supported immensely by the Housing Executive and we were able to establish these services thanks to the generous funding we have been given."

Project Support Worker, said: "Our goal is to build on and expand our support for vulnerable tenants who are at greater risk of experiencing tenancy breakdown.

We work with an extensive range of people including parents, care leavers and those struggling with mental health issues.

"We work hard to tailor our support for people's individual needs. That can mean anything from a crisis food bank referral or ensuring they are registered at a GP to helping with CVs, filling in benefit forms or engaging successfully with the Housing Executive or with the jobs and benefits office," she explained.

"With young mums, for example, we simply take the time to show them how to make their own weaning foods for their babies, which helps them save money and provide nutritious meals for both them and their child.

"On the back of this, we are working through the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing to help with taking care of our young mothers; mental health, enabling them to provide a caring and stable environment for their children."

Outcomes and achievements

Projects utilise the Tenancy Star - a 'distance travelled' outcomes measurement tool to measure and demonstrate the progress made by each tenant. The Star sets out the tenant's goals with regard to their tenancy and measures the progress made towards achieving those goals as they engage with the service. To date, positive outcomes have been recorded across all key outcome areas for approximately 630 tenants using the Tenancy Star system, demonstrating the effectiveness of funded services in meeting the individual needs of tenants.

The programme has contributed to an increase in NIHE's tenancy sustainment rate (for those tenancies

with the potential to be sustained). Prior to the Team's implementation of the funding programme in 2021, 56% of terminated tenancies had the potential to be sustained with appropriate intervention. A strategic target was set to reduce this to 48% by 2025. While the figure dropped to 51% in 2020/21, this was initially largely attributed to the Covid restrictions. However, in 2022-23 and 2023-24 (to date), after the resumption of normal operations, the downward trend in terminations has continued - 49% in 2022-23 and 48% in 2023-24 (YTD). As the target set for 2025 has been met ahead of schedule, a more challenging target of 45% has been set for 2025/26.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSING

Sponsored by: **apex**

This award is for an individual who has consistently gone the extra mile during their career in housing.

WINNER - Jim Dennison

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

We would like to nominate Jim Dennison for the Individual Outstanding Contribution to Housing in Ireland award, recognising their exceptional dedication and transformative impact on the housing sector in Northern Ireland and across the island of Ireland.

Chief Executive, Simon Community NI (January 2014 - Present): Jim has led Northern Ireland's largest homelessness charity for 10 years. During that time, he has driven significant change and transformation within the organisation. Leading the development and execution of two successive Strategic Plans (2014-2017 and 2018-2023), Jim has refocused the vision and objectives of Simon Community NI to centre around the vision of ending homelessness. With his direction, Simon Community has successfully implemented a range of new services, including an

extensive floating support service in Co. Down for individuals with addiction problems, Housing First for Youth services in key areas, a strategic and innovative programme of property acquisition and development across Northern Ireland, and partnerships with housing associations for new accommodation sites. The establishment of the Tenancy Liaison team and a Tenancy Deposit Scheme further attests to Jim's commitment to preventing homelessness and enhancing accessibility to the private rented sector for clients.

Head of Operations, Chartered Institute of Housing (February 2010 - January 2014): In Jim's tenure as Head of Operations at the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), his passion for driving positive change was evident in the strategic review and operational expansion. He led on the initiation and development of CIH's work in the Republic of Ireland - in partnership with The Housing Agency - which paved the way for CIH's greater presence, membership and impact on the island of Ireland. This not only aligns with the criteria for an outstanding ambassador for housing but also highlights the role Jim has played in putting housing on the map, contributing significantly to its recognition and importance.

Director of EU Programmes, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (November 2001 - February 2010): During the tenure as Director of EU Programmes, Jim showcased an unparalleled commitment to fostering positive change by being responsible for the strategic investment of over £70M in local communities. This commitment extended to

addressing sectarian division in housing interface areas, further evidence of his commitment to driving change within the housing sector at a community level.

Education and Professional Membership:

- Postgraduate Diploma in Regional and Local Development, Dublin Institute of Technology (1997)
- BSSc (Hons) in Politics, Queen's University of Belfast (1994)

- Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Housing (2014-present)

Jim not only meets, but exceeds, the criteria for the Outstanding Contribution to Housing in Ireland award. He has shown unwavering passion and commitment to housing issues throughout the island of Ireland, and has repeatedly demonstrated his ability to deliver transformational change on both an organisational and wider sectoral level.

Outcomes and achievements

Under Jim Dennison's leadership, significant achievements have reshaped Northern Ireland's housing landscape. At Simon Community, his strategic vision resulted in innovative services, notably the Floating Support service and Housing First for Youth, leading to a substantial reduction in homelessness. The introduction of the Tenancy Liaison team and a Tenancy Deposit Scheme has provided stability and increased access to the private rented sector for numerous clients.

Jim's impact at CIH is evident in the development of five new courses, including those addressing homelessness and guiding landlords. His initiation of

CIH's work in the Republic of Ireland has expanded the organization's reach and impact.

At the Community Relations Council, Jim's strategic investments totaling over £70M have played a crucial role in promoting community cohesion and addressing sectarian division in housing interface areas.

In summary, Jim Dennison's achievements have significantly advanced homelessness prevention, professional development, and community cohesion in Northern Ireland's housing sector, positively impacting countless lives and communities.

Jim McShane

Ark Housing



Statement of support

In social housing sector, Jim McShane proudly stands as an exemplary leader, a visionary who has consistently championed change and innovation, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of countless individuals and communities. His unwavering dedication, strategic acumen, and compassionate approach have propelled Ark Housing to the forefront of the industry, making it a symbol of excellence and an inspiration to housing providers worldwide.

Jim's journey in social housing spans over three decades, marked by a remarkable trajectory of growth and transformation. His expertise in governance, regulation, strategic planning, and operational management has been instrumental in shaping Ark

Housing's success. From his humble beginnings as a Housing Officer in Wales to his current role as Chief Executive, Jim has consistently demonstrated his ability to navigate complex challenges and deliver exceptional results.

As Business Operations Manager, Jim spearheaded the development of Ark Housing's ambitious Strategic Plan, a blueprint that has propelled the organization to unprecedented heights. Under his leadership, Ark Housing's stock has doubled in size over the past five years, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to providing quality homes and strong communities for those in need. His strategic vision and relentless pursuit of excellence have transformed Ark Housing into one of the top developing organizations in the sector.

Jim's impact extends far beyond the realm of housing development. A passionate advocate for homelessness prevention, he spearheaded the reform of homeless services, creating the Floating Support Service, a groundbreaking initiative that provides comprehensive support to families living in the greater Belfast area. This transformative program has made a significant contribution to alleviating homelessness in the region, earning Jim recognition as a true champion for social justice.

Beyond his professional achievements, Jim is deeply respected for his commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive work environment. He prioritizes

the well-being of his staff, ensuring that every Ark employee feels valued, respected, and supported, creating a cohesive and high-performing team. His leadership style is characterized by empathy, collaboration, and a genuine belief in the power of teamwork to achieve extraordinary results.

Jim McShane is not merely a housing leader; he is a visionary who has redefined the boundaries of what is possible in the social housing sector. His dedication

to innovation, his unwavering commitment to social justice, and his ability to inspire and motivate others have made him a true champion of the housing community. It is with immense pride that we nominate Jim McShane for the Outstanding Contribution to Housing Award, recognizing his exceptional contributions to the betterment of lives and communities across Northern Ireland.

Outcomes and achievements

Organizational Impact:

- **Growth and Transformation:** Ark Housing's stock doubled in size in 5 years due to Jim's strategic plan and commitment to providing quality homes.
- **Excellence and Inspiration:** Ark Housing became a symbol of excellence and an inspiration to housing providers worldwide.
- **Homelessness Prevention:** Spearheaded the Floating Support Service, significantly reducing homelessness in the Belfast area.
- **Developing Organization:** Transformed Ark Housing into one of the top developing organizations in the sector.

Leadership and Management:

- **Visionary Leadership:** Redefined the boundaries of what is possible in the social housing sector.
- **Strategic Acumen:** Developed and executed a successful Strategic Plan, driving growth and transformation.

- **Operational Excellence:** Expertise in governance, regulation, strategic planning, and operational management led to Ark's success.
- **Inclusive Work Environment:** Fostered a positive and inclusive work environment, maximizing employee well-being and performance.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Leadership style characterized by empathy, collaboration, and belief in teamwork for achieving results.

Social Impact:

- **Improved Lives and Communities:** Significant contribution to the betterment of lives and communities across Northern Ireland.
- **Social Justice Champion:** Recognized as a champion for social justice, advocating for homelessness prevention and supporting vulnerable families.
- **Community Inspiration:** Jim's dedication and achievements inspire others in the housing sector to strive for greater impact.

Paul Leonard

Choice Housing Ireland



Statement of support

Paul Leonard is a voluntary Group Board member of Choice and Chair of the Development & Assets Committee (DAC) and Maple and May Board. Paul joined Choice in April 2016. Since then, his attendance at Board & Committee meetings has been exemplary and his contributions invaluable.

In addition to his service as a Board member, Paul was a Director involved in setting up Choice Services, Choice's in-house maintenance provider. He brings various skills around governance, financial management, budget planning, customer satisfaction, KPI reporting and business planning. Fundamentally however, Paul helped ensure the strategy for Choice Services was ambitious and aligned with that of the Choice Group.

During his time as Chair of the Choice Services Board, Paul oversaw Choice Services grow significantly from a turnover of £3m to over £8m. The scope of services increased and Choice Services commenced delivery of housing and facilities services to the first Social Housing Public Private Partnership in Ireland. This arrangement was operated through a Special Purpose Vehicle, Comhar FM Ltd, with Paul as Chair overseeing a commitment to deliver services via an output based contract which, in its own right, is bigger than many.

The DAC oversee annual spend in the Planned Maintenance Programme of £16m and £60m in new

social homes. As current Chair of the DAC, Paul has overseen the provision of Asset, Compliance and Planned Maintenance Services from 2021. In terms of Development, Paul has played an instrumental role in forming and successfully implementing a new Development Strategy, focusing on bigger, better quality projects.

Choice has achieved significantly higher new-build starts under his stewardship, with 442 and 433 in the last two financial years. With his strong commercial background he has improved our approach to project feasibility and risk management.

Paul is extremely committed, always able to take a call and can be relied upon to provide sound advice when it is required. His unchanging and ever-supportive approach gives executives confidence to excel in their roles.

Paul has also taken a lead role in forming Maple and May, Choice's private rental and affordable for sale subsidiary with all surpluses gift aided to Choice Housing to support its 'core' tenants. Initially, this was in forming strategy and direction through to the present day, leading a change in approach into mixed tenure delivery. Choice is delivering some of Northern Ireland's most significant mixed tenure projects and Paul has played a huge part in seeing them come to fruition.

In Paul's tenure as Chair of DAC, Choice has committed to one of the largest social housing projects in NI since the 1970's which comprises more than 800 social homes. In supporting this strategic project, and helping to shape our approach to delivering it, Paul's role cannot be overstated.

Joe Higgins, Choice Group Chair: "Paul has made a significant contribution, not just to the Choice Group, but to the strategic direction of social and affordable housing in Northern Ireland. His experience and expertise has been invaluable in delivering innovative, financially viable solutions to the housing offering of Choice Housing.

"Paul played a key role in the establishment of Choice Services which has grown significantly and now maintains 10,000 homes across the island of Ireland - equating to 80% of the total Choice Housing stock.

"Paul has proved to be an exceptional addition to the Choice Board and during his tenure of almost 8 years, his contribution across many areas of the Choice Group cannot be overstated. From a personal perspective, I have learnt a lot from working with Paul and look forward to continuing our work as part of the Choice Group Board."

Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes delivered under the direction of Paul Leonard include:

- Delivery by Choice of very high standards of Compliance for various maintenance activities e.g. Gas, Asbestos, Legionella, Electrical testing and Lift maintenance.
- Overseen the delivery of a Planned Maintenance investment programme in the last 3 years of over £20m.
- Overseen a commitment of over £130m in new social homes in the last 2 year period.
- Overseen the establishment of Maple and May, Choice's affordable housing subsidiary and played an important part in its early success.
- Instrumental in shaping the mixed tenure strategy, helping to form the approach at key junctures.
- Overseen the investment following acquisition of Victoria Housing Estates in excess of £12m to date for over 200 new Choice tenants.
- Delivered the growth of Choice Services from a £3m pa turnover to over £8m over a 5 year period.
- Overseen Choice Services mobilisation and delivery of the first social housing PPP in Ireland, for 534 new housing units in areas of high social need.
- Overseen Choice Services return nearly £1m in gift aid contributions to the parent for use in the delivery of social housing services.
- Overseen market leading KPI delivery for Choice Services in its core maintenance services

Chris Ellison

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

The definition of outstanding is exceptionally good or clearly noticeable, well that same definition can be used to describe Chris Ellison, the current Chair of Circle VHA, it can't be underestimated the work undertaken by our volunteer directors and the sizable effort and commitment it exhibits to the sector.

Chris has achieved a stellar career in the UK and brought his time, patience and experience to Ireland in volunteering on the Board of Circle VHA since 2009. Chris has spearheaded change in Ireland, with a passion and commitment he has driven positive change in how safety in housing is responded to, he has facilitated, encouraged and created pathways for the tenant voice to not only be heard, but for it to have an impact. An impact on the community, an organisation, and a sector. Every step taken by Chris has been about facilitating a better way, a more inclusive way, a safer way and a stronger way, a true ambassador for housing.

As a volunteer director based in another country the time commitment can't be underestimated, to prepare for and attend meetings in a voluntary capacity is a

hefty load for any individual. To take on that mantle from another country is nothing short of admirable. To do so with passion, compassion empathy and drive is another level altogether.

Chris is a "people's person", people matter to him and when you think of housing, what is housing without people, what is the need for housing without people. Chris sees past the bricks and mortar to the person, the neighbours, the community, the voices that make that community. He sees and he acknowledges the importance of the people, our staff know they have a Chair that sees them. That will hold them to account but will also put his shoulder to the wheel when needed.

The outstanding contribution to housing award, in short recognises a high level of leadership in housing over a sustained period, going the extra mile in their career. While Chris is employed in the UK his "work" with the Irish Sector has been immense. With sustained leadership, his drive, passion and his tenure speak to the drive, passion and commitment to a sector. It's exhibited in his actions, his behaviours in how he has helped align a collective (staff and tenants, board and peers) to execute a new way forward a strategic awakening to why we do what we do - people.

Chris has allowed Circle to turn up the volume on the voice that needs to be heard and he encourages and promotes that at every turn across the sector. Chris will step down as director of Circle at the end of 2023 and that personality won't fade to the back, he will continue to encourage, promote and advocate to do the right thing, his voice will resonate as one of inclusivity, community, safety and sustainability and his passion and commitment will reign in Circle and in the Irish Sector long after he steps down as he is already finding ways to continue his work with our tenants.

Outcomes and achievements

Chris has led the strategic change of Circle VHA from 2018, as Chair of the Strategic Purpose Group, the transformation of Circle commenced. An ambitious project that saw it triple in size between 2018 and 2021. Chris was instrumental in the governance review that led to Circle grasping voluntary regulation and stepping into a sphere that pushed the boundaries for a volunteer board, it questioned, challenged and responded as it grew, laying and embedding the

foundations that would see it position itself for growth. Chris took over as Chair as we entered a pandemic. A feat that some would find daunting; let alone to have to do it from another country but his fun, and determination, encouraged a team of people to push for more. Chris set about ensuring that as we pushed forward, we created the pathways for our tenants to push forward with us, to challenge us and to be involved.

Erskine Holmes OBE

Grove Community Housing Association



Statement of support

Erskine Holmes OBE and CIH Member has dedicated decades of service to the housing movement across North and South of Ireland and to building inclusive

and peaceful communities. He was former CEO of NIFHA and Co-op housing member and Board member of Ulster Garden Villages HA (non reg). Erskine is highly recognised and regarded by many in the social housing movement and a great connector of people. He is not afraid to challenge the status quo and to push government departments to bring about new initiatives and established the Housing Association movement with others, starting of NIFHA and was a founder Board member of many Housing Associations across Northern Ireland. Through his keen interest in urban renewal, historic buildings and rural development he supported the establishment of many community based Housing Associations, empowering local people to improve their own housing conditions. He was a founder member of Grove Community Housing back in the late 70's and remains a very active Board member today.

Outcomes and achievements

Establishment of numerous Housing Associations in Northern Ireland

Member of Co-operative Housing movement Scotland and NI

Achieved the delivery of huge areas being regenerated through vesting and employed NIFHA first development officer Chris Williamson.

Vice Chair Lagan Canal Trust

Active twitter engagement on current issues including housing

Sought by many for his expertise and fantastic mind and memory on a wide range of organisations but particularly housing.

Ciara Scollay

MACS Supporting Children and Young People



Statement of support

MACS would like to nominate our Head of Floating Support and Outreach Services, Ciará Scollay, for this award. Ciará has worked tirelessly in the Homeless Sector for over 15 years, starting as a volunteer with those experiencing rough sleeping, through homeless hostels, young people residential units, and support in the community; she now leads the Floating Support and Outreach Team in MACS with passion and commitment for change like no other. She is a strong-

willed individual who can drive change forward and is not afraid to take on the challenge. From the start, she developed our hugely successful Prison Resettlement Team, working with young people deemed 'hard to reach'. She developed relationships that had referrals triple within the project's first year, and her ethos, kindness, and approach to working with staff and young people in this project are truly breathtaking.

She has also been instrumental in the success of our Shared Tenancy Project, and again, her tenacity and drive for change have meant that this creative approach to the housing crisis has been allowed to flourish. She also leads the Floating Support across the North of Ireland, supporting over 300 young people at any one time who are experiencing or threatened with homelessness; she has put this project on the map with her aspirations and desire to change not just young people's lives but also her whole team's ethics towards passion and commitment for housing change. Not one to rest, she has also recently completed her MSC in Youth Justice, researching Young Men's Resettlement Experiences, from Hydebank Wood, Particularly Concerning Housing Experiences - comments from her supervisors included "Some of the

findings are hugely significant, perhaps more so than the student themselves identifies."

Ciará is a powerhouse, and no person can match her consistency in driving change through the organisation and the communities we work in, all while

being done in true Ciará style "with the best interest of our young people at the fore."

Outcomes and achievements

Ciará has been successful in achieving core funding for both Prison Resettlement and Shared Tenancy within the Floating Support Service, during a period of time when funding was hard to come by. These projects continue to thrive.

* In 2022/2023, across the Floating Support Service, we supported 514 young people, which is 74% of the young people that MACS has supported.

* 93% of young people supported in Floating Support maintained their tenancy, while 81% were supported to find accommodation.

* Further positive outcomes across the service, were that 85% of young people who needed support with benefits achieved this outcome.

* 69% of young people achieved paid work.

* 63% of young people were successfully supported to manage their substance use. 76% of young people had mental health issues, with the increase in dual diagnosis appearing throughout the service.

* In 2022/2023, we supported 42 young people across the Prison Resettlement Service.

* Referrals to the Prison Resettlement Team totalled 54

* 100% of young people supported in Prison Resettlement maintained their tenancy, while 100% were supported to find accommodation. These outcomes may seem extreme, but the reality of young people leaving prison under stringent conditions means that accommodation must be sourced prior to release. The team has also worked to develop partnerships that have allowed young people to keep their accommodation while in prison.

Further positive outcomes across the service were that 85% of young people who needed support with benefits achieved this outcome. 69% of young people achieved paid work.

63% of young people were successfully supported to manage their substance use, and a further 76% had mental health with the increase dual diagnosis appearing throughout the service.

Elaine MacNeill

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

Elaine has tenants and customers at the heart of everything that she does. She provides exemplary customer care in a fast-paced environment which is always changing to meet their needs. Elaine has over 40 years' experience within the Housing Executive and every role that she has had has been focussed on providing exceptional customer care personally and equipping other colleagues with the skills/tools necessary to go the extra mile.

Elaine was instrumental in introducing the Housing Executive's Customer Service Units over 15 years

ago - a new unit designed to offer a central, customer focussed, single point of contact for customers to both report repairs and apply for housing. She has personally trained and mentored over 100 staff in providing empathetic listening skills to assist tenants with their queries in a difficult environment where they are frequently phoning to report emergencies and repairs within their homes. She has not been afraid to take on new challenges and innovations, adapting with the changing housing landscape to ensure that new IT is introduced seamlessly, that contingencies are in place for emergencies and that there is a support network (with her firmly at the centre) for customers and colleagues alike.

Elaine has been in the centre of the Housing Executive's emergency response for over a decade - when inclement weather hits, or through floods or pandemics, Elaine has been a first responder ready to get plans in place to tackle any challenge. During the "Big Freeze" in 2010, not only did Elaine manage to pull resources together to ensure all phonelines were manned and customer calls were answered, she also showed up with several bags of food to make sure that staff had lunches to allow them to work throughout the day. She never thinks of herself and always puts others first.

Elaine deserves recognition for her forward thinking approach in the midst of difficult situations. Her positive can do attitude and supportive nature have made her an exemplary colleague and one to whom many regard as an expert in her field who will always take the time to help. Elaine ensures that our Customer Service Unit staff and managers have the necessary tools, support and confidence in their abilities to make a difference. She helps with complex queries, fixes technical problems, deals with procedural queries and steps in to do any job necessary if it can help alleviate any pressure and focus on ensuring customer queries are answered. She is confident, articulate, innovative, empathetic and inclusive. She is always determined to make a difference.

Sarah McAdorey - Head of Estates

"Elaine is exceptional in the work that she does. She puts her customer at the heart of every single thing that she does. I have worked with her for 20 years and

throughout that time I have continued to be inspired and impressed by her selfless dedication to making a difference in our tenants' lives. She thoroughly deserves to be nominated for this award given the impact that she has had in introducing innovative approaches to help our tenants through our Customer Service Units and by empowering staff to offer the best service they can."

Geraldine Haire, Assistant Manager NE CSU

"Elaine is always supportive, ensuring that both Management and Advisors are equipped with everything they need to deliver a first class customer service. She analyses what is required on complex issues whilst imparting her knowledge in a gentle, guiding and support manner. Her partnership working is second to none and is well respected and renowned. A true example of a dedicated housing professional"

Outcomes and achievements

Elaine deserves recognition for her forward thinking approach in the midst of difficult situations. Her positive can do attitude and supportive nature have made her an exemplary colleague and one to whom many regard as an expert in her field who will always take the time to help. Elaine ensures that our Customer Service Unit staff and managers have the necessary tools, support and confidence

in their abilities to make a difference. She helps with complex queries, fixes technical problems, deals with procedural queries and steps in to do any job necessary if it can help alleviate any pressure and focus on ensuring customer queries are answered. She is confident, articulate, innovative, empathetic and inclusive. She is always determined to make a difference.

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by:

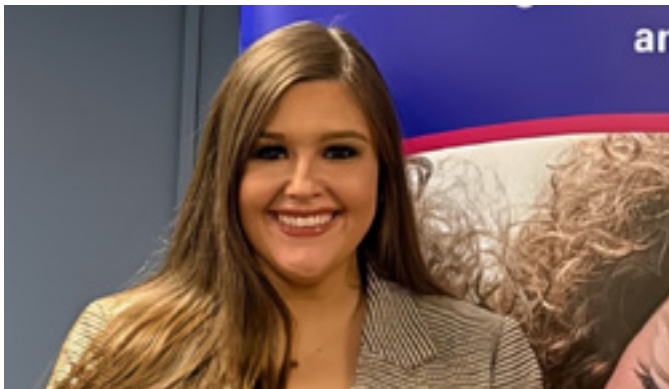


Irish Council
for Social Housing

This award recognises and celebrates the successes of housing professionals who have been working in the housing industry for less than three years. The winner of this award will have demonstrated that professional and personal success is not dependent on length of career. They will have demonstrated professional commitment to their organisation and/or the communities in which they work, as well as a commitment to their profession.

WINNER - Kirsty McCauley

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

Kirsty joined the Housing Executive in 2021 as a Graduate Trainee, excelling through the programme in both frontline and strategic roles. As a Housing Advisor, Kirsty displayed real empathy and understanding for customers' complex situations. In her role as a Community Involvement Officer, she has shown a real flair for policy development by producing the Community Involvement Strategy, including undertaking desk-based research to co-hosting workshops with community representatives.

Kirsty has an aptitude for customer engagement and develops positive relationships that are keenly valued. Patricia McQuillan MBE said, "Since meeting Kirsty, I have been totally impressed by her work ethic, wealth of knowledge and amazing ability. Kirsty is involved in various working groups which are

thankfully some of the ones that I attend. She brings a 'can do' attitude and determination to do the best for customers. On the community conference group, Kirsty is brilliant at showing initiative from beginning to end. She sources key speakers, writes the scripts for the community leaders, and prepares welcome packs. She is committed and always so professional in her approach. The conference day is so busy with much organising to do and Kirsty is brilliant at this. No hassle to her and a major achievement each time.

Kirsty really respects everyone's input and treats the community like her colleagues. Kirsty and I also ran workshops to consult on the Community Involvement Strategy. These sessions were successfully executed with the use of a talking wall. Kirsty collected the responses and wrote the draft strategy. We also presented the findings to staff and community leaders. I feel this was a major responsibility and a great achievement in her career and professional development. I feel Kirsty deserves the young professional of the year as she has been one of the best workers that I have had the pleasure to work with. She really believes in co-production and co-design. From day one she has had a passion and drive for housing, community involvement plus trying to improve every remit of the NIHE."

Kirsty is excellent ambassador for housing and her desire to continuously advance the way NIHE does things was shown in her project on care leavers. She engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to identify shortcomings, and presented recommendations to directors. She was commended for her passion

for improving outcomes for young people, with the research fed into NIHE's youth homelessness action plan.

She also displays a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion as a member of the race workstream, representing NIHE at various events such as the Belfast Mela. She also recognises that the future of the profession depends on attracting skilled young people. She hosted an event for lower sixth students to learn about the variety of careers available at NIHE. She showcased what being a housing professional means and displayed a real flair for engaging with her audience. Attendees commenting that Kirsty made the experience fun and inspired them to consider a career in housing.

Kirsty demonstrates a strong commitment to her continued professional development by identifying training opportunities, and regularly attending networking events to share best practice. Mike Austin, PRINCE2® trainer said, "I found Kirsty to be totally engaged in the learning and her course preparation extraordinary. Furthermore, Kirsty was more than happy to share her learning to help her colleagues succeed." This is testament to her character as a team player who enjoys helping others develop.

Kirsty's commitment to community engagement is clear in the work that she does with the Housing Community Network. She is driven, passionate and a clear rising star with a sparkling career ahead of her.

Outcomes and achievements

- Completed the CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing, CMI Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management, and PRINCE2 accreditation.
- Actively promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and displayed her commitment to the profession by organising a work experience event for school leavers.
- Committed to improving services by advancing scrutiny recommendations. She partnered with housing associations to produce a cost-of-living advice booklet.
- CIH tutor Dr John McPeake said, "I was impressed with Kirsty from our first meeting. Her commitment and desire to learn was apparent from the outset. She worked well with her peers in class

discussions, and it was clear that her colleagues respected her views and knowledge. Her individual work quality was also excellent. She was one of the few to submit on time and to pass each assignment on the first attempt - when she takes on something she is absolutely committed to seeing it through and giving the best of herself in the process. In my view Kirsty displays all the attributes of a housing professional - she acts with integrity and respect, takes personal responsibility and is accountable for her actions, and she is committed to maintaining and improving her professional competence. She clearly has a bright future in housing."

Kerryann McGouran

Ark Housing



Statement of support

Kerryann McGouran, a young and dedicated housing professional at Ark Housing, is making waves in the industry, demonstrating exceptional skills, unswerving commitment, and a passion for making a positive impact on the lives of tenants. Despite facing personal challenges, Kerryanne has consistently delivered outstanding service, embodying the values of

compassion, empathy, and professionalism that are essential in the housing sector.

Kerryann's dedication to her role as receptionist, administrator, and front of house is exemplary. She maintains close contact with residents in category one and category two schemes, ensuring that every tenant feels valued, heard, and supported. Her ability to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and address their concerns with empathy and sensitivity is a testament to her social conscience and genuine care for others.

In spite of battling chronic pain, Kerryann has not let her physical challenges deter her from providing exceptional service. Her resilience and determination are an inspiration to her colleagues and tenants alike. She is grateful for Ark Housing's understanding and support, which has enabled her to thrive in her role despite her health circumstances.

Kerryann's commitment to professional development is evident in her proactive approach to learning and growth. She has enrolled in the CIH Futures initiative,

a program designed to equip housing professionals with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in their careers. Additionally, she has registered for the CIH Level 3 qualification, demonstrating her dedication to enhancing her expertise and delivering the highest level of service to tenants.

Kerryann's innovative ideas for enhancing tenant participation and improving the housing experience are also noteworthy. Her suggestion of providing childcare provision for housing professionals would not only benefit employees but also create a more supportive and inclusive work environment. Furthermore, her observation regarding the lack of communication between housing teams across Ireland and the United Kingdom highlights a potential area

for improvement. Her desire to harmonize services and facilitate better cross-border collaboration is a testament to her vision and commitment to the overall success of the housing sector.

Kerryann McGouran is an exceptional young professional who embodies the qualities of a future leader in the housing industry. Her dedication, passion, and commitment to excellence make her a deserving recipient of the Young Professional of the Year award. Her story is an inspiration to aspiring housing professionals and a reminder that with hard work, perseverance, and a genuine desire to make a difference, individuals can achieve remarkable success in their chosen field.

Outcomes and achievements

Professional Development and Growth:

- Enrolled in CIH Futures initiative: Proactive approach to learning and gaining future-proof skills.
- Registered for CIH Level 3 qualification: Dedicated to enhancing expertise and service quality.

Service Excellence and Impact:

- Exemplary dedication as receptionist, administrator, and front of house: Ensures tenants feel valued, heard, and supported.
- Exceptional service despite personal challenges: Resilience and determination inspire colleagues and tenants.
- Strong connection with diverse residents: Empathy and sensitivity demonstrate social conscience and genuine care.

Innovation and Vision:

- Suggested childcare provision for housing professionals: Benefits employees and creates a more inclusive environment.
- Highlighted lack of communication across housing teams: Vision for improved services and cross-border collaboration.

Leadership Potential:

- Embodies qualities of a future leader: Dedication, passion, and commitment to excellence.
- Story serves as an inspiration: Encourages aspiring professionals and emphasizes the power of hard work and a genuine desire to make a difference.

Additional:

- Overcoming personal challenges: Kerryann's resilience in the face of chronic pain adds another layer of inspiration to her story.
- Appreciation for Ark Housing's support: Highlighting the organization's positive and understanding work environment strengthens the overall narrative.

Adam Gannon

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Since joining Circle Voluntary Housing Association in August 2022, Adam Gannon has brought strong assets to his role and the organisation is incredibly fortunate to have him as its Customer Services Coordinator. He is an integral part of the team, a consummate professional in all of his duties and exceeds expectations to support the organisations teams, tenants and mission.

Upon starting with Circle, Adam was immediately tasked with improving access to and communication with tenants. In his role as team lead, Adam was responsible for delivery of this communication improvement project not just within his own team, but also in collaboration with the Tenancy Team and Repairs Team. His clear vision and ability to align individual strengths with tasks has optimised Circle's performance, resulting in improved communication, engagement, satisfaction and services to Circle tenants. Adam has integrated an improved call centre phone system across the organisation, training champions within departments to deliver and imbed new practice, leading to improved customer service, increased efficiency and enhanced analytics. Adam and his team are now delivering call abandonment rates below the industry standard, achieving 4% and ensuring tenants queries and repairs requests are responded to promptly.

He is extremely organized and focused on continuously learning and developing best practices to enhance services to tenants and genuinely cares about delivering excellent quality work. For

example, in addition to the work carried out on the communication improvement project, Adam undertook, in collaboration with colleagues in Assets and Repairs, a review of how Circle manages damp, mould and condensation within tenants' homes. Adam oversaw the development of a policy and procedure in this regard, which was formally approved by Circle's Tenant Shadow Group and Board in August 2023. To compliment the introduction of this new policy and procedure, staff received training on the subject, and specific informational resources were developed for tenants to avail of (e.g. newsletter articles, animated videos, etc.). The enhanced reporting and drive the Customer Services Team brought to the project, under Adams guidance, resulted in monthly reports detailing each case of mould, damp and condensation alongside a clear tracking system identifying works in progress, completed and transfer of data to planned maintenance.

Throughout his work with his team, Adam has prioritised building awareness with tenants, utilising phone scripts, the tenant newsletter, managing mould, damp and condensation guides and short animated videos - all with the view to encouraging tenant feedback, from which service improvements can be actioned.

He also always goes above and beyond the call of duty in pursuing excellence. For example, he has carried out service visits with other approved housing bodies to share information and keep up to date with sector best practice. He keeps staff updated on current systems and processes and has developed training materials to maintain and enhance skill-levels. This allows responsive repairs to run more smoothly, and informs planned maintenance. In addition he spends time providing training and one-to-one guidance to ensure staff have confidence in their abilities, by reinforcing the importance of their work.

His unwavering dedication and ability to create a compelling vision has set the standard within the organisation and inspired team members to strive for excellence. Under his guidance, Circle has witnessed positive changes to its team dynamics, leading to enhanced collaboration, increased efficiency, and a more tenant-centred approach to the delivery of responsive repairs.

Outcomes and achievements

Adam has been responsible for driving the communication improvement project, with a particular success in this being the achievement of call abandonment rate rates below the industry standard, following the introduction of a new phone system the previous year.

Adam has been a leader in the development of the organisations enhanced approach to managing and addressing instances of mould, damp and condensation. The key elements of this which Adam

was a champion of were the drafting of the policy and procedure, supports for tenants and delivery of staff training.

Dedication to excellence and improvement has been a hallmark of Adam's tenure as Customer Services Coordinator. He has surpassed the requirements of his role in the manner in which he has provided guidance to colleagues and members of his team, embraced learnings from other organisations, and embodied a tenant-first approach to all Circle activities.

Alisha Curtis

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

If you were to look up positive culture, willingness, accountability or teamwork - you would find Alisha Curtis in the definition. Alisha is an Income Management Officer for Circle Voluntary Housing Association. Since joining the organisation, Alisha has demonstrated an eagerness to develop a greater understanding of all elements of social and cost rental housing delivery and management. She does not shy away from a challenge, which sets her apart. She consistently demonstrates a can-do attitude and will find a way to solve a problem. She understands how to navigate sensitive situations and ensure confidentiality, making her support particularly meaningful for Circle's tenants.

Alisha joined Circle in March 2021 as a Customer Services Officer. Working within the Customer Services Team, Alisha quickly found her strengths communicating with tenants to respond to repairs requests and other queries. Having had no prior work experience in the sector, it was noticeable when she quickly and effectively arranged for a family to move out of a home due to a flood. This is when her skills became immediately apparent, Alisha worked collaboratively with tenancy services, repairs staff and contractors to ensure the family were housed temporarily and all works completed to allow them to return to their home as quickly as possible. The championing of collaboration and efficiency has been some of Alisha's greatest assets, to her team specifically, but to the entire organisation and its tenants also.

During the pandemic, in a time of change and uncertainty for everyone, Alisha applied for a role as Income Management Administrator. She was immediately snapped up and seamlessly assumed her new role in January 2022. The purpose of the Income

Team is to support tenants to sustain their home by providing advice and enabling people to access supports. Alisha excelled at this, her calm and positive attitude led her to coordinate the team administrative function and make long lasting improvements. In particular, the ability for the team to manage service charge payments, as Circle's Asset Department act as Agents for other social landlords, Local Authorities and private owners. Alisha's impact in this area has been incredible. In a short period she has shaped interdepartmental procedures to increase collection rates, in doing so supporting Circle's financial stability and growth.

Alisha has consistently looked to develop her skills and knowledge, such as by completing the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) level 6 Certificate in Housing Studies, taking on projects beyond her role scope such as making positive changes to processes in data management, seeking new methods of rent payments thereby progressing applications, in particular for cost rental, much more quickly. She has carried those learnings and experiences through to all projects; stepping up to deliver enhanced Tenant Induction training, discussing the importance of financial wellbeing and addressing cost-of-living challenges. She has led on improvements to how tenants access Circle, managed phonedlines and customer contact, improved phone abandonment rates and importantly, thinking outside the box to improve every tenant experience.

In August 2023 Alisha travelled to the Wheatley Group in Glasgow alongside a group of colleagues and tenants to learn about their "Think Yes" philosophy. Through this, understandings were established of how Circle could support and enable its tenants to personally and professionally develop their own skills, ultimately improving Circle's services by having tenants on the organisation's Board. She has bridged any divide which may have existed between income and tenant engagement, embodying how the two areas do not need to be cut off from one another. In this way, Alisha has made major contributions in supporting the delivery of Circle's Tenant Communication and Engagement Strategy.

In December 2023, Alisha's attention to detail, efficiency and positive attitude, combined with her dedication to being the consummate professional and someone who is trusted and valued every day, led to her being successful in her application for promotion to Income Management Officer. Well done Alisha and thank you!

Outcomes and achievements

Alisha led on implementing new rent collection processes for homes Circle delivered in December 2023. Improving timeframes for allocations and ensuring over forty families moved into their new homes before the holidays.

Alisha played a pivotal role in enhancing Circle's communications with tenants, coordinating phone lines and coverage to ensure that tenants could access support and advice.

Alisha developed new rental payment methods for Circle's first cost rental homes, and developed and delivered updated pre-tenancy training for new tenants.

Alisha has been a pivotal member of the income management team, ensuring Circle's rental income exceeded 100% month on month in 2023.

Eoghan Cregan

Co-operative Housing Ireland



Statement of support

I joined Co-Operative Housing Ireland in June 2022 as a Housing Officer Graduate. I had recently completed an MSc in Sustainable Development at TUD, with my research dissertation centered around the effect that professional Irish football clubs have on disadvantaged communities, with a particular focus on housing. This is what ignited my interest in social housing and my desire to better and improve communities in Ireland. I applied to work with CHI and I was delighted to be offered the role.

I began my work as a Housing Officer Graduate by shadowing other experienced housing officers, who walked me through the wide variety of roles and responsibilities that the job entailed. Although the role was completely new to me, I soon found allocations & lettings, arrears management, tenancy management, estate management and ASB prevention & monitoring to be second nature to me.

My first scheme which came under my management was Weaver's Wood in Clonsilla, Dublin 15. Management allowed me to take this scheme on as a housing officer in September 2022 to hone my skills, whilst providing me with guidance and support at the same time. I was able to build successful and positive tenant relationships by having a continuous presence on the estate. I felt that the tenants were happy to know that the organisation was making the effort to maintain the estate, address issues of ASB and build a strong sense of community. For the duration

of 2022, I had built strong relationships with tenants in the estate, and through doing this I had effectively managed to significantly reduce arrears and instances of ASB whilst providing excellent estate management services through our various contractors.

I have always been happy to keep my online socials updated with my experiences of being a housing officer, and this exposure eventually led to me being approached by The Wheel, who asked me to speak at a breakout session at their annual summit in May 2023. I discussed my initial experiences of being a housing officer with CHI and how organisations can inspire, support and retain young professionals like me in the third sector. I was sure to post about my day at the annual summit on LinkedIn!

Caroline Maloney at The Chartered Institute of Housing picked up on this, and she felt that I would be a good fit to join the CIH Futures Board in June 2023. After the Futures Board had fully formed, we embarked on a mission to convince third level graduates to consider a career in housing by choice. We agreed that we would visit colleges around the country and deliver talks to students studying social care or other community related degrees. In November 2023, I delivered a talk to 4th year Social Care students in Dundalk IT, discussing the myriad of day-to-day roles of a housing officer as well as pathways and routes to taking up a career in housing. I think I may have turned a few heads.

I have a strong desire to support individuals and families in Ireland who are vulnerable or underrepresented in our society. That is why I took up a position on the Board of Trustees of Kildare Traveller Action in August 2023, an advocacy organisation for members of the Travelling Community in County Kildare. Boardmatch and The Wheel approached me and felt that I would be able to provide KTA with the housing knowledge I had acquired in my work to tackle issues surrounding traveller accommodation in the county. We have been busy rewriting the organisation's constitution and reviewing policy over the past few months. We are constantly working toward our goal of instigating positive social change for the well-being of Travellers in Ireland.

CHI's Housing Services underwent an organisational restructuring in July 2023. I applied to join the Neighbourhood Delivery Team and was successful. As a Neighbourhood Specialist, I predominantly focus on lettings and allocations, estate management and

tenancy management. I have 140 newly built homes coming into my management in the coming months. I am delighted to be filling every one of those homes with individuals and families who need them most.

Outcomes and achievements

Noteworthy Projects

Estate Management - Two estates of mine were suffering from neglect prior to my management. I tendered contracts for landscaping with a contractor that I introduced to CHI. The landscaper completely transformed the look of both estates. Calls were received by our call centre from tenants who wished to compliment the work done. Photos of landscaping in Riverside and Auburn Lodge are available on my LinkedIn

I used my network from an undergraduate degree in NCAD to tender contract to an established street artist who consulted with our tenants in Halliday Mills Dundalk and painted a large scale mural on a 6-floor indoor lobby wall. The tenants expressed great satisfaction with the resulting colourful artwork and improvement of their communal space. Press: <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/louth/dundalk-news/new-communal-artwork-at-dundalks-halliday-mills-unveiled/a1699007340.html>

Tenancy Management - I supported a single mother of five who had suffered a bad breakup and had been ostracised by her community. I made referrals for her to Tusla with her consent who provided support. Provided her with a supporting letter from CHI for the exceptional needs grant to buy new appliances, flooring and bedding for her and her children. She has since managed to turn her and her family's lives around and begun to create a positive family setting and environment. We are so proud of her.

Community - During the Christmas period in 2022, I organised a Christmas card design competition for children in Weaver's Wood. The winner received an Eason's gift card as well as having their card design going to print and distributed to the estate as CHI Christmas greetings. All runners-up designs also went to print!

Conor McManus

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

Please state in no more than 600 words how your organisation meets the key judging criteria. Please include details of any references, testimonials, or comments from partners in support of the application

Statement of support (max 600 words):

Conor has demonstrated exceptional commitment, dedication, and motivation for change. Conor joined the Housing Executive in October 2021 as a Housing Services Graduate Trainee based in County Fermanagh, placed initially within the Patch

Manager role, where his duties included supporting & managing a patch of homes and tenants. This is where Conor became acutely aware of the rising issue of hoarding.

Conor actively sought to understand the issue and conducted focused research to identify root causes, what support services were in place locally and what could be done to improve the situation. This included continually going above and beyond; networking and fostering new relationships, supporting the diverse needs of complex tenants who often have little awareness of hoarding, with empathy and respect. Through this, Conor was able to engage our tenants with the appropriate support services.

However, this wasn't enough for Conor as he felt there was much more to do. He quickly identified that hoarding is a recognised mental health problem. Conor conducted detailed analysis and identified that services tailored solely to supporting hoarding issues in the local area, were very limited.

With motivation and passion, Conor examined cases studies within the South West area to review current practice with a view to changing what needed to be done. Through this approach, Conor amplified our tenant's voices by identifying & understanding the extent of the issue. He highlighted the need for more

robust support structures to be put in place. Conor displayed strong leadership in his approach to the task and did not give up despite many challenges encountered!

Conor worked alongside statutory agencies such as the Western Health Trust, Fire Service and the South West Support Hub to identify more tailored support, showcasing his drive, integrity and commitment to go further for an issue he felt strongly about. This resulted in our tenants receiving support that was tailored to their needs. His achievement within a short period of time demonstrates not only dedication and determination but also the ability to adapt quickly to his new role whilst also studying for his professional qualifications!

Conor felt so passionately about the implications of hoarding that he chose to work on it as part of his Chartered Management Institute L5 in Management & Leadership. This saw Conor deliver findings of his research at the annual Dragons' Den event where graduate trainees are tasked with pitching their ideas to senior leaders of the Housing Executive. His pitch and participation highlighted his eagerness to enhance his skills and also acquire new ones - Conor now uses his knowledge to mentor new graduate

trainees and supports them when preparing to present to dragons!

Conor also sought opportunities for growth and choose to do a placement within the Housing Policy team to build on his experience and professional development.

Conor took forward his findings on hoarding and broadened his research to benchmark and understand what was happening across the sector. He has proposed to develop a new internal policy to support residents who hoard and his research has proven valuable in the development of the business case for a dedicated hoarding service for our tenants.

Conor has genuine desire to make a positive impact on our communities and this is evident through his enthusiasm and continual drive to improve services for Housing Executive customers.

In the past 2 years, Conor's passion and dedication has shone through, emphasising the qualities and actions that merit recognition within the social housing sector. Conor has now completed his CIH Level 5 in Housing Practice and demonstrates daily his commitment to the qualities of the professional standards as a CIH member.

Outcomes and achievements

- Completion of Graduate trainee programme
- Certificate in Management and leadership Level 5
- CIH Level 5 Housing practice
- Developed & researched a business improvement idea which contributed to the development of the business case for a dedicated hoarding service for NIHE tenants
- Recognition at NIHE staff awards

- Peer mentoring of other graduate trainee's
- CIH Member
- Developed strong network of partnerships in local area

All the above has been achieved in a short two year period whilst Conor worked in a busy area office in front line housing services.

Matthew Hamilton

Radius Housing Association



Statement of support

Matthew joined Radius Housing Association as a Development Officer in April 2022. With his private sector residential background and a willingness to learn and progress Matthew has excelled in the delivery of his assigned social development projects across feasibility and on-site delivery, and has established great working relationships with colleagues, consultants and contractors alike.

Matthew has taken the initiative and the lead on a number of projects, including overseeing the on-site delivery of some of Radius Housing's key flagship schemes including:-

St Pats: 135 units at St Patricks former Army Barrack development in Ballymena,

This scheme forms part of a wider development which includes a new Northern Regional Training College, Leisure Centre and all associated infrastructures. The new development that Matthew is overseeing for Radius includes timber frame houses which are built to an EPC A standard and apartments which are also built to a very high standard. Matthew has worked very closely and collaboratively with stakeholders and continues to meet with them on a regular basis to provide updates and address any issues. Matthew's input and management style has been of immense benefit for the project, and with his eye for detail everyone on the project team is aware of the quality required. Matthew has shown on this project, through his commercial experience and awareness, that he has the ability to challenge when required in relation to any financial matters.

Gasworks

The Gasworks 94 unit regeneration project is one of the largest housing led projects in Belfast City Centre with the added complexities of proximity to railway and build over some of Northern Ireland Water's regionally important infrastructure.

The Gasworks Project has many complexities which include the relocation of a live Vodafone fibre line, site wide ground contamination and associated remediation works and challenges with new drainage infrastructures (working above the "Belfast Sewer Tunnel" & coring under a railway line to connect into the river Lagan). Prior to the contractor going on site Matthew excelled in managing these complexities and assisted in producing the tender documentation with the design team. The contractor is now on site and Matthew continues to manage and liaise with all those involved on the project team to ensure cost, quality and programme is achieved. This detailed design and high standard project is essentially a flagship scheme for modern social housing in Belfast City Centre. Matthew has the ability to ensure this project is delivered to meet all expectations and using his experience he will collectively work with the project team to overcome any issues that arise.

Matthew was successful in his application to become a Senior Development Officer in April 2023 and in his role as a Senior Development Officer he has provided guidance and clarity to colleagues as well as continuing to deliver large complex schemes through feasibility and on-site delivery including:

Hannahstown

This large scale development of 260 units in West Belfast is a complex scheme, built on a challenging site with steep topography. It required significant remediation, cut-and-fill, innovative split-level unit design, and a carefully considered procurement approach. Matthew oversaw the large integrated consultant team, ensuring the scheme was designed to a rigorous specification, with granular attention to detail on both the buildability and useability of the homes for the end customer, and encouraged the team to find creative ways to overcome the multiple challenges of the project.

Outcomes and achievements

Matthew was successfully appointed as a Senior Development Officer in April 2023, and in his role as a Senior Development Officer he continues to provide guidance and clarity to colleagues as well as delivering large complex schemes through feasibility and on-site delivery.

Alongside strong competency skills, Matthew continually demonstrated his own personal development having previously completed his IOSH Safety, Health & Environment for Construction Managers Platinum level CSR card for an Academically

Qualified Person. This has increased in-house knowledge and expertise of SHE (Safety, Health, and Environment) matters which help to identify potential SHE issues on our schemes that are under construction. Matthew performs at a high level of competence in all areas, performing his duties and requirements of the role diligently, and bringing experience and fresh viewpoints based on his background in private sector development. He is not afraid to question practices and challenge design teams to ensure the Association is achieving value for money and the best homes for our customers.

Tiarnan Spain

Tuath Housing Association



Statement of support

Tiarnan Spain joined Tuath Housing Association as a Graduate Research, Policy & Communications Assistant, one of the first graduates to join the Corporate Services Department.

Tiarnan has since excelled in terms of career progression, and most recently was promoted to Senior Communications Coordinator within the Communications, Policy, and Research Team.

Tiarnan excels in all aspects of his role and is highly valued and respected at both Senior Management and Board level. His dedication to the organisation and willingness to engage at all levels has made him a key member of the overall Corporate Services Department. He has the passion, professionalism, and drive in his role that makes him an excellent role model for all graduates working in the sector. Tiarnan is hugely committed to the principle of social and affordable housing. His commitment is evident in his enthusiastic approach and dedication to the promotion of social housing, his work with communities and his efforts to combat 'nimbyism' and more recently in his work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Tiarnan was actively involved in organising Tuath's participation in Dublin's Pride event in 2023.

Tiarnan is a natural speaker and was invited by For Purpose, a graduate programme to address new entrants, as an example of a successful participant of the programme himself. He spoke on the importance of strategic communication aligning with vision, mission & values, developing an internal communications function and the importance of multiple dimensions of communication in the non-profit sector.

In November 2023, Tiarnan spoke to a group of Danish social housing professionals, including the Chair of the Board of KAB and SYD BO, Board Members, and senior management; KAB is Denmark's largest administrator of non-profit housing. In collaboration with the ICSH, Tiarnan spoke on the history of social housing in Ireland and on a conservation, project recently carried out by Tuath at Ellis Court in Dublin.

Tiarnan is committed to further education; in 2023, supported by Tuath Housing, he completed a Professional Diploma in Graphic Design with UCD Professional Academy. The course arose from Tiarnan's own review of the needs of the organisation and identifying cost-saving measures by having internal design capabilities within the Team. He also achieved certification in building websites using WordPress and in strategies and skills for social media monitoring.

Over the past year, Tiarnan took full responsibility for the publication of Tuath's new Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and corresponding Business Plan. This involved liaising with external media and publishers but also doing much of the design work himself to a high professional level. He also acted as lead coordinator for the redesign of Tuath's website, including introducing improved accessibility for users.

Tiarnan is excellent at passing on skills learned to others; he has been actively involved in onboarding of new graduates within the team and his patience and willingness to take the time to coach new employees is very well received.

In 2023, Tiarnan took on additional duties in terms of managing more junior members of the team, including day to day supervision of work. Due to circumstances within the team in the later part of 2023, Tiarnan became the main point of contact for the Communications Team, overseeing the productivity and ensuring that targets and objectives were reached. This included full responsibility for managing several key launches of Tuath schemes, which included correspondence with various Minister's offices, local authorities and key Tuath stakeholders.

Most recently, Tiarnan created two wonderful videos featuring Board Members, staff and tenants which showcased the history of Tuath from inception to current day, incorporating the values and culture most important to us.

The quality most appreciated in Tiarnan across Tuath Housing is his willingness to support, whether with a presentation at short notice, designing aspects of a policy document or preparing media briefings. While always professional, it is his attitude to his work, his willingness to upskill and his ability to form excellent relationships from Board level to individual tenants that makes Tiarnan an integral part of Tuath Housing. He is a real ambassador for the organisation and his work ethic is reflected in how he will get the work done regardless of whatever else is asked of him. We are proud to call Tiarnan a key member of our team believe he is a deserving recipient of this award.

Outcomes and achievements

- Ambassador for Tuath Housing
- 'A Tale of Tuath' video, designed recorded and edited by Tiarnan featuring past and present Board Members, which showcases the history of Tuath Housing.
- Full responsibility for the coordination, design and launch of Tuath Housing's Strategic Plan and Business Plans in 2023
- Launch of the Tuath Housing website in 2022, fully overseen and project managed by Tiarnan.
- Completion of a Professional Diploma in Graphic Design with UCD Professional Academy and subsequent implementation of skills learned, leading to a reduction in outsourcing of services and consequent reduction in spend Tuath Housing
- Similar reduction in spend as a result of Tiarnan's skills in video editing.
- Continuous education in the areas of website development and in social media monitoring
- Achievements in terms of career growth from Graduate Administrator to Senior Co-Ordinator level (4 separate promotions).

BEST HOUSING STORY



This award celebrates contributions that have made a positive difference to the lives of tenants, residents or communities.

WINNER - Blair Anderson

Northern Ireland Youth Forum



Statement of support

Blair Anderson has a true housing story. Blair has transformed her life from being a person with personal experience of homelessness to using many of the challenges of that experience to help other people in either prevention of homelessness or exiting homelessness if it can't be prevented.

She is now at the forefront of transforming other people's lives and carries out tremendous work supporting young people

In October 2019 NIYF Blair was employed as one of the two Youth Apprentices in the Change Project (funded by the DfC Change Fund and managed by the Housing Executive), to engage and support young people at risk of homelessness in a mentoring process that helped them to navigate housing rights and services. In this role Blair used her experience of homelessness to provide peer support as a means of homelessness prevention and also for those who were going through the homelessness system.

NIHE Head of Homeless Policy, Richard Tanswell says, "Blair is now a very powerful advocate for both young people and people experiencing homelessness with numerous appearances across local media outlets

in which she provides a strong voice and challenges gaps in the system. As a result of Blair's development which began with the Young Person's Peer Support Project, many young people see Blair as a role model as she has proven that you can overcome the challenges of homelessness. Blair's motivation and drive is grounded in making sure other young people can overcome the challenges she faced, and it is for that reason she is so incredibly effective at what she does."

Blair has been employed as a peer support worker on the My P.L.A.C.E. project (funded by the NIHE Sustaining Tenancies Fund) since March 2022. Blair is directly improving the housing outcomes of young tenants in South & East Belfast communities. She draws on her own personal experience of homelessness and insecure tenancies as a child and young adult, which is why she can connect with and so effectively support the young people she works with. She has a deep commitment to addressing the housing and tenancy sustainment issues experienced by young people and has gone above and beyond the requirements of her role to raise wider public awareness, including talking about her journey and her work at events and on local tv, radio, and newspapers.

NIHE Tenancy Sustainment Manger, Rosanna McSorley says, "Blair's story is inspirational, but what I most admire is her generosity in sharing her experience - using her voice to amplify the issues and at the same time, letting other young people struggling with housing know that they are not alone, and that there is support available."

Blair also represents NIYF on the Housing Executive's Central Housing Forum, providing a voice for young people and input into the monitoring and decision-making process of the Housing Executive which influences decisions affecting tenants and communities all over Northern Ireland.

Linda Watson, Chair of the Central Housing Forum & Tenant and Customer Services committee at the Housing Executive has commented, "It has been truly inspirational to see the development of Blair's career. From the very start of Blair joining us at Central Housing Forum meetings, to watching her deliver presentations to Housing Executive board members,

to now speaking at conferences with representatives from government organisations throughout Northern Ireland about the importance of her work. We are proud to be a witness to this great achievement, obtain her input and even more proud that Blair is a Housing Executive tenant like many of us representatives".

Outcomes and achievements

Blair has transformed her life from being a person with personal experience of homelessness to using many of the challenges of that experience to help other people. Blair is now a very powerful advocate for both young people and people experiencing homelessness with numerous appearances across local media outlets in which she provides a strong voice and challenges gaps in the system. As a result, many young people see Blair as a role model as she has proven that you can overcome the challenges of homelessness. Blair's motivation and drive is grounded in making sure other young people can overcome the challenges she faced, and it is for that reason she is so incredibly effective at what she does.

As a peer support worker on the My P.L.A.C.E. project Blair has successfully provided support to a number of Housing Executive young tenants, through 1-1 and group work, on matters such as building practical skills, understanding tenancy responsibilities and rights, dealing with home maintenance and reporting repairs, managing utilities and switching suppliers, budgeting, promoting positive mental health and well-being, addressing isolation and loneliness, and connecting young tenants to their local community and support networks.

Greater Shantallow Area Partnership & the Skeoge Community

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

The chronic housing shortage in Derry~Londonderry is partially being met by Apex Housing Association's large development programme of social housing in Skeoge, located 3.5 miles from the city. Built in phases, beginning in 2017, the area now totals 1,041 Apex properties across four estates. 91% of tenants are benefit dependant, 59% are single adults with children and 40% of the population are under 11 years old.

According to NISRA, the new Skeoge ward is one of the most deprived in NI. With this brings high levels of mental ill-health, serious cases of anti-social behaviour (ASB) and high tenancy turnaround. In the first 18 months of one estate opening, 30% of tenants left. In another estate, five tenancies ended due to suicide.

In 2017, the local community group was concerned that there were no plans from statutory agencies for surrounding infrastructure. Apex, Greater Shantallow Area Partnership (GSAP) and several voluntary agencies took on the task of ensuring that Skeoge would become a desirable place to live for the new community.

Community Outreach

Skeoge Community Hub, a new community hub model, incorporates a high-quality 'Costa style' café that engages all ages, genders and backgrounds. In 2019, Apex and GSAP secured funding from the Nationwide, to employ a Housing and Community Worker, managed locally by GSAP. Apex and GSAP subsequently secured £478,500 from the National Lottery which delivers much needed community development projects in the area, under the 'Catalyst programme'.

Apex's Tenant Engagement Team engages with local tenants on an ongoing basis through meetings, events, estate walkabouts and service reviews. Working in partnership with GSAP and Radius Housing (who manage a smaller number of homes in the Skeoge area), tenants regularly have their say on upcoming activities and events and can suggest improvements for the area.

"The tenant engagement team have been brilliant; so reassuring and helpful. We received funding to organise seasonal events for the community, which

were a great way to get everyone together. I have found Apex to be very supportive of community connectiveness. I tell people everywhere I go how lovely it is to live here." - Eilis Gill, Connected Tenant

Despite the success of these activities and following ongoing dialogue with Apex staff and community partners, it was evident that more direct support interventions were needed.

Social Enterprise support

Playparks in the area were being vandalised regularly at a significant cost to Apex. Apex awarded a contract for managing the playparks to GSAP who employed local tenants to manage them. The profits from the initiative are used by the community group and serious acts of vandalism have reduced in the area.

Tenancy Support

In 2022, Apex successfully applied to The Rank Foundation to employ a Tenancy Support Worker. The employment background of the individual appointed was an Apex addiction hostel, and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. One tenant said: "I can't believe how quickly I have come back to myself after Robert helped me. I feel beaming like the sun is coming out of me. I was craving recovery and couldn't have done it without him".

The Tenancy Support Worker cannot manage all support issues in the Skeoge area. In 2023, Apex funded 50% of a Family Support Worker salary and GSAP secured another 50% from an external funder. Apex refers young mothers who are at risk of losing their children to the service, based in GSAP's Family Support Hub.

Apex's Housing Team has also been reorganised to include a specialist Anti-social Behaviour Officer, which has resulted in the community no longer being adversely affected by serious cases.

In 2023, we worked with Foyle Foodbank to open a 'baby hub' for young parents at Skeoge Community Hub, which provides baby products and financial support for families with new babies.

Conclusion

Apex and its community partners continue to work together in Skeoge to ensure it's a desirable place to live. The newly formed 'SHARP' co-design steering group is working to keep ahead of the challenges. The area is vibrant and there is always something going on in Skeoge Community Hub to support or entertain local people.

Outcomes and achievements

The Catalyst programme has delivered numerous interventions within the last two years including essential numeracy and literacy skills classes, Surestart parenting programmes, weekly 'Skills NorthWest' employment clinics (encouraging third generation unemployed people back into work), a Traveller Community Support programme, a male-only 'Emotions Matter' programme and a kids' breakfast club.

The community café now employs two local tenants, a further three JobStart placements, work experience and volunteering and on-the-job work-related training in this area of high economic inactivity.

The contract with GSAP for managing the playparks employs two local tenants who were previously unemployed. Costs of vandalism to the playparks has dropped by 34% as a result.

98 people in Skeoge were supported by the Tenancy Support Worker since July 2022 with addiction and mental ill-health being the main reasons for referral.

Between September and December 2023, the Family Support Worker has supported a further 60 families with the main reason for referral being children's mental health.

There have been no known cases of suicide in the past 12 months.

The area is an extremely popular place to live with 2,840 currently on the waiting list.

A satisfaction survey carried out by Perceptive Insight Market Research in October 2023 showed an amazing 89% satisfaction from Skeoge tenants, compared with the Housemark NI median for 2022/23 of 74%.

Sheena McAuley

Ark Housing



Statement of support

In the quaint, seaside town of Portaferry, nestled amidst the rugged beauty of Strangford Lough, stands the imposing structure of Cumain House, a housing scheme shrouded in a palpable aura of gloom. For three unending decades, the once vibrant building had languished under the weight of persistent underoccupancy, its empty apartments echoing with the whispers of unfulfilled potential.

Sheena McAuley, a Housing and Customer Service Officer with Ark Housing, was tasked with the daunting mission of breathing new life into this ghostly tower. Armed with an unwavering determination and a heart brimming with empathy, Sheena embarked on a journey that would transform Cumain House from a dwelling of despair into a haven of housing hope.

Her quest began with a thorough investigation of the building's history, delving into the grim tales of antisocial behaviour and underinvestment that had plagued its existence. Since 1996, the property had not been fully tenanted. Yet, amidst the shadows of negativity, Sheena discerned a glimmer of possibility – a chance to reclaim Cumain House from the grip of underoccupancy. Radiating with optimism and determination, she vowed to break the curse of Cumain House.

With a mix of perseverance and ingenuity, Sheena embarked on a relentless campaign to attract tenants. She scoured the housing waiting lists, her persistence undeterred by the endless streams of rejections that flooded her inbox. Unwilling to surrender to the oppressive gloom, Sheena ventured beyond the traditional methods, exploring innovative advertising avenues and forging connections with community

organizations.

Her tireless efforts extended beyond the realm of marketing; Sheena became a beacon of support for those seeking a home, offering guidance and compassion to those navigating the complexities of the housing system. She listened attentively to their needs, understanding that a dwelling is more than just four walls; it's a sanctuary, a place where dreams can flourish.

As Sheena's efforts intensified, the tectonic plates of underoccupancy began to shift. The shadow that had long enveloped Cumain House started to dissipate, replaced by a glimmer of hope. Tenants, drawn by Sheena's relentless dedication and the promise of a brighter future, began to fill the empty apartments.

The transformation was remarkable. The once desolate hallways were now bustling with life, the laughter of children echoing through the corridors. Cumain House, once a symbol of doom and lost hope, was now a vibrant tapestry of diverse families and individuals.

Sheena's extraordinary efforts had not only breathed new life into Cumain House but had also revitalized the surrounding community. The fear that had once permeated the area began to recede, replaced by a sense of camaraderie and mutual support. The grimoire of Cumain House had been rewritten, its tale of despair replaced by a heartwarming story of resilience and unwavering determination.

Sheena McAuley, the heroine of this peculiar tale, stands as a testament to the transformative power of human spirit. Her unflinching commitment to her tenants and her refusal to succumb to the prevailing negativity transformed Cumain House from an empty tower into a vibrant hub of life and community.

Her story is a tale of hope, grit and perseverance, reminding us that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, determination and compassion can pave the way for remarkable change. Sheena McAuley's luminous spirit and firm dedication to her tenants make her an exemplary candidate for the Best Housing Story Award, a testament to the profound impact that individuals can have on their communities.

Outcomes and achievements

Revitalization of Cumain House:

- Transformed from underoccupied and gloomy to vibrant and hopeful.
- Empty apartments filled with new tenants, creating a bustling community.
- Shadow of negativity replaced by a sense of camaraderie and mutual support.

Increased Occupancy and Community Impact:

- Overcame 3 decades of underoccupancy, achieving full tenancy for the first time since 1996.
- Positive impact on the surrounding community, replacing fear with a sense of belonging.
- Cumain House now serves as a model of successful housing reintegration.

Compassionate and Effective Tenant Support:

- Provided guidance and support to tenants navigating the housing system.
- Understood that housing is more than just walls, but a sanctuary for dreams to flourish.

- Built trust and connections with tenants, fostering a sense of community.

Innovative and Persistent Marketing Strategies:

- Scoured housing waiting lists and explored non-traditional advertising avenues.
- Demonstrated unwavering determination in the face of rejections.
- Proactive approach proved successful in attracting new tenants.

Exemplary Leadership and Inspiration:

- Sheena's story serves as a testament to the power of human spirit and perseverance.
- Reminds us that even in difficult circumstances, determination and compassion can make a difference.
- An inspiration to other housing professionals and a potential role model for future generations.

Gordon Robinson

Choice Housing Ireland



Statement of support

At 80 years of age Gordon Robinson must be one of, if not the oldest person working in housing on the island of Ireland. While he is a mature scheme co-ordinator he is energetic, full of life and in his own words loves his job and loves going to work.

Gordon is a scheme co-ordinator at Choice Housing's Victoria Court, a sheltered living scheme in Whitehead, County Antrim. A resident of Whitehead himself, Gordon walks to work through the community in which he plays such a vital role.

Gordon took early retirement from a previous employer in 1996, and began working in housing in 1999 whilst also caring for his elderly parents. Over the years Gordon has worked at a number of Choice's sheltered living schemes and started at Victoria Court in 2007.

Victoria Court contains 14 self-contained apartments and it is ideally situated at the heart of Whitehead, adjacent to the train station, meaning tenants can easily remain independent. Sheltered living schemes bring many benefits to tenants eg:

- having neighbours close by reduces isolation,
- individual homes within a community offer privacy and independence,
- on site staff offer support, and
- the communal facilities provide opportunities to socialise.

While Gordon is of a similar age to the tenants at Victoria Court, he is much younger than his years, he is active, engaging and is such a positive role model for sheltered living tenants. Gordon is enthusiastic with an optimistic attitude, meaning at 80, he embodies the ethos which underpins sheltered living. Gordon empowers and supports older people to stay active and contribute to their community.

Gordon creates a varied events calendar at Victoria Court, everything from day trips to arranging local storytellers to visit the scheme to tell amusing anecdotes. Throughout his years of dedicated service Gordon has built and nurtured strong relationships with the tenants, local community and partner organisations. Gordon successfully delivered cross community sessions with a group from Ahoghill in partnership with Mid and East Antrim Age Well Partnership, funded by Peace IV, as well as developing a working relationship with the local primary school to

develop intergenerational workshops.

2023 saw the 25th anniversary of Victoria Court and Gordon delivered a successful celebration event, attended by tenants, family, friends, staff and community members.

Carol Ervine - Choice Group Director of Tenant and Client Services - spoke at the event saying,

"This is a very proud moment for the residents at Victoria Court and everyone at Choice. 30-year anniversaries do not come around all that often which is exactly why it is important to set the time aside to mark and celebrate this occasion.

"The scheme has been a tremendous success for Choice and that is largely down to the people who call it home and our dedicated scheme co-ordinator."

As well as the many social activities Gordon plans, he also ensures the tenants at Victoria Court get practical

support. Over recent years a number of tenants at the scheme were diagnosed with Alzheimer's and Gordon was quick to source Alzheimer's Awareness training for tenants.

In 2021 Gordon raised £15,000 (for the Alzheimer's Society) through sponsored walks including 26 miles at the Lake District, after which Gordon commented he was 'a wee bit tired after that wee walk.'

Joan Sutherland the longest standing tenant at Victoria Court, having lived there since April 2010 had this to say, 'Gordon looks out for each individual tenant, he has everyone's best interest at heart and will always check in and make sure everyone is well. In the event they cannot travel to get some shopping he arranges the delivery for them.'

Outcomes and achievements

The environment Gordon has created at Victoria Court, means it is a highly regarded sheltered living scheme, with a low turnover of tenants and a long waiting list. Victoria Court is well known and there is always demand and enquiries about possible available apartments. Gordon's regular Tuesday coffee morning is well attended by both tenants and those who live nearby. For 25 years Gordon has shown consistent dedication to providing support to many residents in sheltered living schemes and also to the wider community.

Gordon's life experience and skills make him an ideal scheme co-ordinator. Gordon has cared for his elderly parents, taken training in community mental health

and built strong relationships with local community groups and individuals.

Roisin McLoone, Housing Officer

"Gordon is very highly thought of by his tenants. He always has his tenants wellbeing in mind and goes out of his way to help. He is very willing to help other scheme co-ordinators and always makes himself available to cover colleagues and support tenants at other schemes when needed."

Gordon looks forward to his work and lives by a simple motto his father gave him-

'If you can help someone even a wee bit, do it.'

Lorraine Gorman

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

Lorraine Gorman has been a tenant of Circle Voluntary Housing Association since 2021 and she has, since the beginning, played an integral role in the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG). The TAG work in partnership

with Circle and give a tenant perspective on the delivery of Circle homes and services.

When Lorraine first joined the TAG, she spoke about not really knowing what to do or say at the meetings. Over time, however, Lorraine found her voice and it really was worth waiting for! She is extremely articulate in giving voice to tenants needs and has taken a very hands-on approach to tenant engagement.

She has been a beacon of light, promoting tenant engagement in Circle. Lorraine consistently makes suggestions to improve all services for all tenants and she never loses sight of this task. She has brought her positive can-do attitude to the TAG meetings while constructively questioning Circle's satisfaction levels, along with ensuring that all policies approved have the tenants voice central to them.

Lorraine has been a driving force this year by:

- Presenting at the Board away-day in April 2023. Lorraine spoke about the importance of the tenant voice and what it means to her to be a Circle tenant.
- Presenting at the staff conference in April 2023. Lorraine spoke about what prompted her to get involved, about her experience of working with tenants and staff and the TAG's accomplishments, making tenant engagement meaningful to every member of Circle's teams.
- Leading on professionalising the TAG, by completing professional boundaries training. Driving the development of an 8-step process to enable tenants become Board members, she has presented the work of the TAG to the Board of Circle. Lorraine has shown leadership skills throughout the TAG's development of the Terms of Reference for a new Board subcommittee, which will represent the tenant voice through tenant membership alongside Board members and the Board Chair. Lorraine was instrumental in the Board approval of the establishment of this Tenant First Link Committee.
- Coordinating a site visit to Wheatley Group, Glasgow, with tenant Board members, to understand and learn from the Wheatley Groups experience of enabling tenants become Board members.

As if all the above was not enough, Lorraine also attended Circle summer events as she wanted more tenants to know about tenant engagement and how to get involved. She shared her story and the enthusiasm that she has for empowering tenants, just like herself, to find their voice and to take part. She created an engagement brochure so that this message can reach more people and encourage recruitment to the TAG. She has also contributed to the IT Focus Group, this sub-group of the TAG supported with the development of the Circle Tenant Portal.

By being part of the various groups, sharing her experience and getting more tenants involved, Lorraine is making positive changes within Circle. Embedding a clear understanding with Circle's Board, staff and tenants that the tenant is the expert in their home and their community.

Shaping any culture is extremely challenging, but Lorraine has taken this challenge on by spreading the word to tenants, staff, colleagues and Board members in the sector that the tenants voice is absolutely key to improving services.

Lorraine has generously volunteered her time and extensive knowledge to support Circle and her fellow tenants. In today's busy society giving up any of your time, especially parenting alone with three boys, is extremely selfless. Her commitment and dedication to make a house a home for all tenants, is evidenced throughout all the work she has done to date – she is an inspiration to us all.

Outcomes and achievements

Lorraine has a full attendance record for the six Tenant Advisory Group meetings in 2023, along with three additional meetings.

Lorraine presented at the first All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference delivered by Supporting Communities alongside the Director of Services, Liz Clarke, and a fellow tenant, David. She discussed the changes in tenant engagement, her personal story and what she would like to see in the future for tenant engagement in the approved housing body sector.

Lorraine delivered very lively and important in-person tenant engagement training for all Circle staff. The aim of the training was to let non-frontline staff hear from

tenants directly, highlight the achievements made by tenants and to explore how staff from across the organisation can contribute to tenant engagement work.

Lorraine was nominated by her fellow tenant members of the TAG to present to the full Circle Board meeting in December. Lorraine attended and shared the groups achievements for 2023 and their actions for 2024. This was a first for Circle and for Lorraine, it highlighted the change in Tenant engagement process and work in Circle due to Lorraine's ongoing commitment, enthusiasm and generous efforts to make sure the tenants voice is heard.

Michelle McGoldrick

Belmayne Community Group



Statement of support

Michelle McGoldrick is secretary of the Belmayne Community Group. Michelle is a passionate advocate for the Belmayne/Clongriffin area and has worked tirelessly to advance the opportunities for all residents in the local area. Michelle has focused on a number of themes to support these aims, primarily financial inclusion, addressing gaps in social infrastructure and access to the democratic process for residents otherwise excluded.

The obstacles Michelle has overcome are well documented, with the Northside Partnership's 'Forgotten Communities' report highlighting the gaps that exist in community infrastructure necessary to support such a large, mixed tenure development.

Michelle is taking a collaborative approach to resolving these issues by identifying potential social partners for Clúid and other AHBs in the area to work alongside and has brought representatives from all stakeholders together to address areas of shared concern.

Michelle recently met with Clúid board members to discuss the challenges she is facing in addressing community infrastructure gaps and impressed members with her singular focus on improving outcomes for all those who reside in the community, regardless of tenure.

This is being done alongside Michelle's studies at Maynooth, but Michelle has still found time to take part in Clúid's partnership with Dr. Mick Byrne in UCD.

This partnership saw Michelle present to students in Dr. Byrne's 'Social Justice and the City' module on her lived experience of social housing.

Michelle's efforts to improve access to the political process for her neighbours merits special mention. Speaking about the initiative, Michelle explained, "Many people living in apartment blocks don't have the opportunity to speak to canvassers at their door and with the rise in apartment living, I wanted to ensure everyone has equal access to the democratic process.

"I felt people were more likely to engage in the democratic process if they have canvassers knocking on their door and speaking with them directly. In Belmayne, we have a large number of lone parents too who don't find it as easy to go to public meetings.

"The two days where we have provided access to elected representatives have been warmly received. It's about having people's voices heard and drawing attention to issues we face in our communities. But it's also about creating opportunities for us to work together and overcome these issues."

Clúid are now supporting Michelle to replicate these access clinics in the lead up to the local elections in 2024. Michelle is also running an awareness campaign to ensure as many of her neighbours as possible are registered to vote.

Again, Michelle's collaborative approach is evident in the Summer School she organised in partnership with Crosscare. This programme was attended by 64 children aged between 7-17 over the fortnight that the programme ran. In addition to the Summer School, Michelle established a youth club staffed entirely by volunteers, despite the difficulties in accessing community spaces to support their aims.

In many ways, Michelle typifies the best of community. Promoting participation, building capacity in those around her, respectfully challenging those with power to act to do so, forging consensus and fostering relationships built on respect and shared responsibility.

Clúid are delighted to put Michelle forward in recognition of her continued efforts to make Belmayne a Great Place to Live.

Outcomes and achievements

The Belmayne Community Group's goal is to enhance the quality of life in Belmayne by promoting community development. The project has made significant progress towards these aims by establishing multiple avenues for engagement which has had a positive and far-reaching impact on the community. Notable achievements to date:

- Establishment of entirely volunteer-run youth club attended by 64 children.
- 2wk Summer Camp in partnership with Crosscare for children aged between 7-17yrs of age.
- Facilitation of two access clinics whereby elected representatives were provided with canvassing opportunities to engage with cohorts often

excluded from the demographic process due to being time-poor or having no supports to attend public meetings.

- Participation on UCD's Social Justice and the City module providing students with first hand experience of living in social housing.
- Presenting to Clúid Board members alongside Northside Partnership on the challenges of addressing gaps in social infrastructure within large, mixed tenure housing schemes
- Meeting with social partners and local authorities to advocate on behalf of the community for essential services.

Tony Reilly

MACS Supporting Children and Young People



Statement of support

Being care experienced often means transitioning to adulthood quicker than others; no better example is Tony. Tony is a young person supported by MACS and whom we would like to nominate for Best Housing Story.

Tony has had many adverse experiences in his life that have shaped the young man he has become today;

Tony experienced loss and separation at a young age, followed in the years to come by huge periods of housing instability, including periods of homelessness and time spent in prison. Tony had several tenancies that he struggled to maintain for various reasons such as Anti Social Behaviour, not tenancy ready, and suffering from grief. Fast forward a few years, and with the support from MACS Floating Support, Tony has overcome significant obstacles to improve his housing outcomes and those in his local community. Tony is now settled in his flat and is giving back to the community; he volunteers at Peoples Kitchen, giving back to homeless people; he is dedicated - he never misses a shift and always arrives with a big smile.

Tony also hopes to become a peer mentor through MACS, educating young people through the preventative side of homelessness to improve their outcomes; he has done interviews with local radio and newspapers and is a huge advocate for making change. Tony is one in a million. His commitment to supporting others and making a change is outstanding. We are very proud of him.

Outcomes and achievements

Tony has made many personal outcomes and achievements to date. As he is in a volunteer role with Peoples Kitchen Outcomes are not recorded, however the achievements he has achieved are:

* Volunteering weekly

- * Making positive contribution to his local community
- * Gaining a place to study Youth Work
- * Maintaining his tenancy
- * Beating adversity

Davy Faulkner and Alex Pelan

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

We proudly nominate Davy, a dedicated Senior Practitioner at Simon Community for over 25 years, and Alex Pelan, an inspiring individual who, at 24, transformed her experiences with homelessness into a powerful force for change. Their collaborative efforts recognize outstanding contributions that have significantly impacted our community.

Davy's commitment to addressing homelessness spans a quarter-century, making him an invaluable asset to Simon Community. His tireless efforts overcome significant obstacles, improving housing outcomes for countless individuals. Davy consistently goes above and beyond his role, addressing the complex challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness with unwavering dedication and supporting each individual's cycle in and out of homelessness.

At 18, Alex found herself grappling with homelessness following a family breakdown. Through the support of Simon Community, and Davy specifically, she overcame issues with her mental health and stigmas around homelessness. "I feel proud that I came out the other side and I wear that as a patch, I survived it. I knew I needed to change and I started to build relationships with staff."

Outcomes and achievements

Alex continues to show dedication to giving back. She stays in contact with Davy, who supported her throughout her homelessness journey. Alex now conducts workshops at the Simon Community Belfast Foyer where she once resided, sharing her story and offering guidance to current clients facing experiences similar to her own. This showcases the transformative potential of education in breaking the cycle of homelessness.

"Alex's story is a testament to the transformative power of support services. Her workshops at Belfast Foyer have become a beacon of hope for those facing

"Simon Community staff helped me get on a course for youth work, and I've been on a mission to help people ever since," says Alex. Her journey from homelessness to obtaining qualifications in youth work demonstrates the transformative potential of housing support services coupled with individual commitment to personal growth.

Davy and Alex's collaboration goes beyond their roles, creating positive change in housing outcomes. Davy's experience and Alex's first hand understanding of homelessness form a dynamic partnership that has impacted the lives of many.

"Davy's long-standing personal commitment to ending homelessness aligns with our organisations vision and mission. His ability to navigate challenges with empathy and resilience has inspired our team and transformed countless lives." - Kirsten Hewitt, Director of Homelessness Services

Davy and Alex embody the spirit of the Best Housing Story Award through resilience, dedication, and collaborative efforts. Their transformative impact on the lives of tenants, residents, and communities stands as a shining example of what can be achieved when individuals and communities come together to overcome housing challenges.

For further insights, please watch their video story published on World Homeless Day, along with a supporting interview in the Belfast Telegraph:

Alex and Davy a Simon Community Journey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Tqmnavsj9s>

Belfast Telegraph: <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/house-home/homeless-charity-warns-250-people-losing-their-homes-every-single-week-in-ni/a296114042.html?fbclid=IwAR3eaQpEWCifN8npNaZeWRIqd-zzrUJ6qzEJp3h1OEmTq-mwyC7ovKrTR-k>

Davy's Staff Profile: <https://simoncommunity.org/about/work-with-us/staff-profiles/davy-f>

homelessness, showcasing the potential for positive change." - Arlene Irvine, Service Manager of Specialist Projects

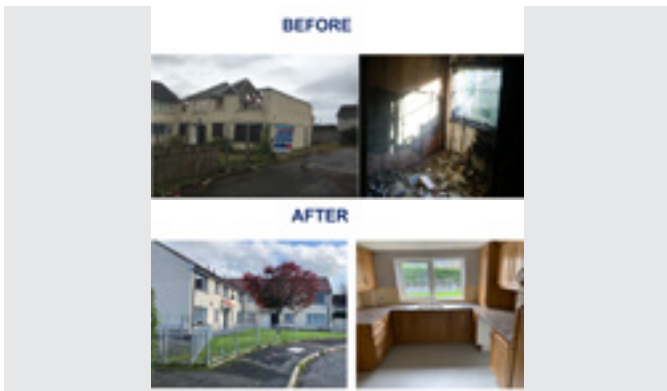
Davy and Alex's efforts extend beyond individuals directly touched by their work. By empowering Alex to become an advocate and educator, they've created a ripple effect that extends to the wider community. Through her role with Extern, Alex continues to make meaningful contributions, offering hope and guidance to those navigating the challenging terrain of homelessness.

HOUSING HERO

This award celebrates the outstanding achievements of housing professionals, committee members and tenants, who have used new approaches to help solve housing problems they see around them. We are looking for committed individuals who have used creative approaches to solve real life housing issues they encounter, either in their workplace or within their community.

WINNER - Bronagh Magorrian

Northern Ireland Housing Executive



Statement of support

Bronagh has received hero status in the Housing Executive for her tireless, customer focussed and results driven work as Team Leader in its Downpatrick Office over the last 30 years.

A brilliant example of Bronagh's work is how, in 2021, she masterminded an innovative and intensive Tenancy Sustainment project which has transformed a neighbourhood. The Burrendale estate in Newcastle, Co Down comprises 113 properties and 15 blocks of flats. Two particular blocks of apartments were notorious for ASB, difficult to let, had extremely high turnover and were resource intensive for the NIHE as well as other statutory agencies including the PSNI & the local council. To make matters worse, a succession of deliberate fires on the apartments caused real concern and disruption to residents living in the estate.

While the arson attacks necessitated significant investment to repair the apartments, Bronagh argued that, unless a radical plan was put in place to support the residents, it was likely that the ASB and arson which had plagued the area would not be long in returning, causing issues for the wider community, and perpetuating the area as a "no go zone". More importantly Bronagh wanted to see the tenants thrive in their new homes.

She worked closely with Extern, a social justice charity, to put in place multi-disciplinary support for the residents in each of the eight self-contained flats. Bronagh also engaged stakeholders in the PSNI, the Police & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP), the local Council (ASB Forum) and the local community group. The project set out to work with tenants with highly complex needs and vulnerabilities to provide holistic assessments, support planning, assistance to attend appointments, case strategy meetings, attendance at hospital discharge meetings, engagement with statutory service providers, support to reconnect with families, budgeting and benefit work, harm reduction interventions, safety planning, as well as dealing with Safeguarding/ Child Protection issues.

Bronagh personally oversaw the development of the project from conception to operation and worked with great commitment to operationalise her vision in partnership with other stakeholders. She liaised with the tenants being allocated the properties and their families too to gain their commitment to engaging. Through her support, encouragement and commitment all 12 initial referrals actively engaged with the service.

The project has been a huge success both in terms of tenancy sustainment (see project outcomes) and in terms of impact on the wider community.

Graham Croy, Chairman of Murlough Community Association:

"There was a particular hot spot in the community with a lot of anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse & tenants living in conditions which caused them a lot of distress! We regularly met with Housing Executive along with other agencies to discuss how we could help improve the situation.

Shortly after these discussions, Bronagh from NIHE presented us with a fantastic initiative.

The sustaining tenancy programme turned a community from living in fear & depression, into a great, happy neighbourhood! The help and support Bronagh & the NIHE team provided for new tenants along with continuing to support the current ones has been a God send!

As a community group we were so happy that rather than just putting tenants in houses, they were ensuring these tenants got the opportunity to enjoy a long-term

tenancy in a place they could call home.

The programme helped tenants thrive in a good standard of accommodation and when things were difficult the Housing Executive was there to help.

The project has had & continues to have such a positive impact and really has helped to change people's lives!

Well done Bronagh & the team!"

Outcomes and achievements

From a set of apartment blocks with extremely high turnover of tenants, from the beginning of Bronagh's work in February 2021 the project has supported 20 tenants with a high degree of success. Only two tenancies have terminated (one where the tenant went to university and the other where the tenant moved areas). Two service users have transferred as the properties no longer met their needs (changing health circumstances in one case and where the tenant was successful in gaining access to their child and needed an extra bedroom). The other properties remain tenanted by the original tenants more than 24 months later.

The local PCSP reports a significant drop in incidents of ASB.

Success of the pilot project has led to the NIHE formally procuring the service for the wider South Down area - this is in the process of being rolled out.

Scope for further similar initiatives across NI are now being considered based on the success of the pilot project. This wider roll out is a testimony to the difference the project has made to the individuals in receipt of support and the wider surrounding community.

Teresa McCloskey

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

Teresa McCloskey has been an Apex Housing Association (Apex) employee for 26 years and is a line manager who inspires and motivates her team every day. Teresa shows outstanding commitment to the values of Apex and is a manager who always displays behaviours to show that she cares.

Teresa is a true ambassador of Apex and is always innovative in her approach to delivering Apex's Community Investment Strategy. The strategy and its associated projects are now a lifeline for many of our tenants who have struggled financially and emotionally during 2023-2024.

Apex continues to invest in its Community Investment Strategy to help improve the lives of tenants who

live in Apex homes. This includes supporting wider community groups to deliver and make a real difference to tenants' lives.

Teresa's collaborative and innovative work with community partners is second to none. She continues to work with Bogside and Brandywell Initiative, who have created and developed Ballymagowan Allotments and Urban Park; Greater Shantallow Area Partnership, who manage the fantastic Skeoge Community Hub; and Foyle Foodbank who deliver Apex Community Supermarket and much needed food support. All of these projects are award winning and are regularly showcased as examples of best practice by external organisations, such as CiH and NIFHA.

A further successful initiative to support tenants has been the introduction of the Tenancy Support Worker role in July 2022. The Tenancy Support Worker pilot, funded for three years by The Rank Foundation, supports vulnerable tenants and their families who may be at risk of losing their tenancies.

Very often, Apex's housing and property services teams wish they could spend more time with some tenants to assist them with accessing services that they may need. The purpose of this role is to spend time supporting tenants with any tenancy related issue. The Tenancy Support Worker can link in with many partner agencies and provide help on a range of issues.

More recently, Teresa has transformed the TBUC /

Housing for All programme within Apex. The type of good relations events being delivered over the last two years has gone from strength to strength in Apex's eleven developments throughout Northern Ireland. This has included high profile events, such as 'Northern Lights', a celebration of Northern Ireland's people and culture. The event was delivered in partnership with a number of housing associations at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast and was the showcase event to open Good Relations Week 2023.

A further innovative example of this is Apex's collaboration with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and Ledley Hall in East Belfast. This five-year programme provides a free book every month to local children under the age of five, including families from Apex's shared community, Ballynafoy Close. The books are sent directly to the named child at their

home address and will undoubtedly leave a lasting legacy on early childhood development and literacy skills.

Teresa is a real advocate of Apex in carrying out her role and is central to the continued success of her team. This has been a difficult year for Teresa and her team, as they navigated through the loss of their much-loved friend and colleague Ann Herron, who tragically passed away in December 2022. However, they have remained very strong and have supported one another. Teresa's team ended 2023 by arranging a lunch in Ann's memory and used this as an opportunity to raise much-needed donations to support Foyle Foodbank.

s said "I wish to see it (NIHE) be sustained and flourish as an organisation for another 50 years."

Outcomes and achievements

During 2022-2023:

- Teresa secured £105,239 of external funding to strengthen local partnerships and ensure that tenants continued to be supported in a difficult year due to the high cost of living.
- In May 2022, Teresa accepted Apex's CiH All-Ireland 'More than bricks and mortar' Award acknowledging Apex's partnership with Bogside and Brandywell Initiative.
- Apex Community Supermarket supported 94 members during the year. Members benefitted from 4,326 instances of support including help with finding employment, assistance with higher education, benefits advice and credit union savings. Volunteers were supported to give 467 hours of their time to help deliver this invaluable service.
- Foyle Foodbank assisted 5,979 people during the year and 24,000 kg of food, household and hygiene products were delivered to local communities.

- 68 tenants were supported to manage their tenancies due to issues such as mental health, financial pressures or social isolation. Spending valuable time to support tenants, the Tenancy Support Worker has turned around and changed the lives of many vulnerable tenants.
- 143 'Housing for All' initiatives were delivered across Apex's 11 shared neighbourhoods in Northern Ireland.

Servicer user testimonials:

"I have learned to be mindful and accepting of those who appear to be different than us, but deep down are all the same as us, all human."

"I can't believe how quickly I have come back to myself after the Tenancy Support Worker helped me. I am beaming. I was craving recovery and couldn't have done it without him."

Martin Murphy

Ark Housing



Statement of support

Martin Murphy is one of the exceptional Housing Officers at Ark Housing, consistently demonstrating remarkable commitment to his tenants, colleagues, and all of our interconnecting communities. His unflinching dedication and innovative approach to addressing housing challenges have earned him the well-deserved title of Housing Hero.

Martin's expertise in resolving anti-social behavior cases is exemplary. With professionalism and compassion, he navigates complex situations, ensuring that the best housing practices are upheld and that tenants experience a safe and harmonious environment. His ability to connect with tenants on a personal level fosters trust and understanding, facilitating effective resolutions.

A regular presence at Tenants Forum meetings, Martin actively engages with tenants, listening to their concerns and working collaboratively to address their needs. His friendly and approachable demeanor creates a sense of connection and belonging,

fostering a positive and inclusive community spirit at Ark Housing.

Martin's passion for making a difference extends beyond his day-to-day duties. He spearheaded the creation of Ark Housing's Fundraising Team, dedicating his time and energy to raising funds for Alzheimer's NI. His commitment to this cause is deeply personal, as he understands the impact of this debilitating disease on individuals and families. Through raffles, awareness-raising events, and other fundraising initiatives, Martin has made significant contributions to support Alzheimer's research and care.

Martin's dedication to his colleagues is inspiring. He readily lends a helping hand to support their projects and initiatives, demonstrating a genuine spirit of collaboration. His assistance to the scheme coordinator at Conor House in submitting funding applications exemplifies his commitment to enhancing the lives of tenants.

Martin's infectious laugh and jovial personality brighten the atmosphere at Ark Housing offices. His positive attitude and willingness to go the extra mile contribute to a supportive and encouraging work environment that fosters teamwork and innovation.

Martin Murphy is a true Housing Hero, embodying the values of compassion, dedication, and innovation that are essential for making a positive impact on the lives of others. His commitment to his tenants, his colleagues, and his community makes him an exceptional representative of the housing sector. He is a deserving recipient of the Housing Hero award, and his story serves as an inspiration to aspiring housing professionals and individuals seeking to make a difference in their communities.

Outcomes and achievements

For Tenants:

- Safer and more harmonious environment: Effectively resolves anti-social behavior cases with professionalism and compassion.
- Improved community spirit: Creates a sense of connection and belonging through active engagement and approachable demeanor.
- Collaborative problem-solving: Listens to concerns and works with tenants to address their needs through the Tenants Forum.

For Ark Housing:

- Positive and inclusive work environment: Promotes teamwork and innovation with his helpfulness and positive attitude.
- Enhanced lives of tenants: Supports other staff like the scheme coordinator at Conor House to secure funding for tenant benefit projects.

- Successful fundraising for Alzheimer's NI: Demonstrates personal commitment and raises significant contributions through the initiatives he spearheaded.

For Himself:

- Personal fulfillment: Finds meaning and purpose in making a positive impact on others.
- Strong social connections: Fosters trust and understanding with tenants and colleagues.
- Positive reputation: Recognized as a "Housing Hero" for his dedication and innovative approach.

Overall:

- Martin Murphy serves as an exemplary Housing Officer, demonstrating a clear commitment to improving the lives of tenants, colleagues, and the wider community.
- His work and personality uplift the atmosphere at Ark Housing and inspire others to strive for positive change.

David Kortukohun

Circle Voluntary Housing Association



Statement of support

David Kortukohun has been a tenant of Circle since 2019. He lives in Dublin 8 now and is originally from Sierra Leone. Since becoming a tenant of Circle, David has always been welcoming and engaging with staff and has such a warm manner and way of being that staff always look forward to working with him.

David has been an active member of the Tenant Advisory Group (TAG) with Circle since its establishment in 2021. David gives freely of his time as a volunteer group member, showing up regularly for meetings and events, participating in a very real way in the important work of the TAG and having a strong impact on this work.

Since the inception of the "Quality in Our Diversity" project within Circle, David enthusiastically became involved, bringing his unique and positive perspective to all interactions, while generously sharing his own personal insights so that others can understand, learn and implement that learning in their everyday lives and work. In addition to giving his time, David has completed 19.5 hours of training, attended three full planning meetings and helped to guide Circle in the implementation of Recite Me. This is an assistive technology/toolbar active on Circle's website, which enables tenants and visitors to the site to customise their experience in a way that best suits their individual needs, whether they have a language need or a visual impairment.

David is a natural leader, and his influence on other TAG tenants is obvious. He is reflective and shares insights during what can be challenging

conversations. As with any newly established group, there are differences of opinion, disagreements and often very difficult choices to be made. The TAG has experienced this over the past 18 months and has had to consider their own professional boundaries, code of conduct and ultimately make decisions that have been uncomfortable. David has led the group through change and challenge by encouraging discussion, building trust, conveying vision and strategic intent, while bringing people along on with him on that journey.

In addition to the work David does with Circle, he is also an advocate with the Vision Ireland (formerly National Council for the Blind (NCBI)) and has been a spokesperson for them in their recently launched #clearourpaths campaign. In this campaign David featured in media articles and wrote blogs articulately highlighting the concerns and needs of people with a visual impairment.

Here are some of the things that Circle's team have to say about David:

Many local heroes go unnoticed. Here's CIH's chance to do something lovely! David is a tenant who has enthusiastically changed how we think, work, and understand the impact we, as social landlords, can have on our tenants' lives. He has played a key role in our Tenant Advisory Group and The Intercultural Diversity project and a very significant role in bringing about real change in how we deliver our services to tenants. He has done this by sharing his experiences directly with our staff. David brings a positive attitude and the perspective of our tenants, which has been invaluable to the team in Circle."

Liz Clarke - Director of Services

"David has been an integral part of the tenant engagement process from its inception. Throughout the journey he has brought energy to the group with his balanced and intelligent approach. Everyone is listened to and encouraged to participate and supported by David. The road has not always been smooth and when friction arises, David always demonstrates empathy and kindness. One of his great strengths is to question areas to seek clarification and offer solution focused hints and ideas to help guide the engagement strategy."

Gavin Connolly - Housing Services Manager.

Outcomes and achievements

David has completed Quality in Our Diversity training this year in the area of Cultural Competence, Unconscious Bias, Privilege, Migration and Anti-Racism. He has led project planning meetings, and is developing a welcome pack for all new tenants with a focus on tenants from ethnic minority backgrounds so that they have the information they need from the moment they move into their home to settle into their new area.

The work David alone has contributed this year has led to real change within Circle and how it delivers services. David presented at Supporting Communities first ever All Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference,

discussing how the process will assist and guide AHB's in building sustainable intercultural communities.

David is passionate, reliable, a team player, patient, creative, energetic, compassionate and positive. He is extremely resourceful and always takes the time to reflect and hear others, to quote the man himself:

"There are people who have other disabilities and achieve great things so why can't blind people. What we need is public and political support, if the resources are there we can achieve anything we want to do. It is society that is making us more disabled because they are not giving us the resources we need. If the resources are there we can achieve anything."

Mary Osakwe

Taylor Hill Ballbriggan Residents Association



Statement of support

Clúid wholeheartedly support the nomination of Mary Osakwe for the Housing Hero award. Her continued commitment and drive to further the opportunities of all who live not just in Taylor Hill, but in the wider Balbriggan area, is an example to us all.

Those in her own residents' association have been highly impressed by the dynamism she has brought since being elected to her current role as Chairperson:

"Since her arrival in 2021, coinciding with the establishment of Ireland's inaugural Cost Rental Housing project, Mary has propelled our community engagement to unprecedented heights.

"Previously our residents association would do activities such as clean ups, tree planting and advocacy for residents in the estate. Mary has brought our impact to a new level. Elected as Chair in 2022, Mary's impact has been nothing short of transformative. The establishment of Christmas Family Fun Days, Halloween events, Easter celebrations, and Playful Streets activities has turned Taylor Hill into a lively and inclusive community space, attracting hundreds of participants on each occasion.

"What sets Mary apart is her dynamic and proactive approach to community development. Modest and understated, she spearheads a team of volunteers, including myself, in conceiving innovative concepts. Mary's ability to secure funding and forge partnerships with key stakeholders has been instrumental in bringing these ideas to fruition, ensuring the seamless organisation of events with successful outcomes each time.

"Mary is not just a Chair; she is a catalyst for positive change. Her collaborative spirit and enthusiasm inspire confidence among residents, fostering a belief that any challenge can be overcome when united. Mary Osakwe's dedication and leadership make her a deserving nominee for the Housing Hero award, as she continues to shape Taylor Hill into a model of community cohesion and vibrancy".

Mary is also a member of our National Resident Advisory Group but has not let these various commitments distract from her primary focus in Taylor Hill. While supporting Clúid in our resident engagement activities, Mary has still found time to lead on the planting of a pocket forest in Taylor Hill, where 30 mature trees and over 100 saplings of native and pollinator friendly trees were planted by community members.

Such has been Mary's impact that it was deemed necessary for the Taylor Hill Residents Association to expand and rebrand, following interest from the wider community in becoming involved. The organisation is now known as Taylor Hill and Balbriggan Residents Association, reflecting its wider reach. Their strapline now reads, 'Uniting our Community, Celebrating our Diversity and Preserving our Environment'.

Mary has worked collaboratively with Glenveagh Homes (the developer of the site) to bring back into use a vacant strip of land adjacent to Taylor Hill. This regeneration project is close to completion and will serve as a social resource for the entire community.

Finally, Mary has established the Taylor Hill Youth Club. Again, a collaborative approach was taken to meet a gap in social infrastructure highlighted by the residents' association. Mary approached Foroige to come alongside residents and provide supports to volunteers. This initiative was opened by the Lord

Mayor of Fingal in December 2022 and aims to develop leadership and active citizenship among young people, enabling those young people to help make Balbriggan a Great Place to Live.

Gavin Connolly - Housing Services Manager.

Outcomes and achievements

In addition to the work already detailed, since taking up the role of Chairperson in late 2022, Mary has led on a number of initiatives and projects both within her own scheme and further afield, impacting on the wider community too:

- Asked by Fingal County Council to sit on the organising committee for International Women's Day
- Joined Flemington Development group working to improve the wider Balbriggan community
- Joined Balbriggan Community Council
- Asked by Fingal County Council to showcase collaborative project with Playful Streets (completion of 4 pilot community days)
- Asked to lead Balbriggan St Patrick's Day parade following the 'Best Community Award' win
- Achieved certificate of recognition in Balbriggan Town awards for Tidy Towns group
- Clúid's 'Great Places to Live' competition (Runners Up 2022; Winners 2023)
- Presented to board at Clúid's Corporate Strategy launch on importance of the Resident Voice
- Presented to UCD students on Cost Rental viability and impact
- Nominated by residents of Taylor Hill for the 'Women in Leadership' project, showcasing leadership of Fingal Women in Community Action (initiative of Fingal County Council)

Andrea Donnan

East Belfast Mission



Statement of support

Andrea is the manager of Hosford, East Belfast Mission's homeless hostel. For 15 years she has demonstrated outstanding commitment and dedication to the service, has impacted the lives of 100s of people, and has made a profound impact on this community. Andrea has led the implementation of many creative and ground-breaking initiatives and in doing so created one of the best temporary accommodation services for people who are experiencing homelessness in Northern Ireland. Incredibly, though the service has received awards, Andrea has never received any formal recognition for her work. I have worked with Andrea for 15 years and I would love to see her receive the recognition she deserves.

Andrea is driven by the desire to help people who are experiencing homelessness. Over the past 15 years, under Andrea's leadership, the hostel has provided lifesaving shelter and support to almost 2000 people; most of these people have been supported to find their own accommodation, to deal with the issues they face, and to have a better life. Andrea has gone far beyond the requirements of her role and always worked tirelessly and successfully to improve and develop every aspect of Hosford.

Andrea has been a passionate advocate of creating a physical environment at the hostel that promotes wellbeing and recovery for the people who stay there. Andrea played a key role in the development and set up of the new hostel, 12 years ago, which provides high quality accommodation in a mixture of ensuite rooms and single apartments. Since then, Andrea has secured the income and managed the budget to create a really beautiful living environment. Alongside the basics of painting, furniture, etc. Andrea has led art projects with Ulster University to decorate the building and horticultural projects to bring plants into the building and its outside areas. As a result, feedback from residents on the building is 100% positive with the only negative comment requesting the service is not described as a 'hostel' as it does not feel like one.

Andrea has consistently included residents in the service at all levels and has led or implemented innovative solutions to the challenges faced by residents. Thanks to Andrea's leadership Hosford

provides a mental health service, community garden, art project, health and wellbeing project, refugee women's group, sports projects and more. Andrea has empowered staff on her team to lead these projects and has managed the hostel in such a way that it is possible to create these projects; this is a great achievement in the context of a homeless accommodation service. Andrea has also responded proactively to the material needs faced by clients ensuring that there are resources available to help people with food, clothes, rent to access accommodation, money for emergencies etc.

When Belfast began to see increasing levels of migration and refugees, Andrea adapted the service to meet people's needs; providing translation and

interpreting, training and support for the staff, and resources to meet the cultural needs of different communities. Two refugees who previously lived at the hostel now work as Support Workers in the hostel; Andrea played a decisive role in creating this pathway. In large part thanks to Andrea's work, Hosford is now seen as the best temporary accommodation service by refugee communities and there is very high demand to access the service.

As well as demonstrating great commitment, dedication, and skill in developing the service Andrea has also been a wonderful person to work with; she is kind, generous, thoughtful, and has been a great support to our team and to myself.

Outcomes and achievements

- Almost 2000 people provided with shelter and support over the past 15 years.
- Over 1000 people helped to find a home of their own.
- Creation of high quality psychological informed environment for people experiencing homelessness.
- Development of projects providing wrap around support; community garden, health and wellbeing, women's groups, etc.
- Creation of a strong client involvement culture; 3 people with lived experience on the staff team, client involvement at strategic and operational level.
- Development of a best practice model for the support of ethnic minorities.

'Andrea is an enthusiastic and passionate advocate for people experiencing homelessness. She strives to develop homelessness services in Hosford House and beyond, with a steadfast commitment to improving the lives of the people in the service'. (Imogen Orr, Supporting People, principal funder of the service).

Quotes from clients:

'I wouldn't be on this earth if it wasn't for Hosford.'

'They give you the tools and then you can help yourself and make progress. I now have my own home and a job. I'm very grateful for the help I got'

'They provided me with housing and helped me when I arrived here alone from another country'

'They gave me a chance to rebuild my life.'

Paul Stuart

Grove Community Housing Association



Statement of support

Paul Stuart, Senior Housing Officer GCHA

Paul has been the Senior Housing Officer here at

Grove for 7 years. He is held in high regard by tenants, staff, board and the local community because he never fails to go the extra mile for anyone, always professional and always with a smile and his extremely calm and reassuring manner.

Paul not only works hard on the voids and arrears always performing to the highest standard, he uses his extensive knowledge to assist tenants with HB, rates and universal credit claims as well as referring on to any agency that knows will assist those struggling.

Paul has built up a great relationship with local community contacts and local shops and is regularly being donated items to help with events – he can be seen with trolley loads of pumpkins, crisps and selection boxes throughout the year. In the office he is the go to person when a laptop, software or a phone stops working, helping to carry stuff in or out of the

office , getting tables set up for an event and can even be seen crawling under desks to sort out cables and wires for the rest of us.

His relationship with tenants is professional yet caring and he is often a listening ear when out and about the area. His name is mentioned on numerous Tenant Satisfaction Surveys as being super helpful, having gone the extra mile and always polite. His work within the Tenant Voice Group has been extensive including organising meetings and events, delivering flyers and

information, sourcing funding, assisting with their application to become a constituted group and .

He never shies away from any challenge and is extremely popular as his alter ego "Mr G" our Grove Mascot, seen at all our events, leading the conga, taking selfies and giving hugs to anyone who needs one.

Paul is simply put the Housing Hero of Grove Community HA and we'd be lost without him.

Outcomes and achievements

Paul has delivered every year on arrears and voids well below the internal and DfC target. His calm, professional manner has impacted on the low turn around of stock, minimal complaints and ASB being dealt with swiftly and maintained an extremely low level when compared with his counterparts. He steers the Tenant Voice Group and has this year delivered an Easter event for 150 tenants, a summer fun day for

250-300 people in the community, a Halloween event and most recently a Santa sleigh event for approx 150 locals where he played the part of the man himself. Paul is also involved in the development of Grove having identified a number of properties to increase our stock and provide essential housing in this high demand area.

Kelan McClelland

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

Kelan was employed in 2015 as the Head of Homeless Prevention within Simon Community NI. This role has expanded and he now leads in the organisation as the Head of Housing Solutions, focussing on work undertaken to prevent homelessness and when someone is experiencing homelessness, work to move them in to independent housing as soon as they are able.

Kelan not only leads the Housing Solutions Team but is a respected leader within the organisation and his influence extends to all areas of work. Kelan is passionate about homeless prevention and has an ability to motivate and inspire his team to deliver on operational objectives.

Kelan initiated the support given to those in the community who are experiencing crisis. This stemmed from an increase in calls to the Homeless Support Line from individuals who had received eviction notices, were living in unfit accommodation, or in need of basic necessities such as food, heating and/ or electricity.

Innovatively, Kelan explored how we could support those in need and importantly, prevent homelessness. Through this, we now provide a crisis response. Examples of this include assistance with food, heating and electric, support with long term resolutions through signposting, referrals to appropriate agencies for more tailored support and advocacy when appropriate.

This work supporting individuals to remain in their home, giving stability and security whilst importantly preventing homelessness. Kelan's role and influence extends across all services in Simmon Community but also those external partners and stakeholders that enable success to be reached in both preventing and ending homelessness.

Kelan leads the work of Simon Community with the Complex Lives initiative led by Belfast City Council but inclusive of health, justice, housing executive and key stakeholders within the city of Belfast.

Kelan has a wealth of knowledge and expertise in housing and this translates through his work and interaction with colleagues and external partners. Kelan is passionate about preventing and ending homelessness and this passion filters down through the team giving fantastic motivation and commitment. Kelan has the ability to empower and guide the Housing Solutions team, he is committed to supporting each member of staff through conversation and sharing of his knowledge and expertise. On behalf of the Housing Solutions Team, we are incredibly lucky to have such a wonderful leader who is compassionate, resilient and diligent. We as a team have the upmost respect and gratitude for all that Kelan does and continues to do to prevent and end homelessness.

Outcomes and achievements

Under Kelan's leadership the team has developed a Tenancy Sustainment Scheme which is open to referrals from across Northern Ireland. The scheme has assisted households with deposits for their private rent, and in some cases first months rent. This scheme has prevented homelessness for 370 (as of 05/01/24) households. It's important to note this is 370 households which includes families and children.

Kelan's team supports the Creating Homes service in Simon Community and provides community-based support to assist the clients who have moved in to their 'forever home'. In 2023, Kelan was an integral

figure in reuniting a family unit through Creating Homes. A client had been homeless and living in temporary accommodation for 5 years, but with Kelan's support this client was able to move into their forever home. This was a pivotal moment in the client's life, as it enabled him to reconnect with his children and come together as a family. For the first time in 5 years, this client was able to have his children stay with him, and was able to cook dinner for them in his safe and warm forever home. This example is one of many that Kelan has been fundamental in orchestrating.

James O'Neill

Tuath Housing Association/An Garrán Resident's Association



Statement of support

James is a Tuath Housing resident and committee member of An Garrán Residents' Association, Tramore. At nearly 80 years of age his commitment and energy for bringing his community together and influencing positive change is outstanding. James' zest for life and enthusiasm are key factors for the community spirit that has been created in An Garrán. He tirelessly gives his time to work on behalf of residents and to promote tenant engagement in other communities.

Built in 2009, the An Garrán development was a joint venture between Waterford City and County Council and Tuath Housing. The An Garrán Residents' Association started out as a small group coming together to provide a platform to bring people together and provide a range of supports through engagement with both Tuath's and the council's residents. The Association's action plan is to create a sense of community in An Garrán by hosting community events and ensuring there is social inclusion for all who live in the estate. The estate consists of many cultures and diversity with residents from Europe, Ghana, Russia, Ireland, South Africa, Scotland, England, and Canada.

Adults and children learn about different traditions and cultures as part of everyday life while living together in An Garrán, and one of the most significant

ventures that takes place is the annual European Neighbour's Day, celebrated by a fun day each year with a barbecue, music, and activities for children. At one of these recent events, James organised a raffle at the event held for promising local boxer Dyllan Rocket, who won an All-Ireland medal, to raise funds to further his coaching and training. James is an integral part of this event, and his leadership is paramount to its success.

Since the residents' group was set up, there have been several environmental awareness projects such as Tree Planting, Clean Up Days, Daffodil bulb planting, Pollinator Projects, Seasonal events, Meet and greet days and fun events. The residents' association, Waterford City and County Council and Tuath have also created a positive link with the community Gardaí for support. As a result, the Residents' Association have witnessed less antisocial behaviour over the past number of years, more traffic calming measures put in place and a solution to stop nuisance fires close to An Garrán.

In 2022 An Garrán was nominated for the IBP 'Pride of Place Awards' awards, hosted by Dublin City Council, that celebrate the best in community development and the efforts of people in making their local neighbourhoods better places to live, work and socialise. On Friday 24th March, James and residents of An Garrán Residents' Association were hosted by Mayor of Waterford, Cllr. John O'Leary, at a special reception to commend James and the groups work and to celebrate the Residents' Association being named as runner-up at the awards in January in the Urban Neighbourhood category.

The An Garrán estate has seen many changes since 2009 but have continued to work together for the better of the community. Unfortunately, in 2022 a resident with a young family passed away. The residents rallied round and set up a GoFund Me page and raised €8,000 to repatriate the man for his funeral. The family remain in An Garrán which is testament to James and the resident's support. In the Summer of 2023, a community event was also organised by James

and the committee to remember late residents with a tree planting ceremony. The Mayor of Waterford attended the event. James was instrumental in getting support from Tuath and local businesses to sponsor the event.

In 2023 a new housing development commenced opposite the An Garrán estate. James and the committee have been liaising with the developer and council to ensure that there is green space provided for residents and especially for children to

have a space for community activities. James also successfully lobbied for a secure fence to be put in place along the pathways in An Garrán to increase safety for residents and children from construction traffic.

James O'Neill is a true community champion and has been an instrumental part of the positive contribution to his community. If every community had a James, how lucky would we all be!

Outcomes and achievements

Nomination testimonials

Alison O’Gorman, Director of Housing- Tuath Housing

“James's leadership fosters cultural inclusion, creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, and residents feel a genuine sense of belonging. His impact extends beyond the local community, with invitations to speak at tenant-focused conferences. James's exceptional contributions not only elevate his community but also positively influence the broader sector. His passion for positive change aligns with the values upheld by Tuath Housing”.

Paul Lynch, Chairperson An Garran Residents Association.

“As James will admit, he’s not a young man, but getting closer to 80 years of age, his energy and verve would never betray this. He has tirelessly worked on our resident’s committee. His enthusiasm and passion for the neighbourhood knows no bounds. He has implemented so many ideas, including a yearly European neighbours’ day, as an opportunity to bring everyone together and celebrate their cultures. He has spoken at a national conference, giving an emotional speech about the ongoing work to improve our neighbourhood”.

His key message is inclusion. He cares deeply about the residents, with an infectious energy and commitment that’s unwavering. The committee are so blessed to have his continuing presence, even despite ill-health. James asks for no acknowledgment, often working modestly in the background. He truly is the epitome of the perfect neighbour, and it would be wonderful for him to be recognised for his sterling contributions. I am proud to call him a neighbour. I am proud to call him a friend”.

Sheenagh McNally, Head of Corporate Services, Supporting Communities

“James was a standout speaker at our inaugural All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference, delivering a practical and engaging account of his involvement with Tuath Housing. His professionalism, humor, and impact on the 270 delegates earned him invitations to speak at other prestigious events. A remarkable ambassador for tenant engagement in Ireland, James not only contributes significantly to his local community but also collaborates with Tuath as a 'critical friend,' aiming to improve conditions for everyone. I wholeheartedly support James's nomination as a Housing Hero; he would be a deserving and exceptional winner”.