



Chartered
Institute of
Housing



Good practice compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from CIH 2020 Housing Awards

#CIHawards20

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Welcome

Welcome to the Chartered Institute of Housing's 2020 Housing Awards good practice compendium.

This compendium showcases the great work that's being done in housing and communities right across the island of Ireland. It recognises the many great success stories by bringing them into the spotlight.

The work of housing and associated professionals is central to building sustainable communities. It takes commitment and hard work. Work that involves years of commitment, engagement and problem solving.

Every individual, team or project in this compendium is an example of this work. The work that you do as housing professionals changes people's lives for the better. For this, every one of you is highly valued and respected by your professional body CIH.

But this publication is more than a celebration. CIH exists to support the housing sector to up skill and improve. And this compendium contains exemplars of best practice and reinforces the importance of innovation in housing. It has a vast range of brilliant examples from which we can all learn, helping us to create a future in which everyone has a place to call home.

Professionals who work in social housing continue to tell me that their working environment has never been tougher. Thankfully the impending weight of the bedroom tax has been lifted with the welcome return of the Northern Ireland Executive, and the Executive's commitment to extend existing welfare mitigation measures beyond March 2020.



Justin Cartwright CertCIH
National director - Northern Ireland
Chartered Institute of Housing

But big challenges remain, such as ever-growing housing stress levels, and the multi-billion pound investment gap the Housing Executive faces to ensure all its tenants can live in a decent home. The big challenges are both a call for government to act, and a call for us all in the housing sector to innovate.

Now in its eleventh year, the standard of nominations for this year's awards was high and continues to demonstrate the ongoing innovation within the housing sector right across the island. And where there is such a high standard of work, it was no easy task for the awards judging panel to decide the finalists and the winners. So I would like to thank all our judges for their time and contributions.

I would also like to thank the awards headline sponsor Radius Housing, and all the sponsors of the individual awards. With your support we have been able to share this fantastic content.

And thank you all for your ongoing support of the Chartered Institute of Housing, and support for excellence in housing.

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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

This award celebrates contributions that have made a positive difference to the lives of tenants/ residents or communities.

End of life care at Belmont Cottage

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

Belmont Cottages in Derry~Londonderry is a 16 bed residential unit situated in the heart of its local community. The home supports adults with a learning disability to live as independently as possible and become an integral part of the community.

The staff team at Belmont Cottages is deserving of this award because of the compassion and care they showed towards someone in the end stages of their life. It is not easy to support people with a learning disability in this way as most would need to go into hospital. Staff embraced the value and importance of 'home' and overcame all obstacles to ensure the resident - Margaret* - remained at home during a remarkable and emotive time for all.

Margaret was one of the original residents who moved into Belmont Cottages when it opened 27 years ago. In September 2019, she was suddenly diagnosed with an end stage palliative illness. This was a very difficult time not only for Margaret and her family but also for the other residents who lived in the home and the staff who had also become her family and friends.

Taking into consideration the complexities that come with caring for an adult with a learning disability, staff knew that that it would be important for Margaret to be in a familiar environment surrounded by familiar faces. This would help to reduce the confusion, fear and anxiety she was feeling at this time. Despite proving difficult, the home manager and staff team decided that they wanted to provide the end of life care and support to ensure Margaret passed in her own home with friends and family by her side.

The team worked around the clock to make Margaret feel comfortable. They quickly secured the appropriate equipment and worked with the district nurse, hospice nurse (in relation to pain management), Marie Curie nurses and family. They ensured there was always a familiar face with the resident on a one-to-one basis throughout day and night to help ease any anxieties and fear. This dedication to ensuring support was there at all times went outside the perimeters of their own roles.

Whilst this was a clear demonstration of staff's commitment to supporting someone in their care, what happened next was an extraordinary example of when staff members go above and beyond the requirements of their role to make a difference.

Margaret's favourite time of year was Christmas. Every year she started talking about Santa and Christmas every day from September onwards and would begin her Christmas list. This year, she continued to talk about it unaware of how ill she was. On 11th October it became clear that Margaret would not be able to celebrate Christmas this year so the manager and staff decided to bring Christmas to her.

On the same day staff pulled out all the stops to bring Christmas to Belmont Cottages. Seamus Crossan, manager of Belmont Cottages, arranged to get a Santa costume and dressed up as Santa. Staff bought the presents on Margaret's Christmas list and they decorated her bedroom with a Christmas tree, toys, lights, and played her favourite Christmas music. Her family and all the staff were there to celebrate her favourite day and then Santa brought in her presents. Margaret was so happy and wished everyone a Happy Christmas as she always did.

Six days later Margaret passed away peacefully in her own home surrounded by her family and friends.

* The name of this resident has been changed to protect her identity

Outcomes and achievements

As a housing association our primary focus is to provide housing for those in need - whether that is in an individual home or a supported home. This nomination is an inspiring story about how a housing team worked together to enhance the quality of life for someone in their final stages of life in such an empathetic, caring and compassionate way.

Staff could see the value and importance in providing a real 'home'. They saw the person as an individual and promoted that individuality despite the difficulties for themselves, and in doing so created a special time for the resident in her final days.

Margaret's family recognised the importance of her time in Belmont Cottages by allowing the scheme to host one night of her wake to allow all involved in her care to say goodbye. Her family also asked for staff to write a few words which were read out at her funeral.

The only outcome that mattered in this story was that Margaret passed away peacefully in her own home surrounded by her family and friends; and that she was able to celebrate Christmas one last time in a special way.

* The name of this resident has been changed to protect her identity

Zemzem Eigal - Roseville House

Ark Housing Association



Statement of support

Zemzem Eigal arrived in N Ireland in 2009 as a refugee having fled her native home in Somalia as a result of the devastating conflict that had torn her country apart. Under personally traumatic circumstances, Zemzem was forced to flee her country and was unable to take her daughter Maryam 8yrs and her son Jabir 2yrs.

Zemzem arrived in Roseville House having been granted settled status. By the time of her referral to Roseville in June 2018, Zemzem had been apart from her children for over 9 years.

Zemzem had been living in single person, shared facility hostels during her first 2 years in Northern Ireland and when she arrived at Roseville House she was stressed, worried and anxious about the move and transition from those facilities to her own self-contained home, albeit on a temporary basis. She had been waiting and working tirelessly for this moment

for a long time but being reunited with her son and daughter after such a lengthy period was also a frightening experience for her. Over the years she had kept in touch with her children, and had begun to rebuild a relationship with them, however the prospect of family reunification after so long created a lot of anxiety on both sides. Zemzem's daughter was also 8 months pregnant at the time which added to the stress and concern as not only was Zemzem about to reignite her role as a mother once more, she was also about to become a grandmother. Zemzem's anxiety was also compounded by her mental health concerns, which emanated from her years of trauma having to leave her home country and be forcibly separated from her children. Her physical health had also suffered during this time. When Zemzem was reunited with her children at Roseville House, this was initially a joyous occasion, but soon after the pressures of responsibility came to bear on Zemzem. She felt responsible for supporting her 2 children integrate into a city she or they did not know, they had no English, and her daughter was about to give birth.

To help Zemzem through this difficult period, her keyworker and Roseville House Team Leader Stephen Harland, developed a programme of support designed to help Zemzem and her growing family cope with and meet head on the numerous challenges they faced.

Stephen started with the practical aspects of support. He ensured Zemzem and her family felt secure and comfortable throughout the move to Roseville House. He took Zemzem through the welfare benefits processes ensuring that all applicable benefits were secured. He ensured registration with the GP for all members of the family, particularly as Maryam was due her baby within a matter of weeks and he also began to work with Zemzem on identifying her longer-term housing needs. There was a strong emphasis on the family's future and on making Belfast their home.

However, Zemzem's needs went beyond those related to housing, welfare and basic health. Zemzem recognised that the stress and anxiety she was suffering from required additional support, with the support of Stephen they began to identify and reach out to the agencies and organisations who could help further.

In addition, her son Jabir received support from Stephen in respect to his English language needs by helping him enrol in school and English lessons. Three weeks after arriving in Roseville, Maryam gave birth to a daughter which brought great joy for the family and several months later when Maryann was ready, Stephen supported her back into education at Belfast Metropolitan College where she went on to achieve successes in spoken and written English.

Outcomes and achievements

After 12 months of support, in July 2019 the family moved out of Roseville House as one family unit, closer than ever, and into a home of their own in North Belfast. Stephen ensured through his support, that the home was sustainable for the family longer term needs, including Zemzem's deteriorating physical condition.

Stephen continues to support the family as their floating support worker, but as the family continues to grow in confidence and settle into their new surroundings, they do not require the same high intense support as before and are moving towards

more fulfilled and independent life in N Ireland. Zemzem, Maryam, Jabir and baby Samsam continue to return to Roseville House for social gatherings and to meet up with friends, and after 10 years of trauma, have found peace & happiness and a new beginning.

Zemzem "Working with Stephen was good he listened to my problems and helped me fix them. There are good and bad people and when I meet Stephen, I knew he was a person with a good heart, and he has helped me and my children. I now have a home for my family in Belfast thanks to Stephen and his support"

The FireGuards

Housing Executive



Statement of support

On 8th August 2019, the North Belfast Area office team were faced with a major crisis when a contentious Internment bonfire was built adjacent to 2 tower blocks in the New Lodge area of North Belfast. Police worked throughout the day to remove the bonfire but severe civil disturbance broke out and police had to withdraw from the area at 4pm. The Fire and Rescue service assessed the tower blocks as being at serious risk of fire damage and the Housing Executive's Director of Housing Services immediately put in place an emergency response plan to deal with this potentially critical situation. A central emergency response unit was convened to

co-ordinate our response and Liam and his team worked on the ground to assist residents. Liam and his local team had been working in the area from 5am that morning and after police withdrew at 4pm, and despite serious disorder in the area, immediately went door to door to each block (96 flats in total) asking residents to leave their homes. The team arranged for up over 50 emergency temporary accommodation places and set up an emergency contact point in a nearby tower block foyer which they then manned throughout the evening and night. During this period, Liam and his team also maintained close contact with public representatives, police and fire rescue to closely monitor and assist in the situation.

The majority of residents went to stay with family and friends but some chose to remain in the blocks and Housing Executive staff and concierge remained in the blocks to protect the residents. When the bonfire was lit, smoke penetrated one of the tower blocks (Oisin House), setting off fire alarms and concierge staff called the fire brigade and went door to door to get the remaining residents to a place of safety on the ground floor. Fire crews were unable to get to the scene for some time as roads had been closed off during the street rioting. Concierge staff remained with residents until the fire crew arrived and the scene was declared safe.

Liam and his staff went well over and above the call of duty and demonstrated unrivalled dedication to their residents. They worked tirelessly throughout the day and night to ensure residents' were supported and kept safe.

Clark Bailie, Chief Executive in NI Housing Executive said *"While our highly professional and caring response was predictable and expected, nevertheless we should never take for granted the selfless and invaluable contribution made by Housing Executive colleagues"*.

Outcomes and achievements

Dealing with emergency situations is nothing new to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as we have been at the front line of delivering housing services throughout the very worst of the NI Troubles.

Thankfully, these types of incidents are now infrequent, however, the very real danger posed by this bonfire to almost 100 residents of 2 Tower Blocks called for an exceptional response, which local Housing Executive staff went far and beyond the call of duty to deal with. The emergency response was text book and the

commitment of the staff to stay with residents and take action to ensure their safety, resulted in the blocks and more importantly, the residents being kept safe from further harm.

The local team have deservedly been warmly praised by local residents and elected representatives and they are now taking forward creative new environmental plans to the area surrounding the Tower blocks to ensure this type of incident never happens again.

T:BUC Social Change Group

Radius Housing

Statement of support



Female tenants from both T:BUC Shared Housing Schemes in the Ravenhill Road area of East Belfast came together in May 2018 on a joint Social Change project with Apex and Radius Housing Associations over an initial period of 8 weeks.

The women engaged and collaborated on discussions and workshops about issues, assets and challenges in their neighbourhoods. They discussed how different tenants and groups within the community might be engaged, and how potential projects might benefit them.

The tenants from both developments completed

an empathy mapping activity, involving putting themselves in the shoes of a different person in the neighbourhood. On feedback, they emphasised the importance of a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere, and of localised activities, rather than those requiring travel and the need for safe activities for children in the area.

Radius and Apex coordinated a "co-creation" workshop, where members of the group visited the Diamond Project Hub in East Belfast and also Belvoir Area Residents Group in South Belfast to see how they have progressed a Community Garden. They also attended Cameron's Garden Centre in Lisburn to look at planting ideas and the Belfast in Bloom Event through Belfast City Council to gather ideas and network with other agencies, all on a voluntary basis. The 8 week programme resulted in the development of a project which the group called the 'Diversity in Bloom Project'. The tenants engaged the wider community to get involved; they put their ideas in to practice and continued to engage other tenants from both shared housing schemes whilst also connecting with the wider community, including those with additional needs and barriers such as loneliness, isolation and disability through a range of mediums.

The Social Change Groups aims were to create -

- A greater sense of community (i.e. more tenants getting involved in local activities)
- Safe activities for children in the immediate area
- Enhancement of the Shared Housing Schemes and creating a more welcoming place to live.
- Empowering tenants to take action to improve where they live, work and socialise

The tenants took the initiative to lead on and deliver the 'Diversity in Bloom Project' which included -

- 'A Fun Day with Flowers' Event for families

- 4 Make and Donate Planting Workshops with adults with learning disabilities from Orchardville Society and Willowfield Open House Drop In with older people
- 1 Pop Up Make and Take Planting Workshop with tenants and their children in the Shared Housing Development

The project was a great success with 120 filled window boxes and tubs being made and donated to tenants in both schemes including those with additional barriers to inclusion including social isolation, loneliness and disability.

The group now meet on a weekly basis and have taken on the name of the T:BUC Social Change Group and have recently received 2 tenant awards for their outstanding contribution to the community listed below -

- Radius Heroes Good Neighbour Award 2019
- Radius Heroes Community Pride Award 2019

They relentlessly support, promote, organise and participate in other programmes, activities and events

within T:BUC and encourage other tenants to get involved. To date they have led on, supported or attended a wide range of activities listed below -

- 5 week Cultural Awareness programme
- Drug & Alcohol Awareness sessions
- First Aid Training Certification
- Certification on Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking
- Sexual Harassment/Violence Workshop
- 4 week Community Development Awareness programme
- Making your Money Work sessions
- Mindful Bodies - Alternative Therapies and Counselling programme
- Nutrition workshops
- 5 week Feel Good Friday Programme
- Christmas Events x 3
- Diversity Projects x 4
- Cultural Festival and Parade in East Belfast

Outcomes and achievements

The T:BUC Social Change Group are made up of a diverse mix of tenants from a range of backgrounds and cultures. They have gone from strength to strength and have not only increased the capacity within the group on a personal and community level but work tirelessly for the benefit of other tenants within the T:BUC Shared Housing Schemes on a daily basis.

Their achievements to date have included -

- Visual improvements to the neighbourhood
- Building a sense of community
- Connecting different generations
- Encouraging people to take pride in and respect their area
- Improved health and well-being for residents
- Decreased loneliness and social isolation

Some key learning included:

- The benefits of starting small and getting community buy-in for bigger projects.
- The possibilities that a small group of people can aspire to; and the difference they can make.
- The importance of connecting in with tenants and local decision-makers to achieve longer term success and make a long lasting difference.

Group Quote

"Without the support of Radius and Apex Housing Associations we would not have been able to achieve all the positive outcomes for ourselves, our families and other tenants in the Shared Housing Schemes and wider community"

Best housing development

sponsored by



An Ghníomhaireacht
Tithíochta
The Housing Agency

This award recognises developments that provide desirable and sustainable places to live, improving the lives of people within the community.

St Breacan's Park, Waterside, Londonderry

Apex Housing Association in partnership with
EHA Group



Statement of support:

The success of St Breacan's Park has been the result of excellent partnership working and community engagement right from the very beginning. Building work on St Breacan's Park first started in 2017 on the site of the former Immaculate Conception school on Trench Road in the Waterside. Since then 78 much needed homes, a well-equipped play park and a temporary community hub in the former school canteen have been provided for the local community.

Throughout the process Apex worked with the church who owned the former school site, the council who had plans to build a new community hub on part of the site and the local community.

In an act of serendipity, the first handover of Apex homes coincided with the council's announcement that long awaited funding was in place for the new community hub. The new hub is now almost complete and when occupied will allow Apex to demolish the

temporary hub and build another 14 homes. This hive of activity has lessened the blow to the community of losing a much loved secondary school.

When the school closed, Apex met with community group Hillcrest Trust on site and asked them to outline their vision for the area. The group conveyed the local community's sense of deflation as a result of many opportunities lost over the last 30 years, but following a walk of the site for a few hours that vision started to emerge.

The first step taken by Apex was to invest money in providing a temporary community hub within the school's canteen building. This took just a few months to complete and signalled our good intentions to the community. The temporary hub has subsequently provided a base for a number of summer schools programmes for local children and hosts numerous groups on a daily basis. All of which will relocate to the council's permanent hub in a few months' time.

The community's vision was reflected in the design competition's design brief and Hillcrest Trust reviewed the competition entries with us. When the winning design was developed for the formal planning consultation, Hillcrest hosted the week-long event. The general public was able to discuss the proposals with Apex and our architect and when viable suggested changes were made to the proposals.

The planning process was straightforward as we had consulted heavily with the community and had widespread support for the development. It's been drawn to our attention that a planner lives locally and has informally used photographs of St Breacan's to show what good houses look like!

During the construction period, the contractor continued the close consultation process with Hillcrest and was able to deal with any reported problems very quickly. The temporary hub building hosts a local nursery and there were rigorous controls in place to ensure the safety of youngsters and their parents. Easter eggs were bought for children and overall there was a 'feel good vibe' on site. It was apparent to all that this deprived area of the city, where the last social house was built 30 years ago, was being invigorated.

During the contract period the Housing Executive identified a large homeless family who urgently needed a wheelchair home. As a result, we built an extension to one of the houses and fast tracked it through planning and funding approvals allowing the family to move in at project completion. The contractor

worked with us on this unusual event and didn't seek heightened compensation claims for 'out of sequence' work. This spirit of cooperation on site and within the community has made St Breacan's Park a very successful project.

Outcomes and achievements

We grabbed the opportunity to do something special with this site and we recognised the benefit of a temporary hub in the area. We promised the community we would help build their vision and we have delivered on all those promises in a very short time scale.

The community has a community hub, it has 78 fantastic homes, we have catered for a variety of complex needs families and the site is beautifully landscaped around a new play park.

One new tenant, whose 6 year old daughter is wheelchair bound, said: "This house is so spacious and that extra space has allowed us to request equipment,

such as a hoist, that helps so much in caring for Michaela. Apex went above and beyond to meet our needs."

As a way of giving ownership to the community, we asked them to suggest a name for the development. They chose to name it St Breacan's Park to reflect the original name of the school - "We want to honour the hope that came to us sixty years ago with the new St Breacan's School. This is our new beginning and the spirit of St Breacan is back in the community where he belongs."

Lawnfield Close

Choice Housing Ireland Ltd



Statement of support:

Lawnfield Close, Newcastle is an innovative older people's housing scheme located within Newcastle at the base of Slieve Donard an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The need for social housing in the area was significantly met with the accommodation of 42 individuals in the 14 apartments and incorporated a design to meet the complex needs of 2 specific families.

Comprising of 14Nr apartments, Lawnfield Close is broken down to 12Nr 3-person 2-bedroom apartments and 2Nr 3-person 2-bedroom ground floor wheelchair apartments with their own in-curtilage parking.

The development fundamentally influences health, wellbeing and long-term quality of life by providing an affordable stable and secure base within the coastal town. Lawnfield Close offers a place where residents feel safe and comfortable with both similar surrounding existing accommodation and elderly people in close proximity.

The design of the development has carefully considered the wider natural context of the area and maximises unspoilt views of the Mourne Mountains, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Windows are wrapped around corners to maximise surveillance and bring generous amounts of natural light into people's homes. The chestnut lined fencing to the rear of the building makes it easy for tenants and visitors to navigate their way round easily linking to the open front seated area. Ample parking has been provided for the development which has considered local car ownership trends, disabled parking and sufficient space for visitors. The landscape buffer provides privacy to the communal car parking and private open amenity spaces to the ground floor apartments. The development provides two convenient dedicated bin and recycling storage areas that are out of sight but are very accessible for tenants. A drying space is also provided to allow tenants a space to dry clothes. Each of the complex needs apartments are provided with their own in-curtilage car parking.

The building is traditional in form generally with pitched natural Spanish slate roofs but with variations, steps and articulation in the roof form to provide visual interest in the streetscape and form. The project has been constructed predominantly with self-coloured render as this is dominant in the context and within the area of Townscape Character. Form and scale is manipulated and building lines and eaves lines and ridge heights have been varied as indicated and dormers and bays are used to punctuate the roof scape and eaves line.

The use zinc to form the dormers, bays and canopies provide modern construction detailing to the building.

The land is not zoned and therefore the key requirements for the development will spring from a response to the surrounding context, although the site is bounded on the west by a Landscape Policy Area LLPA 6 which relates to Donard Park and to the east of Donard Fold it is bounded by an Area of Townscape Character which highlights the historic dwellings and townscape around the harbour.

To the northwest there is a stand of mature indigenous trees that frames the entrance road on approach to the site and conceals the site. The new development embraces and understands the complexity of changing lives and the design lends itself to support the community now and into the future, meeting Lifetime Homes Standards. The team at McCartan Muldoon Architects designed these apartments working with the site structure which split into three distinctive zones and creating an open aspect and streetscape. It was very much a collaborative process with the McCartan Muldoon team to ensure buildable, quality of finish and community cohesion.

Outcomes and achievements

The Association and Architect's vision to improve quality of life through good design is noticeably evident in this development.

The developments uniqueness represents that all user needs groups whether it's elderly people or people with complex needs, can live together within one community. Lawnfield Close represents the blending of new modern locally sourced materials showing that contemporary design can embrace the natural and effectively satisfy the surrounding existing community and environment.

Andrea Harrison, Scheme Coordinator, Radius Housing

"One of my couples down here is delighted as their daughter has moved in and we are so thrilled for her. They are lovely apartments and we were pleased to get a wee tour before the handover. It's lovely to see a bit of life about the place again as Mary Murray House was a bit of an eye sore and a potential site for vandalism so it's really lovely to see such a bright building up and running now. It's fantastic and exciting the prospect of new neighbours and we hope that they will respond to an invite to our coffee morning and perhaps some other events in and around our Scheme."

Durham Street

Clanmil Housing



Statement of support:

Clanmil's development at Durham Street, Belfast is a new and exciting housing scheme of 23 modern, high quality homes in an area with high social housing need. The scheme involved the restoration of an important listed building, bringing it back to its former glory and saving it from threat of demolition.

Originally designed by Young & Mackenzie Architects, famous for other iconic buildings including Scottish Provident Building, and Robinson & Cleaver department store, the building is well known as the former home of the Blood Transfusion Service. It originally housed the NI Tuberculosis Authority from 1918 to 1960.

The building had been unoccupied since 1995 and had fallen into disrepair. Clanmil acquired it in August 2014 and set about working with the local community to design a scheme that celebrated the old building and met housing need.

Extending the existing listed building required careful consideration. It was clear from the outset that a strong, innovative design solution was required. The key design element is a new atrium separating the listed building and a new extension, providing a connection and a light-filled 'heart' to the building where tenants can informally meet and get to know each other. The atrium allows the old building to be understood and appreciated in its own right. The new extension respects the original and sits subservient to it.

The apartments, which are designated for over 55's, have been designed to meet 'Lifetime Homes' accessibility standards. This ensures people can stay in their homes for longer as they grow older and makes the homes easier to adapt, at minimal cost, for lifetime use. The development also includes 10 new family houses and a specially adapted accessible bungalow for a family who required bespoke accommodation.

In order to preserve the building's original features whilst creating modern comfortable homes, the sash windows were reinstated with secondary glazing, brick and sandstone detailing was restored, including a prominent Belfast crest and motto, the original lime mortar was repointed and insulation improved. Other interesting features from the building's past uses include curved corners at wall and ceiling junctions, designed to help with infection control, and a sandstone head above the entrance door representing Hygeia, the goddess of sanitation and health. These elements are retained and celebrated within the restoration allowing the building's historic past to be remembered and understood.

We explored the history of the site and discovered, from early maps, that a street named Emma Court had once been located at the entrance to the new development. We reused this as the official name of the new street.

We worked closely with local political representatives and St Mary's Community Group to ensure the housing mix proposed met the need in the area. Many in the community have memories of the old building and are happy to see it restored to its former glory and back in use for the community as much needed homes. The scheme has proved extremely popular and is fully occupied.

Jean McMahon of St Mary's Community Group said: *"We are delighted that our community's fantastic old building is providing new accommodation for a wide range of ages and residents. There is a need for family and older peoples' housing in this area, so it is great to see both provided in this scheme".*

"We congratulate Clanmil for having the vision to restore this historic building, providing much needed housing. We've extended a warm welcome to our new neighbours and look forward to getting to know them better."

The expertise of Rolston Architects, Turley Planning, and Geda Construction, helped Clanmil bring this architecturally-significant listed building back to life.

Outcomes and achievements

Clanmil celebrated its 5,000th home in June 2019 after successfully transforming a 101 year old listed building on Durham Street, Belfast into new apartments, bringing life back to this much loved but abandoned space.

The project has delivered high-quality accommodation that meets specific design standards and has helped regenerate this part of Belfast. The community-led restoration project involved intensive consultation with the local community group ensuring that the right mix of accommodation was delivered to meet the community's need whilst respecting the historical importance of the site.

The social impact of the regeneration scheme has been significant. It has transformed an area within Belfast city centre that was previously blighted by significant anti-social behaviour. It is fitting that a building used to investigate and treat tuberculosis, the cure for which was found to be better standards of living, has been re-purposed in 2019 as high quality social housing.

The sympathetic restoration and extension of the old building was part of a £3.3 million housing scheme providing 23 new homes. The development, which was part funded by the Department for Communities, has given the previously derelict Grade B2 listed building a bright future as fantastic new homes for the community.

Millrace Court, Emmet St. Trim, County Meath

North & East Housing Association



Statement of support:

Millrace Court, Emmet Street, Trim, County Meath was purchased under a turnkey arrangement by North & East Housing Association in June 2018. The original site comprised of retail units with accommodation upstairs and a large rear yard. In 2007, following many years of dereliction, planning was sought for 9 dwellings with commercial units on the street front. This development was abandoned in 2009 due to the economic crash. Clonmel Enterprises purchased the unfinished site in 2016 and applied for new planning increasing residential to 11 homes and removing the commercial units. A purchase agreement was entered into during construction works with North & East.

Millrace Court is an example of the development of a town centre brown field site that not only provides

good quality housing for those on Meath County Council waiting lists but also enhances the streetscape of a prominent street in a large rural town. The solution to ensuring the development was complete lay in marrying the social housing need in the town and the need to complete a prominent derelict site that had been attracting Anti-Social Behaviour. The completion of this unfinished development has resulted in a complete turnaround into an aesthetically pleasing streetscape and thriving sustainable community. It is anticipated that this redevelopment will act as a catalyst for regeneration in this location of Trim town centre.

The accommodation consists a mix of housing as follows:

5 x 1 bed apartments

4 x 3 bed duplexes

2 x 2 bed apartments

This mix of accommodation has allowed a mix of family housing and housing for single people and couples in an aesthetically pleasing development in the heart of the town surrounded by all the essentially amenities that Trim has to offer including shops, amenities and schools. High rents in the private rental market had meant that many families and older single people were living long distances from the town centre where they travel to for work, school and socialising. The move to this town centre location afforded our tenants a choice to walk, cycle or take public transport where they need to go and encourages sustainable travel means and minimises the need to use cars. This also has health benefits for our tenants and enhances wellbeing and quality of life.

When North & East Housing and Meath County Council were collaborating on suitable allocations for Millrace Court both were cognisant of the fact that living in a town centre would not suit everybody. Housing allocations in Meath County Council took a careful look at their applicants and nominated families with older children and single people who expressed

an interest in being close to town. Millrace Court provides the perfect mix of low maintenance and highly accessible properties. Parking is provided within the courtyard as well as a bicycle rack and tenants maintain the green area bordering the complex.

The orientation of the development has been created to take advantage and maximise the energy efficiency of the south facing aspect of the balcony areas to the front. All living spaces have windows southwesterly facing making effective use of natural daylight and sunlight. These homes have a Building Energy Rating

ranging from A3 to B3. These homes were completed with new mechanical and electrical systems, A-rated gas boilers, PV panels to the front block and upgraded wall and ceiling insulation, which will ensure long-term sustainable maintenance of the homes. More importantly, it will ensure that tenants have thermal comfort in their homes and alleviate the burden on tenants suffering from fuel poverty.

Outcomes and achievements

The development at Millrace Court is a turnkey development funded by a mixture of Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), Payment and Availability Scheme (P&A) and funding from the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). The total cost of the development is €1.96m. The Development has revitalised a previously derelict town centre site and transformed it into an aesthetically pleasing streetscape. The 11 homes are low maintenance and energy efficient. Cognisant of the fact that living in a town centre would not suit everybody housing allocations in Meath County Council took a careful look at their applicants and

nominated families with older children and single people who expressed an interest in being close to town. Due to the High cost of private rental properties in the town one particular family had been undertaking a 40K round trip to school each day. They and others now have both schools, shops, playgrounds and other amenities in easy reach. North & East will continue to work with the tenants of Millrace Court to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the development.

Ravenswood

Peter McVerry Trust



Statement of support

Ravenswood Social Housing Development is a greenfield development consisting of eight social housing units in the form of one-bedroom bungalows configured around a central garden and a community building.

In late 2017, an initiative known as the Refund Project was initiated by Focus Ireland, Peter McVerry Trust

and Simon Communities of Ireland to seek donations from households receiving water charge refunds. The appeal raised over €1 million and €236,000 of the €361,000 allocated to Peter McVerry Trust increased the original capacity for six units on the Ravenswood site to the eight units there are today.

The scheme was designed specifically to meet the needs of people impacted by homelessness who, once housed, would have a particularly acute level of visiting support needs. For example, people that have been housed in the scheme are those with terminal illness, degenerative diseases, severe disabilities, visual impairment and chronic addiction.

This development was progressed on a derelict site. The site was immediately adjacent to an existing Peter McVerry Trust homeless service, located off the old N2 Dublin - Ashbourne Road.

The primary barriers to the development of the site related to its location relative to the drainage system on the new N2 dual carriageway. Once a solution was found to this problem, following consultation with Fingal County Council to secure access to the drainage system, the development of the site became viable.

The site layout was developed around a central community building. This building is at the centre of the broader Ravenswood site which includes a small homeless hostel. The community building provides an amenity not just for tenants in the housing development but also those accessing the homeless service. The design of the community building

incorporated a stand-alone semi-independent housing unit on the site which is adjacent to, but separate from, the main hostel building.

The single story houses are in-keeping with the semi-rural nature of the site. The units are laid out around a fully landscaped garden, with each tenant having their own external seating area to the front of the properties facing onto the central garden leading into the community building.

The internal layout of all the units provides spacious accommodation for a single person, with open plan living, dining and kitchen areas, ample storage, a separate double bedroom and a large bathroom.

The site has comprehensive landscaping and planting, including boundary hedging. New boundary walls were erected to increase privacy and security for residents.

The scheme is located in close proximity to a high-frequency bus route linking Dublin City Centre and Finglas Village. The site is serviced by the 103 and 103X buses, which run four times per hour.

This complements transport provided by Peter McVerry Trust minibus, which offers a transport service to and from Finglas Village on a regular basis to tenants and residents of the Ravenswood hostel. This transport services provides drop-off and collection service and also offers support for people to access external appointments off-site such as education of health related programmes.

Outcomes and achievements

The single type of unit is reflective of the needs of those in homelessness and on the housing list, in that they are all one-bedroom units. The single largest household type in homelessness, the social housing waiting list and households supported by Peter McVerry Trust are single people.

Therefore, the delivery of eight one-bedroom housing units ensured that this cohort, who are underserved by the local authority housing programme and the broader Approved Housing Body housing programme, would be prioritised in the scheme.

The development of the new housing units incorporated into its work the reconfiguration of

the entrance to the broader Ravenswood site, which improved access and parking, and provided designated bike parking facilities for the first time.

All units in the development are single-storey, with ground floor access. Half of the units delivered are fully disability accessible, with a high-quality finish to reflect the aim to provide secure, quality housing to those with acute, ongoing support needs.

Further to that, the location of an on-site office has meant that there is support available to tenants 24 hours per day, seven days per week, every single day of the year.

Forde Green Seaforde

Radius Housing



Statement of support

Radius Housing's Forde Green development located at Manse Road Seaforde encompasses 10no. high quality semi-detached homes, to include 2no. five person three bed properties and 8no. three person two bed properties. The 0.3 hectare site located on the western boundary of the historical villages settlement limit is located in an Area of Townscape Character and was acquired on the open market by the association in April 2015 given the significant housing need in the Newry, Mourne and Down district (which has remained at a consistently high level between 2013 and 2019). At the time of its acquisition the former agricultural field had incorporated partial foundations for another previously approved seven unit residential development which had been abandoned. It was also bounded by the well-established Forde Close development located immediately east of the site. Following site acquisition Radius Housing worked collaboratively alongside the NIHE Place shaping team (Southern Region) and the NIHE Rural Unit to gauge interest in the provision of social housing on the site. Both organisations recognised that in rural areas, housing needs can be hidden or dispersed and that a different approach is often required to ensure that social housing provision is delivered in a responsive fit for purpose manner. In this instance

further to the completion of a mailing exercise which sought to assess interest in the proposed site, NIHE confirmed their support but stressed the need for Radius to work closely with the local NIHE area office to proactively market the scheme both locally and in nearby settlements in order to ensure that prospective applicants were identified and advised of the scheme as "an area of choice" which would be in keeping with their desired needs.

Sinead Collin's NIE Rural Co-ordinator commented:

"This scheme has made a significant contribution towards addressing housing need in the South Down area but specifically, it has provided housing options for the rural community in and around the village of Seaforde. Although a relatively small scheme, it will have a big impact for local people who wish to stay within their area of choice, close to family, friends and support networks and by doing so, this scheme will contribute to the sustainability of this rural community. We commend Radius for going above and beyond to make this scheme happen."

Through the appointment of Rolston Architects a new residential scheme for the site was subsequently designed to include an additional three units on site, bringing the total site yield to 10 properties. Much emphasis was placed on innovative design to ensure the scheme would create a strong sense of place, in keeping with the overall historic layout and built form of the small settlement of Seaforde in terms of scale, massing, materials and detailing. Each of the ten properties were built to Lifetime Homes standards with full disabled wheelchair access throughout using level deck door access. Throughout the development elevations used a mixture of renders with projecting bays featuring a traditional vernacular stone detailing. Vehicular access to the scheme was facilitated through the adjoining Forde Close development which seamlessly integrates with Forde Green.

The Forde Green scheme achieved planning approval in May 2016, commenced on site in September 2017 and completed under budget and within the agreed fourteen month contract term in November 2018. The completed scheme has not only created ten high quality family homes within Seaforde but also introduced an enhanced vibrancy into the small village which undoubtedly adds to the wider sustainability and wellbeing of the rural community.

Outcomes and achievements

- The creation of 10 new high quality family homes;
- Transformation of a prominent abandoned site located within an Area of Townscape Character in the historic village of Seaforde;
- Effective partnership working with NIHE in identifying and addressing rural housing need in Seaforde and its surrounding settlements.

Old Mill Court, Sion Mills

Rural Housing Association



Statement of support

Rural Housing Association identified a need for more new-build social housing in Sion Mills. The Housing Executive's waiting list indicated that there was a substantial number of people in Housing Stress, however there was an undersupply of social housing.

NISRA's Multiple Deprivations Measure highlighted Sion Mills as amongst the top 10 most deprived rural Super Output Areas in Northern Ireland in relation to health, employment and education. Unemployment levels were high in the village and many families and individuals on low incomes were struggling to find suitable housing within their budget.

Through the provision of new-build social housing in the area, RHA was able to meet the needs of local people. Also, through the provision of specially adapted homes for those with disabilities, Rural Housing was able to provide suitable housing for residents whose lives had been impacted by disability or illness.

Old Mill Court, Sion Mills, is the conclusive outworking and first born New Build scheme based on the 2014 published Rural Housing Design Guide, the principals of which were meticulously adhered to and applied, within this historic village.

RHA and GM Design Associates recognised the importance of achieving a sense of place and cohesion with the historic village of Sion Mills. As a village rich in built heritage, emanating from its history as a linen producer both partners worked to ensure the design and development of the scheme reflected the village's rich architectural history.

Rural Housing also aimed to generate a sense of cohesion between the new development and local residents. Through Good Relations Support from DFC and NIHE, Rural Housing developed a community relations plan for the area, which will see the implementation of community programmes promoting integration between residents of Old Mill Court and the surrounding community.

This dual approach to promoting cohesion between the new development and the surrounding community, places Rural Housing at the forefront of building sustainable rural communities. Rural Housing and partners have created a development that is truly rooted in the community and that fully achieves a sense of place within the village.

Statement from GM Design Associates:

Extensive contextual and built form historical studies have been undertaken by our Architect led team which focused on the vernacular designs, materials, form, detailing and language that is instantly recognisable at Sion Mills. These are inclusive of the historic flax mill, Sion Stables through to direct links within the Old Mill Court site, on which historic dwellings sat. These were all extensively researched and uniquely and respectfully amalgamated to create a 21st Century Social Housing proposal. The individual housetypes created at 'Old Mill Court' all contain historic references to the area and include 'The Original Cottage' - a respectful & dignified reconstruction of an original Irish vernacular farm dwelling that stood in the rear of this site and served well previous local families. With corrugated metal roof and brick detailing, this dwelling has been brought back to life, to form a bespoke new home for a person with individual needs.

Sion Stables have played a large role in the Architectural language, material selection & detailing of the scheme including the rustic brick, laid using an English bond and flush mortar joints throughout. This had helped realize our vision of the 'The Stables' Housetype which is set at the entrance, and again within the heart of the scheme. Other historic building connections include 'The Gateway Building', 'The Big House', 'The Big Barn', 'The Long House', 'The Cottages' and others, which have all been carefully organized and sited to form the 14 Unit scheme in the heart of this established residential area in Sion Mills.

Outcomes and achievements

Old Mill Court, Sion Mills is a development which has truly achieved a sense of place within the village of Sion Mills. From project inception, Rural Housing Association and GM Design Associates worked to develop a scheme that would blend into the surrounding community, whilst reflecting the rich historical context of the village. Through the selection of materials and inclusion of design features that reflect the historical buildings within the village, Rural Housing and GM Design Associates have achieved a scheme that reflects the history of the village whilst fitting unobtrusively into the surrounding community.

As a 'Housing for All' shared neighbourhood, Old Mill Court has a clear social purpose. Through the establishment of an advisory group represented by community and statutory agencies working within Sion Mills, Rural Housing has developed a plan of action to promote integration between tenants and the surrounding community. Key achievements in the area of community relations has included the delivery of a health & wellbeing project for seniors living within Sion Mills, engagement initiatives with the local primary school to raise awareness of the benefits of shared neighbourhoods and a tenant welcome event to generate a sense of belonging to the wider community.

Castleguard Manor, Ardee, Co. Louth

Tuath Housing



Statement of support

Castleguard is nominated for this award because it has delivered 102 high quality family homes via a modern method of construction in just over one year. It is development that has ticked all the boxes in a housing crisis including volume, value for money and rapid delivery. We need more Castleguards!

Tuath in partnership with Louth County Council maximised the opportunity to provide much needed homes for families in a town with a high demand for housing in a quick, efficient manner. The development has showcased the developer/manufacturers product as a means of delivering newbuild homes quickly and as a result many Local Authorities/Developers have visited Castleguard to see this factory-built structure being brought to life and enjoyed by our residents. Due to the success of this project and the

rapid delivery of these homes we are now working on additional developments with this manufacturer.

The entire Castleguard development was handed over to Tuath on a phases basis and tenanted within a 13-month timeframe. The opportunity for Tuath to negotiate the purchase of the entire development of 102 homes on a turnkey basis in a time where housing waiting lists are rising was a unique one and with the support of Louth County Council it was agreed that there was sufficient demand to enable Tuath to acquire all 102 homes at this location. Castleguard Manor comprises of 102 (2,3 and 4 bed) houses which are now occupied by families from Louth County Council's housing list. The Council under their disability strategy also sought to house people from their list and were able to do so by working with the Association & the developer to deliver purpose-built homes for families where one member has a specific disability. This has had a profound and positive impact on these families living in Castleguard who had thought their needs would never be catered for within a family development where their children can grow up like all others. This is full integration at its best. Nine of the 4 bed houses were adapted to suit people with disabilities.

The Association have also partnered with service providers including the Health Service Executive & Praxis to ensure the needs of the tenants living in these properties are met and that they are supported throughout their tenancy. Our expertise is in housing and by staying true to our core principles we sought the expertise of others for the specialist services required. This is good practice as its most effective.

The Castleguard development is located in Ardee town and has good transport links with a regular bus service on the doorstep of the development. In the wider community there is a variety of amenities including shops, schools amongst many other community and sports facilities and retail amenities.

A cohesive multi-cultural community who are supported and support each other has already been established within the development with an active resident's association who engage with all members of the development and hold culturally diverse activities to ensure inclusion. Events are held on a large central communal area for residents to utilise and already there have been getting to know your neighbour events, clean up days and cultural events. The residents committee at Castleguard played an integral part in the organisation of Ireland's largest ever tenant engagement day which Tuath held for over 1000 tenants at Tayto Park in August 2019. The residents in Castleguard wanted to ensure this event happened and lead on the organisation, sponsorship and logistics of a very successful day for all.

The Council were willing to support such a large number of family homes because this development was a fantastic opportunity to deliver a large number of homes quickly. They also had faith in Tuath to deliver on our housing management promises. A recent independent survey carried out in the

Castleguard development shows that 100% of tenants are happy with their accommodation and the service the Association provide.

Barry O'Leary, Chief Executive Officer at the Housing Finance Agency noted that they are *"very pleased to support this substantial development by Tuath in Castleguard Manor. The availability of low cost, long term, fixed rate finance from the HFA continues to support the strong growth in activity by Tuath and other approved housing bodies across the country, as we work together to achieve the objectives set out in Rebuilding Ireland."*

Chief Executive of Louth County Council, Joan Martin commented; *"Louth County Council are delighted to partner with Tuath Housing Association and other Approved Housing Bodies to jointly meet the social housing need in Louth. We particularly welcome this development as it meets a large range of needs such as homelessness and disability as well as providing lifetime homes for many families with connections to the Ardee area"*.

Outcomes and achievements

The residents in Castleguard have achieved so much in such a short period of time. Tenant involvement has been a key part of establishing and maintaining a settled, inclusive and viable community and this has been encouraged and established in this housing development. Tenants are encouraged to share their experiences and comment on the service in order for improvements to be made. This development and allocation of 102 family homes on a phased bases have ensured tenants have been given time at each stage to get settled. Our Housing Services Co-ordinator was on hand at every phase to ensure families settle into their new homes easily and assisted those who needed extra help.

This development has provided accessible high-quality accommodation with dwellings built to A3 standard with solar panels and an energy efficient gas boiler system installed as standard. The development is environmentally friendly in that the materials used ie steel is 100% recyclable and due to the factory build has little impact on the living ecosystem. This is also

a 'dry' system, which means there is no need to use (often limited) water resources for mixing cement or other materials. Other sustainable benefits include a reduce carbon footprint, less man hours, speed of delivery and all without compromising the quality of the homes built. Long-term building maintenance costs are also reduced.

The Castleguard development is an excellent example of accommodation for low income families in a high-density area. It houses a range of families who enjoy living within a well-designed development where the community is at the heart of its success. It enhances the people who live there and encourages residents to participate in the community to achieve a better place to live. It was provided at best value, achieved delivery in just over a year and housed 102 families some with complex needs.

Castleguard is best in class for delivery, scale, value, tenant engagement, cultural diversity and inclusion. It is a worthy winner...

Gilmartin Road Regeneration, Tuam, Co. Galway

Vincent Hannon Architects



Statement of support

Client: Galway County Council

Following extensive public consultation & display of proposed designs throughout late 2015/early 2016, Galway County Council engaged Vincent Hannon Architects in July 2016 to further develop the findings from the public consultation process, formulate detailed designs, progress the planning application process and publish tenders.

€8 million was successfully secured through Galway County Councils application to the Department of Housing Planning & Local Governments, Rebuilding Ireland Programme.

The brief required the regeneration of the area encompassing Cloontooa Road, St. Enda's Avenue and Gilmartin Road which comprised of 30 dilapidated houses, in two distinct developments, which were synonymous with antisocial behaviour and high levels of long term vacancy.

Low maintenance brickwork entrance & aluminium fascia with P.V panels on roof.

Rachel Lowe, Engineer, Galway County Council, "One of the biggest challenges was to eliminate the issue of antisocial behavior plaguing the area. Vincent Hannon Architects's design eliminated alleyways, introduced a flow and cohesiveness through good spatial design strategy and importantly gave residents back pride and community ownership"

The outcome was the creation of 61 exceptional, modern homes and two new communities, Cuil Ghreine (Nook of the Sun), and Gort an Chlair, (Level Land).

The new layout comprised of;

- 40 high quality and affordable new homes.
- 21 high standard renovations to existing houses.

Rachel Lowe, said of the design, " What impressed us most about the chosen submission from Vincent Hannon Architects was the clarity and sharpness, the clear aesthetic appeal which was reflective of need for modern houses for the current era"

Gilmartin Road is an extremely successful community led urban renewal which has delivered a larger site footprint OF 1.25 hectares by removing the 30 homes in poor condition.

- 15% of this space is dedicated to open and amenity space which are enclosed by homes to maximise the public open space while eliminating spaces where antisocial behaviour previously occurred.
- Increased private open spaces.
- Turning the corners of the site maximised the amenity and energy efficiencies. This is achieved by incorporating corner windows into home design and placing single storey units in the site corners.
- Maintenance free aluminium canopies and gutters were integrated around the front porches complimented by a brickwork facade.

Innovative Spatial Strategy maximising site corners integration to development

Galway County Councils rigorous environmental policies were applied to the Gilmartin Road project to ensure a minimal impact on the surroundings and maximise sustainable design.

To adhere to the GCC polices the following overall methodology was adopted;

- Lean: Energy efficiency in design and use.
- Clean: Optimise energy supply infrastructures using Low Carbon strategies.
- Green: Where cost permitted, utilisation of renewable energy sources.

This resulted in the use of the following materials, policies and processes;

- Passive Design approach to maximise natural light and ventilation.
- Selection of low embodied energy building materials and thorough waste reduction management of these during construction.
- Reduced transport of materials during construction.
- Photo-voltaic panels were installed on the roofs to generate renewable energy which generated supplementary electrical energy to compliment the other energy sources.
- PVC Windows and composite doors incorporated triple glazed glazing to maximise heat retention.
- Low flow fittings were selected for sanitary ware to conserve water.

- Modelling using Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure to examine design options and avoid potential outcomes such as overheating or stale air while ensuring an efficient and comfortable living environment based on a whole of life-cycle costs analysis.
- Sensitive landscaping design to encourage biodiversity and ensure maximum residential access and usage.

Outcomes and achievements

Return Of Community Ownership

The innovative and accessible spatial design has begun to restore community pride and values and foster a cohesive social community. This is assisted by the integrated open flowing design which promotes inclusivity.

Full Occupancy Levels

As many as 20 homes would have been previously vacant whereas all 61 units are currently occupied or in the process of being occupied. This has greatly assisted in reducing the number of families waiting on Galway County Councils Housing register and drastically improved the aesthetic character of the area.

Increase in Property Values

Local auctioneers have reported the value of properties in the vicinity of the development increasing and an upturn in mixed public and private purchasing. According to the Irish property price register, property prices have increased 100% between 2017 and 2019 on Gilmartin Road.

Better Environmental Outcomes

Thermal efficiencies have been updated in all 21 renovated homes with all doors, windows and levels of insulation now upgraded and air tight construction in new constructions, resulting in less energy usage and reduced bills for residents.

Better Living Quality

Residents living experience is enhanced with natural light and good air quality throughout each new and regenerated home which now feature increased private exterior space and integrated public space.

Excellence in customer service

sponsored by **apex**

This award recognises organisations who can demonstrate customer service excellence in the areas of practice and innovation.

Welfare Advice Service

Radius Housing



Statement of support

As a response of welfare reform Radius developed an in-house welfare advice service, employing two welfare advice officers to assist our tenants to access advice and information in a timely manner and to assist with benefit advice, advocacy and support on a daily basis. Our advisers:

- Take time to explain benefits to our tenants tailoring advice to suit individual circumstances
- Check benefit entitlement ensuring tenants receive their full entitlements,
- Maximise income via benefit application, grant and charitable assistance;
- Assist tenants with Universal Credit (UC), explaining the process and what is expected of them throughout their claim; ensuring they are aware of possible consequences and sanctions - along with how to challenge decisions;
- Assist tenants to challenge benefit decisions, overpayments and represent at Appeal;
- Assist with budgeting, offering one to one budgeting sessions;

The welfare advice service also assists housing officers with the challenges of welfare reform, assisting with queries and facilitating training and keeping housing officers up to date with relevant changes.

The advisers sit on the Radius Welfare Reform Strategy committee providing direct input to the Association's ever evolving Welfare Reform policy. This ensures that the policy continually reflects the needs of the tenants and responds to changes in welfare reform legislation. They sit on local housing forums and liaise with other organisations, and the Department to exercise responsible influence on wider policy issues. We have taken a number of innovative approaches to reach our tenants and to assist them access information and services to help sustain their tenancy:

Pre-tenancy questionnaire

This questionnaire is about getting to know our tenants better, offering support and advice at the earliest opportunity. Welfare Reform Questionnaire: End of mitigations:

Engaging with our tenants receiving mitigations and prepare them for the end of supplementary payments in March 2020 and assisting them identify any exemptions.

Food banks / charitable organisations

The advice service works with food banks and charitable organisations providing vouchers and assisting vulnerable tenants with applications for grants, starter packs and food parcels.

Financial capability/Budget planner:

We have compiled a budget planner and resource sheet for our tenants to assist with money management and household finances offering bespoke budgeting advice.

Reaching our tenants:

Our website has been updated to include innovative ways to reach our tenants and in an effort to reach a wider audience we have leaflets available to download and a number of podcasts on welfare reform and benefits available online. We inform our tenants of impending changes and welfare issues in our newsletters. Our advice service can be contacted via phone, email, in person or by referral.

We have an outreach service at Glenabbey Community Hub with the view of extending provision to other areas. We also facilitate benefit awareness and budgeting sessions throughout NI.

The service tirelessly works towards best outcome for our tenants, continually changing to meet their needs. Our advisers take care to ensure quality assurance and a high quality confidential service that is embedded in the Association's Equality and Diversity policy.

We welcome feedback from our tenants and service users.

"we deeply appreciate how very very helpful (the adviser) has been. They were so reassuring and handled the situation in such an efficient and professional way. We really are so very grateful to them for helping us through this crisis" (tenant)

"I have found the service provided by both Cathy and Frank to be invaluable....they have helped me understand and interpret the universal credit payments and process... I believe we would all have struggled to understand welfare reform without their expert guidance." (Housing Officer)

Outcomes and achievements

The welfare advice service has secured £1.2 million income for our tenants between April - Oct 2019.

The advice services ongoing support for individual tenants has helped sustain tenancies on a long term basis, preventing rising arrears and in many cases has prevented tenancies from failing.

By taking time to explain the benefit system and tailoring advice to the individual's circumstances tenants are more in control of their situation and are more likely to engage therefore decreasing the likelihood of sanctions and suspensions being applied.

By engaging face to face with our most vulnerable tenants, we have secured grants and charitable support that they may not have been able to access otherwise.

Through our awareness sessions, the service has increased budgeting skills and knowledge of the benefit system increasing tenant confidence. At each stage of the advice process we involve the tenant, resulting in ownership of the problem and indeed ownership of the solution. The tenant becomes empowered therefore enhancing their ability to sustain the tenancy which has a positive impact on the wider community.

Excellence in Communications

sponsored by **resource**
making it happen*

This award recognises housing teams who go above and beyond to deliver truly outstanding customer service. This also includes organisations that have used an innovative approach to gain insight into their customer needs and experiences and have used this to transform service to customers.

Change of Rental Law – Student Specific Accommodation

Residential Tenancies Board



Statement of support

The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 was commenced on 4th June 2019. The new legislation introduced a range of important changes for the rental sector including bringing Student Specific Accommodation (SSA) under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). This change meant that an estimated 35,000 tenancies had to be registered with the RTB. The last time an operation of this scale was undertaken, was when the Approved Housing Bodies came under the remit of the RTB. This sector had a year to transition and register their tenancies (currently 31,000).

In comparison, the new academic year dictated that the SSA registrations would need to come into effect within a 3-month period. Even though it is the responsibility of the landlord to register the tenancies, we conducted a detail business intelligence exercise to develop a database of landlords to reach out to. This supported the range of outreach activities that we planned.

A number of landlord engagement events were held across the country to explain the new requirements and offer an opportunity to address any concerns or complex queries. Running parallel to this was a digital awareness campaign targeted at students, calling on them to familiarise themselves with their rights and responsibilities.

Changes were also made to the RTB website and our customer service staff were trained to assist resolve queries on the issues via phone, email and webchat.

This multifaceted approach enabled the RTB to reach out to as many key stakeholders as possible within the tight deadline.

Testimonials

"As the registration of our students residencies with RTB was a new responsibility to Maynooth University this year (2019) we needed significant supports in terms of understanding our new responsibilities, getting the administration requirements into place and flexibility around the initial submissions. The initial meeting with Ms Memery at Maynooth was very helpful and the follow up "industry" focused meetings with the full RTB team present and held in July at the RTB offices was particularly useful and informative. It also gave us faces and contacts which we would have no hesitation in calling on if we needed further assistance. Our Legal Advisors were also afforded a meeting separately and that became a significant help to us also as it provided them with clarity on some of the legal issues and requirement of this new legislation."

"All staff at RTB we engaged with were knowledgeable and helpful and overall we found the experience of our first registration much easier than expected initially"

Corla Mansfield - Residence Officer, Maynooth University.

"The introduction of new legislation for SSAs and the obligations on landlords was a matter of concern for our team, given we are the largest private provider of student accommodation in the country with almost 3000 bedspaces. We found that the RTB engaged with us early in the process in an open and transparent manner; they sought to provide solutions at every step in the process and were receptive to suggestions that we made. Their approach to the development of the process was pragmatic and customer focused which

enabled a partnership-style approach to putting the new systems in place. There was clear engagement at all levels of management from RTB and this direction of focus ensured that the roll out of the new process was as seamless as possible and ultimately we found it a very positive experience."

Outcomes and achievements

The key objective was to have student accommodation providers comply with the new legislation by registering their tenancies by the 15 November 2019 and to ensure that students were fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.

In total, the RTB engaged with 92 universities/ educational authorities and private student specific accommodation providers through stakeholder events. As the legislation is new, this two-way engagement was of great assistance to the RTB to get a sense of the practical application of the law in a new setting.

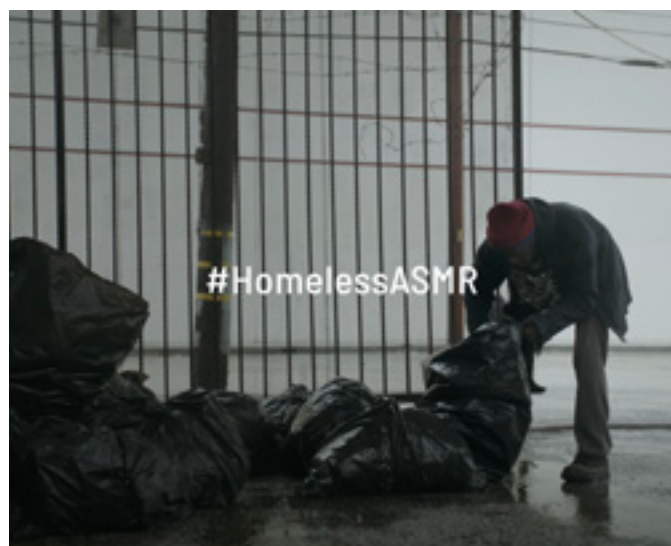
In terms of engaging with students their representative bodies the digital campaign has resulted in 1.7 million impressions with 11,864 clicks throughs. The RTB

has also updated the Good Landlord/Tenant Guide with the new legislation and has in conjunction with USI created a guide which is especially for students explaining their rights and responsibilities under the new legislation.

The registrations team has been onboarding these new providers by helping them register their tenancies. To date over 27,000 tenancies have been registered, 13,685 registrations from 14 Higher Education Institutes and 13,532 registrations from private providers representing 77% of the sector, a significant achievement in such a short space of time.

Digital First at Simon Community

Simon Community NI



Statement of support

With an investment of £16,000, Simon Community committed to embracing digital communications with the launch of a new website in November 2018. This move was integral to the charity's focus for 2019 in placing digital first. A digital persona was created - a more playful take on the corporate branding and tone of voice, which was used to provide a stronger online identity.

"Green17 have worked closely with the Simon Community team to make the website and digital platforms work to their best to increase awareness, funding opportunities and involvement from volunteers. The site now allows the public to engage with the charity outside of 3rd parties. This digital focus dramatically cuts down on the percentage of donations going to sites such as JustGiving. The new website was an innovative project that surpassed the year's targets within the first three months of activation."

(Adrian Wilson, Director at Green17 Creative Ltd)

Planning, strategy and campaign tactics:

After researching and identifying target audiences, in 2019, the charity implemented a R.A.C.E model for digital audience engagement: REACH, ACT, CONVERT, ENGAGE.

The strategy focused on

- Generating leads and actions e.g. donations and calls to helpline
- Building a digital brand
- Reaching new audiences

Using the R.A.C.E approach, 'Digital First' became the focus of the communications team. In the first year, the key digital priority actions included:

- SEO: Regular and relevant web content (news, stories, blogs, statements, events) was used to keep the website fresh and topical. By matching keywords

to audience groups, overhauling 'Almost' first pages on Google Search, focusing on video content and backlinks, and partnering with external agencies, the charity performed above benchmark, displayed in top search results for key terms and increased likelihood of external referencing from journalists and organisations.

- Conversion Rate Optimisation: by introducing shortcuts, early bird incentives and web page tools the strategy increased the percentage of visitors that took a desired action e.g. data capture forms replacing pdf downloads
- Social Media: the charity moved away from a curator approach of external content and produced Simon brand material. Social budgets were allocated for audience growth, campaigns and video production initiatives. Working with staff in other areas of the charity, social media photography training was delivered to encourage impact documentation.
- Email: by delivering personalisation for audiences, offering incentives to open and click email links and using external mailing lists (paid for and sector), the charity aimed to reach new audiences and engage with them via e-newsletters over traditional print.
- Print: audience specific CTA's were included across all print (flyers, billboards and posters) to increase visits to the website and social media channels

- Influencers: the charity partnered with key personas/ businesses to better influence new audiences with the Simon brand e.g. charity partnership announcements, Instagrammers, radio presenters
- User Generated Content: by encouraging and promoting content from digital audiences, the focus was to increase cross-over opportunities for the online brand to target new audiences e.g. campaign hashtags, providing supporters with graphics for social media and having two-way conversations with followers.

Integrated campaigns have played a major role in the success of R.A.C.E and have allowed the charity to use a small budget to better reach audiences and encourage positive actions. An

example of this would be the One BIG Sleep Out 2019 campaign. With a promotional budget

of £3000, 90% of which was consumed by radio advertising, learning from analytics and social

insights were used to deliver audiences to the online event registration form. Using mixed

social media and rich video content alongside social media influencer relationships, the online

Simon brand was able to deliver 35% of web page traffic via social media activity.

Outcomes and achievements

'Digital First' impacts include:

- 95% increase in web users
- 338% increase in pageviews
- £42,500 donated online – a functionality not previously possible
- 166% increase in flagship event registrations
- 34% increase in Facebook audience
- Over 1.4million content displays across social media
- Facebook and Twitter engagement above industry standards
- One BIG Sleep Out 2018, named 'Fundraising Event of the Year' at the Institute of Fundraising NI Annual Awards
- Rethinking Homelessness campaign in partnership with Q-Radio, awarded silver at New York festivals radio awards

- Release of a digital campaign with ASMR YouTube influencers across UK, USA and Canada

"What we needed was a partner who could advise, facilitate interviews and participate fully in the multi-faceted campaign. We found that in the Simon Community. They were on hand to pitch ideas; promptly respond to enquiries and were willing to assist with the provision of the very latest statistics."
(Bob Huggins, Q Radio Head of News)

Moving forward, the communication team will progress with the strategy – allocating budget and focus to Simon's digital developments. Using analytics, the Communications team have commissioned the expertise of a digital agency and will confidently move on to stage two of the R.A.C.E model.

Excellence in health and wellbeing

sponsored by **CLANMIL**
HOUSING GROUP

This award will focus on excellence in the areas of fit for purpose housing, adaptations and services.

Dementia Friendly Homes Initiative

Housing Executive



Statement of support

Successful partnership between housing and partners in health and social care.

Following the success of the NIHE's 2018 South Down Dementia Friendly Pilot, this "Dementia Friendly Homes Initiative" has been rolled out across the whole organisation. This involves partnership working with the Alzheimer's Society and Health Trusts, engaging with other statutory, community and voluntary organisations so that people with dementia can live well for as long as possible in their homes and communities.

Testimonials

This partnership with NIHE has been an excellent way of working collaboratively with external partners to not only raise awareness of dementia but to provide simple solutions for their tenants living with dementia. The support mechanisms being provided are simple but effective (Pamela Frazer, Dementia Friendly Communities Support Manager, North & East NI);

The provision of 'Packs' particularly the Day Clock and the key rings have been a great success with tenants and families. (Stephanie McGrory, Dementia Navigator, Newry);

Usage of new and innovative approaches

Through the pilot, a 'test and learn' review resulted in a service tailored to best meet the needs of those with Dementia. Key aspects include; Referral Mechanism: Referrals are mainly through Health Trust Dementia Navigators /Memory Teams who link our Champions with their patients who are Housing Executive tenants, or with those in other tenures who require advice about housing options. We also accept self-referrals from customers and family members.

Dementia Champions, Friends and communities: Trained by the Alzheimer's Society, our champions are key to co-ordinating the Service. Over the coming months, every area will have at least 2 champions trained. They then hold workshops to ensure that all frontline staff will be Dementia friends, understanding customers' needs and complexities and how best to help them. They can also carry out workshops with community and voluntary organisations, and engage with other dementia services locally.

Once a referral is received, the Champion visits the customer with their Patch Manager/ Housing Advisor, to discuss and plan for their current and future housing needs. For our tenants and those receiving housing options advice, a dementia friendly pack is offered, and possible adaptations to sustain tenure considered, along with signposting to other local services.

Dementia Friendly Packs: During the pilot we sought feedback on the living aids included in our packs, and these now include;

- A dementia friendly telephone: designed to accommodate people with limited dexterity, poor vision, and memory loss.
- A Dementia friendly 2-in-1 Calendar Clock: with large display, auto-adjusting brightness, contrasting background and capability to display simple text e.g. 'today is Monday'
- Dry-wipe Reminder Board and Pen
- Colour contrasting key fobs with labels
- Documents and guides: including a visitors book for the customer's home

Dementia Friendly Maintenance and Adaptations: During the home visit, with the customer's permission, the Champion considers if/how the home might be adapted to prevent the customer from becoming homeless or unable to remain in their home. If it is not our property, grants will be signposted and/

or the customer assisted to make a rehousing application. For Housing Executive tenants, through our maintenance department, we ensure that a range of dementia friendly minor adaptations, such as colour contrasting grab rails and toilet seats, lever taps, door enhancements, glass fronted kitchen cabinets, are available without OT referral, and that major adaptations are considered where appropriate. Dementia friendliness is also considered in the outdoor space where possible.

Follow-up: An alert (added to our customer records, with permission) to allow contact in a way that most suits them and their family, taking account of their needs (e.g. for preparing for scheme work, arranging repairs etc), and keeping customers updated on local Dementia services.

Outcomes and achievements

Positive outcomes

The project outcomes and achievements include;

- NIHE has worked collaboratively and developed strong working links with the Alzheimer's Society and the Trusts to improve health and well-being outcomes for customers living with dementia in our homes and communities.
- We have developed an innovative pack with a number of daily living aids, and secured funding for a minimum of 570 of these to be purchased within this financial year in order to roll out service across all of NI (equating to investment of £65,000), and made available dementia friendly minor adaptations which are funded through our maintenance budget.

- To date we have provided the advice and assistance service and dementia friendly packs to 41 customers
- Carried out minor adaptations to 14 properties
- Trained over 20 Dementia champions with the Alzheimer's Society, with at least 32 to be trained by February
- Delivered Dementia Friend workshops bespoke to housing related services, to make over 70 staff dementia friends, with an estimated 1,100 to become friends within the next year.
- Developed a communications plan to launch and raise awareness off the service in each area, including Dementia Friendly posters and bookmarks.

Saving Lives: Naloxone Administration for Overdose Victims

Housing Executive



Statement of support

The Housing Executive is the Regional Housing Authority for NI and we have a statutory duty to deal with homelessness. Our front line staff provide

an outstanding service to the most vulnerable in our society and are highly skilled in dealing with vulnerable homeless clients. Homeless applicants call to our offices seeking assistance at a point of crisis in their lives and on a daily basis we have to assist clients who can present to us in a very vulnerable state, often under the influence of severe drug and alcohol misuse. We have a high tolerance policy and always try to assist clients even when their behaviours are very challenging. Our Belfast City Centre office in particular is visited by large numbers of clients with severe addiction issues and a number of overdose incidents have sadly occurred in our front office in recent months which resulted in emergency services being called to save peoples lives.

Our front line staff (including our security personnel) wanted to do more than just call emergency services and they wanted to be equipped to deal with overdose issues as soon as they occurred in order to save lives. Staff requested training in the administration of Naloxone (an injection which reverses the effects of narcotic drugs) and the Regional manager sourced training from Extern for our front line staff. An astonishing 23 staff put themselves forward to undertake this rigorous one day training course in October 2019 and we were informed we were the first organisation (outside the health sector) who have ever undertaken this training. Our Belfast and Lisburn front line offices are now skilled to provide an immediate emergency response to overdose situations and we know this will ultimately

save lives. The Housing Executive is very proud to be the first non health professional organisation to skill their staff in Naloxone administration and we remain fully committed to doing all we can to help our most vulnerable clients in their hour of need.

Chris Rintoul, Extern Drug and Alcohol consultant stated: "Thanks again for your initiative in sending NIHE staff to the overdose response/naloxone training. It was a pleasure to work with all 23 for the day. 2 of

them were from NIHE's Lisburn office and the rest from Adelaide St. I said at the time that it has proved difficult to provide the training and supply naloxone to those working in statutory orgs. such as PSNI, Councils, Prison Service etc. Even when the need is so obvious. In fact NIHE are the 1st non-health statutory service to take the plunge and skill their staff up to respond to opioid overdose."

Outcomes and achievements

The Housing Executive now have 23 staff fully trained in the administration of Naloxone. Supplies of the drug are now kept at the counters in Belfast and Lisburn offices with fully trained staff available to respond to opioid overdoses if they occur in these offices. Lisburn and Belfast offices are the first housing offices in NI to be able to provide this service and staff are now trained to not only recognise the signs of a drug overdose, but to also react in the appropriate

way to save lives by administering Naloxone and CPR. Housing Executive front line staff who work with homeless clients already go over and above the call of duty to assist the most vulnerable in our society and they are now the first ever non-health professionals trained in this life saving response. I have no doubt the teams will save lives in the future.

All Fraoch Housing Development, Belmullet, Co. Mayo

Irish Wheelchair Association



Statement of support

Irish Wheelchair Association has a vision of an Ireland where people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, choices and opportunities in how they live their lives, and where our country is a model worldwide for a truly inclusive society.

A need was identified for independent living houses for people with disabilities living in the rural areas of Erris Co. Mayo

Following extensive lobbying by IWA and in conjunction with Mayo County Council IWA utilised funding of €1.25 million through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) to finance the An Fraoch housing development.

The development consisting of 7 houses located near the Blacksod Bay shoreline on the edge of Belmullet Town. There is a mix of detached and semi-detached houses and the street scape is in keeping with the adjoining properties creating a sense of individuality in a community context.

The IWA design team, Occupational Therapist (OT) and Access Advisory Group worked closely with the tenants to identify their current and future housing requirements which later informed the design.

The development has an Open Plan appearance to the front of the houses, common areas and driveways throughout the development.

IWA tenancies are long-term and the houses are designed to support people with physical disabilities to continue to live independently, supported by assistive technology, formal 24/7 supports and accessible design. Tenants living independently access local services, integrate with and contribute to the local community and economy.

IWA has an adjacent Resource & Outreach Centre to the housing development, which is an integral element of the local Belmullet community and is utilised and supported by local community groups from the greater Erris Area.

The tenants have the option of taking part in activities and of seeking support from IWA's Housing Liaison Officer who is based in the Centre. Tenants of this development are provided with level access to the front door, offering canopy shelter for ease of access

on door opening. Tenants have a key fob which enables them to open the door electronically and with ease as they approach.

Internal Structures

The houses consist of 2 bedrooms, Bathroom, Kitchen and Living Area

The low window heights facilitate wheelchair users to have a clear view outside.

The houses have enough internal circulation space to navigate all areas of the house with ease and store mobility and medical equipment. Using their remote controls tenants can activate light switches and plug sockets, open and close internal and external doors, windows and curtains. They also have an electronic height adjustable kitchen worktop and wardrobe rail to facilitate dual use by wheelchair users and ambulant guests such as personal assistants. Assistive technology reduces dependence on others for assistance, including informal and formal support and increases independence. It also reduces the costs of a personal assistant service as less supports are required.

The second bedroom facilitates a personal-assistant to stay overnight enabling the tenants to live independently in the community. An accessible footpath was created into town for local services.

The houses are lifetime adaptable e.g. structural provision is made for the installation of ceiling racking hoists in the master bedroom if required. An intercom system allows tenants to identify visitors remotely and grant access.

Underfloor heating is installed with Air to Water heat pumps as the primary heat source together with high levels of thermal insulation and triple glazing, this being installed to achieve A3 Energy rating. For many people with disabilities their only source of income is the Disability Allowance and therefore their disposable income is limited. The A3 energy rating will ensure their energy costs are significantly reduced compared to housing of a lower energy rating.

Outcomes and achievements

ICSH Allianz Community Housing Awards 2019

Category Winner: Housing for People with Disabilities

Pride of Place National Awards 2019 Runner-up

Speaking at the official opening of An Fraoch, Minister for Rural & Community Development, Michael Ring TD said: *"This represents an excellent use of Government funding which will stand to the community in Belmullet for years to come. As local TD and Minister, I was glad to be able to support this worthwhile project and it gives me great satisfaction to see it come to fruition. These homes will really improve people's quality of life and will give comfort and peace of mind to the families*

of those who live here. I commend the Irish Wheelchair Association for these wonderful homes and for the great work they do to support people with physical disabilities here in Mayo."

Teresa Gaughan: (Tenant)

"The changes it has made to my life are immeasurable. The house is fully wheelchair accessible, I can do normal everyday things. At the press on a button I can open a door, a window. At press of a button I can open the wardrobe and the level of the wardrobe the clothes will come them to my level. My heart is definitely in this home."

Excellence in housing innovation

sponsored by **clúid housing**

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.

The Mews

Choice Housing Ireland Ltd



Statement of support

The Mews, Belfast, is a new model of supported living. Providing 12 homes, the scheme was commissioned to resettle adults with serious learning disabilities and mental health issues from Muckamore Abbey Hospital, some of whom had been institutionalised for over 30 years.

Due to the complexity of need and challenging behaviour of the client group it was established that there was no existing suitable accommodation. It was clear that a bespoke supported living scheme was required to enable the transition from long term hospital stay to living in a community environment. Residents at The Mews were the last remaining residential patients in the hospital.

The Mews showcases innovation in supported living through design features and assistive technologies. It is the thoughtful design and creative approach to support that has enabled service users to finally live within a community setting.

Choice worked in partnership with a number of key stakeholders to bring this scheme to fruition, including Cedar Foundation, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, NIHE and Supporting People. The accommodation

was designed by JNP architects and constructed at a total cost of £1,631,985. Grant funding of £994K was provided by the Department for Communities. The remaining was sourced through private finance by Choice.

It was important after long term hospital care that the service users enjoy the privacy and independence of their own home in self-contained accommodation. Due to the complexity of need in the proposed client group, each home was carefully designed for a specific service user. These designs include creative adaptations which go well beyond expectations and offer not only a safe home environment but maximise independence while meeting sensory, functional and behavioural requirements. Electronic assistive technology is integral to the scheme assisting residents and staff to live and work with safety, security and independence. The use of this technology has also ensured a greater sense of dignity for the residents, by reducing the level of staff supervision required whilst also safeguarding health, for example;

- Staggered doorways have been installed in communal spaces to reduce the likelihood of tenants coming into direct face-to-face contact with others which may trigger certain behaviours.
- Externally, each residence has been provided with a secured terrace space for access outdoors which takes into account their sensory and behavioural requirements and needs.
- One home has been designated as anti-ligature accommodation, with fixtures and fittings, including kitchen and bathroom installations, specified to provide a safe and secure living environment for a nominated resident.

Some residents require assistance from care staff for certain aspects of daily living, including personal care, cooking and shopping. The increased size of each unit means that bathrooms and kitchens are more generously proportioned to allow these activities to be carried out with ease. For example, increased kitchen space has encouraged meal preparation and laundry tasks to be undertaken primarily by the residents, aided by staff.

Given the complexity and variety of need, access to intensive support from dedicated personnel is essential. The Cedar Foundation are delighted that

their staff provide 24-7 support are now availing of a safe, comfortable secure work environment.

Catherine O'Callaghan, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust;

"Choice has given these individuals the opportunity to enjoy every day experiences that the general population take for granted, for example, having your

own front door and a small garden area, space to have family and friends to visit and opportunity to access community facilities. The attention to detail has been meticulous. There is no doubt that these service users would be still in hospital if this accommodation had not been provided. These homes have maximised their quality of life."

Outcomes and achievements

The Mews has marked a significant step forward in the support of adults with learning disability whose needs challenge traditional services. These individuals now live within their community outside of a hospital setting. While this alone is an incredible achievement, the service users themselves have expressed what their new homes have meant for them:

(CR) *"The best things about living at The Mews are the activities that I get to do and the places that I get to visit."*

(JLW) *"I like it, I get to have my own space and I get to do loads of activities."*

(GO) *"The best thing is I have my own space, have my own furniture, I can cook my own meals and I like doing my own shopping. I can go on outings when I want. I like all my support staff."*

Maurice Kane- Belfast HSC Trust

"The Mews is remarkable in that it supports some of the most challenging people cared for by the Belfast Trust, within the community in a traditional living environment, as opposed to remaining in hospital. It has demonstrated that an innovative approach to the model of support combined with a sensitive bespoke design can transform lives."

Arus Mhuire Rightsizing Housing Project

Cork City Council



Statement of support

The Arus Mhuire 'Rightsizing' initiative is a unique 30-unit housing scheme, procured and developed by Cork City Council to provide a sustainable housing solution for older persons who were living in housing stock (both social housing and private) which was no longer suitable due to layout, size, location or physical condition, and to provide 'right size' and age friendly

accommodation. 'Rightsizing' is an older person's active, positive choice to move home as a means of improving their quality of life. There is no reason that finding people's last house should be any less exciting than finding their first.

Integrated with its social housing and private downsizing schemes, this project was targeted to fill a gap in the provision of housing the elderly whilst also, freeing-up existing homes for younger families. The project managed the transfer of occupants from their original over-sized homes releasing these additional houses for uptake by younger families - a sustainable and innovative solution and a model for future housing provision.

Located in a mature residential suburb to the south east of Cork City Centre, this project entails the provision of a sheltered housing scheme designed with regard to Lifetimes Homes Standards, so are suited to people with a wide range of needs and are readily adaptable. The residential mix consists of 11 no. 1-bedroom and 19 no. 2-bedroom dwellings, in 10 no. single-storey 1/2-bedroom houses and 20 no. 1/2-bedroom apartments in 2-storey blocks. A communal courtyard is at the heart of the scheme, which is secure, sunny and animated, designed to receive afternoon sun, surrounded by seating both in the courtyard and at dwelling entrances and first floor balconies to encourage social interaction, creating a sense of place for residents and visitors alike, and also providing operational benefit in terms of passive surveillance. All houses and apartments are accessed off this space. All accommodation is at dwelling entrance level for maximum accessibility, and each

unit has a private outdoor space, whether small back garden or balcony. The majority of units are own-door, with entrances recessed and covered and emphasized using colour contrast.

The development enjoys quality public transport, pedestrian, cycling and private car links, and is within easy walking distance of a range of amenities and services, including shops, healthcare facilities and a popular local amenity walk.

Sustainability was also key - design interventions covering security, access, energy efficiency and life-long living combined with options for care and support plans in place make this development unique and original, an example for the future filling the gap identified. All dwellings have BER ratings of at least A3, are well-insulated, have quality double-glazed aluclad windows and doors, utilise efficient gas boilers, and have photovoltaic panels, making living costs for residents low whilst comfort levels are high.

The project also addresses the problem of isolation and loneliness which should yield health benefits for the immediate community and provides a social mix and long term boost to the economy in the wider community by locating the secure facility in a recently developed area with lots of young families, the location is very much alive.

Tuath Housing manages the development on Cork City Council's behalf, who work closely with both the tenants and Cork City Council to ensure effective and efficient housing management. Pre-tenancy training was provided to all tenants and tenant involvement has been a key part of establishing and maintaining a settled, inclusive and viable community and this has been encouraged and established. Tenants are encouraged to share their experiences and comment on the service in order to continually improve.

Outcomes and achievements

This development transformed a linear derelict site with one bungalow into an innovative housing solution which provides "rightsizing" homes to older people, which in turn has freed up 30 additional homes for younger families at times of high demand for social housing.

There has been a very positive and sustained public and media reaction to the project resulting in a strong demand for more similar schemes across the City and the Council has learned from this exercise and has included a range of similar schemes in its future plans - with four schemes projected for delivery in the period 2020-2021. A survey of the Council's existing housing stock is identifying significant potential to increase capacity of housing stock through similar innovative schemes.

Arus Mhuire has allowed older families to relocate within their immediate community to more suitable accommodation, creating a new community within their own community. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement throughout the process was a vital ingredient to its success, and the use of the unique Competitive Dialogue procurement procedure allowed the Council to achieve great value for money with the project particularly in terms of its strategic and desirable location on a southside hub. Going forward, the cost of ownership has been reduced in terms of energy and design efficiencies. The Council and its stakeholders have been blessed with this project; it ticks all the boxes.

Excellence in the private rented sector

sponsored by  **DfC**
Department
for Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

This award recognises organisations or individuals who provide a quality service within the private rented sector.

Tenancy Protection Service

Threshold



Statement of support

Threshold has a proven track record in supporting those most at risk of homelessness in Ireland for over 40 years. By far the most impactful and cost effective solution is to stop homelessness from happening in the first place. For nearly every family who enters emergency accommodation, this will be their home for the next 10 months- and this will cost the State a staggering €31,000 per family. But Threshold can prevent the same family from becoming homeless for only €340.

In the last year alone, we saved over 5,100 families from the chaos of homelessness. This equates to more than 11,000 people- more than are currently homeless across the whole country. We have developed and honed specific expertise in the rental sector. Our housing advisors, through our unique, in-depth and bespoke training are amongst the most knowledgeable in the sector. We constantly upskill our advisors to ensure we remain the rental specialists, and best placed to be a voice, and act for those in rented accommodation. Over 40 years we have developed a range of innovative services which support those at risk. We deliver these services to those who need

it most, when, and where they need it most. This means last year we supported over 75,000 people through our freephone number and over 210,000 sought information and advice from our website. We provide vital face to face support and advice in 9 locations in Dublin, Galway, Cork, Limerick, Tralee, Ennis, Mayo and we are currently working to increase our outreach and community presence. Threshold has built up partnerships with a number of State and other partners and to magnify our reach and impact we provide onsite training and support to staff of a number of organisations and companies across the country. To respond to trends and increasing demand we have enhanced our support provided to people through direct legal representation at the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). This has led to significantly better outcomes for clients at both. Through this we have now also begun a formal partnership with Arthur Cox which will see another extension of our legal representation services. Our policy work and constant campaigning has contributed to a number of legal and policy changes which have benefited and strengthened the rights of renters in Ireland. We will continue to innovate and be leaders in the sector by providing the best possible range and quality of services and outcomes for all those who need our help. Please see a link to what some people have said about us here: <https://www.threshold.ie/at40/testimonials/>

Here is just one of those 5,161 stories: "Alexandra and her 2 children had lived happily in their rented home for over 4 years. The agent she dealt with changed and without warning Alexandra received a 7 day notice for alleged anti-social behaviour. Alexandra was shocked, having never had any problems or difficulties in the entire time she had been in her home. She was terrified, not knowing what would happen in 7 days. Fortunately Alexandra rang Threshold. An advisor looked at the notice and was able to tell Alexandra it was invalid. However, the agent persisted in trying to evict Alexandra. With the help of Threshold she lodged a dispute with the RTB, where we represented her and the notices were found invalid. Alexandra has been able to remain in her home".

Outcomes and achievements

Our primary measure of success is the number of people we save from the chaos of homelessness- last year this was over 11,000 people from 5,161 households.

- Our Tenancy Protection service has the unique capacity to seek an enhanced rent supplement payment for a household in receipt of rent supplement and facing a rent increase if they are at risk of homelessness in Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Cork City and its immediate surrounding areas, and Galway city.
- Our Cork Access Housing Unit developed our formal Pre-Tenancy Programme and we are now using this Programme with our clients to enable them develop the skills and knowledge they require to secure and sustain tenancies in the Private Rental Sector.
- Our new client case management database and integrated telephone system enables us to provide our clients with a single point of contact. It has also enabled us to gather and analyse data from our services to inform both the development of our services and the policy positions we advocate.
- Continued delivery of a second tier support service to the Citizens Information Centres.
- Greater formal representation at the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and social welfare hearings
- To respond to greatly increasing demand we have established new outreach services in Kerry and Limerick in 2019.

Raising standard in private rented sector

TDS Northern Ireland



Statement of support

The private rented sector in Northern Ireland is a changing and growing sector that has seen many changes over the years. The Tenancy Deposit Schemes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 were introduced in April 2013 and changed how tenancy deposits were handled by letting agents and landlords. The introduction of the deposit protection schemes provides a mechanism for tenants to ensure their money is safe and to allow them to dispute unfair charges quickly, easily and for free.

Deposit protection and access to free dispute resolution is now the norm for property professionals and helps improve their everyday practises. It is for them to justify their deductions so to be prepared it is

essential to, amongst other things, keep strong audit trails, accurate inventories, and check-in/check-out reports. TDS Northern Ireland has a strong focus on education and promoting good practise within the private rented sector to raise its standard and provide a professional service among landlords, letting agents and tenants. This proactive approach has included public and individual training, training in conjunction with other organisations within private rented sector and attending over 100 industry events. The promotion of good practise and delivery of education has seen changes within the sector and raised standards, with the tenant's expectations of service provided by letting agents and landlords. Tenants now expect correct documentation to be provided and standard of accommodation to be accounted for. This has been achieved by engaging private rented sector and promote higher standards of care from landlords. The transparency and openness of transactions between tenants and landlords has improved the private rented sector while safeguarding tenants and providing avenue for recovering of deposits rather than facing arduous process of going through court.

The dedicated team in Belfast provides guidance and support to tenants, landlords and letting agents on issues throughout the dispute process. While services are provided online allowing for 24/7 access to guidance, deposit repayments and dispute process TDS Northern Ireland has a Belfast based call centre to assist with queries. The team prides itself on providing excellent customer service and using a dynamic approach in delivering services and improving sector. TDS Northern Ireland provides the only online self-resolution tool to allow parties to negotiate and resolve any disputes, the introduction of moratorium process has proven a successful tool with 50% of disputes entering this process resolved. Reducing the need for processing evidence and speeding up repayment of deposit funds as parties reach a mutual agreement.

TDS Northern Ireland strives to improve the private rented sector and works collaboratively with other industry parties including CIH, Housing Rights, Propertymark, RICS, Office of Fair Trading, University bodies, Simon Community and landlords association to promote good practise and education to raise standards within the sector. As part of collaborative work, we have been involved with projects with Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and University of Ulster. These research project engage and provide insight into the private rented sector, allowing for further improvements and recommendations for the future and enhance the professional services available. This includes (below) a comprehensive tenant research

survey on tenant's experience in private rental, we are also in process of conducting a current survey on landlords and tenants' experiences of private rented sector.

- <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/getmedia/7e0c7ded-d70e-48cc-979d-3c9ce81bd327/tenant-deposit-scheme-survey.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf>

We publish extensive educational material for tenants, landlords and agents via our website and social media including a deduction template to assist with end of tenancy process. These documents are there to assist with delivery of a comprehensive tenancy and smooth transition of deposit refund at end of tenancy.

Outcomes and achievements

TDS Northern Ireland has achieved great success within the private rented sector in promoting improvements within the industry and providing educational training courses to tenants and landlords, providing information on legislation and tenant/ landlord obligations. The delivery these training events including contributed professional development qualified course for letting agents has seen changes over 6 years to industry and a change in attitude from landlords in providing a professional service. This professional service and transparency for tenants provides reassurance and security in knowing their deposit is protected. TDS Northern Ireland has been successful in delivering these changes and been recognised regionally and nationally with several awards, CIHNI awards, ESTA industry supplier awards. As part of our commitment to promoting

improvements within private rented sector TDS Charitable Foundation has awarded the University of Ulster Students Unions £5,146 to train and equip student officers on housing matters, while providing additional funding throughout the UK.

- [http://tdsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TDS-Charitable-](http://tdsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TDS-Charitable-Foundation-Annual-Review-2019_Final_Interactive.pdf)

[Foundation-Annual-Review-2019_Final_Interactive.pdf](http://tdsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/TDS-Charitable-Foundation-Annual-Review-2019_Final_Interactive.pdf)
The outstanding achievement of TDS Northern Ireland to protect over 82% of Northern Irelands deposits and demonstration of commitment of staff and diverse work within sector. At TDS Northern Ireland we feel we deliver changes to sector and achieve a common goal of providing excellence within our service.

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.

One Voice Together

Ark Housing Association



Statement of support

The One Voice Together project (OVT), was a three-way initiative between Ark Housing Association, Upper Springfield Development Trust Youth Team and Rosario Youth Club. Funded through the Together Building United Communities Fund, OVT aimed to develop a sense on inclusivity and togetherness amongst a large group of young people from very different backgrounds and cultures.

Ark Housing manages two homeless services schemes for families experiencing homelessness in South and West Belfast. Although these services are temporary, in practice, some homeless households may be forced to spend a longer period of time in this situation whilst awaiting a more secure and permanent home. Families living at these schemes not only carry the trauma of being homeless, but also at times carry with them the distressing experiences and stigma associated with being homeless. These experiences can also impact the children and young people within these families. The OVT involved children from our services, those from the Upper Springfield Development Trust, and those from the nearby Rosario Youth Centre coming together to explore issues of the past and present in relation to Northern Ireland and in respect to other conflicts throughout the world that

some of our resident children had experienced. The project involved 40 young people aged 11-19 and there was a balanced mix of participants from Catholic, Protestant and other Cultural backgrounds (mainly Sudanese and Somalian).

The project was managed by 9 leaders, 6 of which were doing so on a voluntary capacity. The project was delivered between May 2019 and October 2019 and cost £15,000.

A wide range of facilitated shared activities and team building events took place which included a residential event in Ballintoy, cultural visits to the Shankill, Falls and the local Islamic Centre, and several social evenings at Roseville House.

Each participant also completed an OCN Level 1 in Diversity and Good Relations, where they had the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and their own attitudes, explore their own identity and encouraged the challenge 'the norm'.

Finally, they considered what the future might hold for them and their role in building good relations might contribute to a positive future, and they also built lasting memories and friendships through the project which we hope will endure for some time. The programme finished on 5th October this year with a celebration event and graduation ceremony.

Amarwo aged 11 - "This is the best day of my life" following her first ever surfing lesson." Sophie Aged 10 - "I have never been away on holiday before this has been amazing when can we do it again"

Mohamed Aged 10 - "I had a really fun time and made loads of new friends"

Beyond, the end of the project, the legacy continues. The young people still meet regularly and are now focussed on the issues of homelessness in Northern Ireland. They have organised a protest event at Stormont on the issue of homelessness, titled 'In our shoes' to highlight the overwhelming number of families currently homeless in NI which now numbers over 6000. In recognition of this, they have collected 6000 shoes and plan to use this as their banner or hope at the doors of Stormont.

Outcomes and achievements

The 'One Voice Together' project has delivered significant outcomes and achievements for young people in Belfast, with the main impact being the development of friendships, the change in perceptions and the positive strengthening of communities.

- The project was able to bring 40 young people aged 11-19 from different community and cultural backgrounds together to look at their own stereotypes and attitudes.
- Each young person received 110 hours of face to face engagement with staff and volunteers within the project
- The completion of an OCN Level 1 qualification in Diversity and Good Relations, helping young people in their educational development
- Young people have a better understanding and respect for cultural differences
- The project has developed sustained contact and friendships with young people from different backgrounds
- The project has created a positive attitudinal change towards people from different backgrounds
- Young people involved in the project now feel empowered and have a 'voice' to challenge perceptions and create an awareness to the issues facing homelessness in NI
- The project has developed and strengthened partnerships with Ark Housings homeless schemes and the wider community and voluntary organisations.

Housing Associations Integration Project

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations



Statement of support

Building and improving good relations within our deeply divided society continues to be a significant concern and challenge. This is particularly evidenced across social housing developments where 90% of neighbourhoods are segregated on a single identity basis. The fact is that there are now more peace walls throughout Belfast separating communities at contentious religious interfaces than there were before the Belfast agreement. However, it is not just these physical barriers that are causing concern, it is also the psychological barriers that continue to exist in the mindsets of our divided communities.

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) working with four of Northern Ireland's largest Housing Associations - Radius, Clanmil, Choice and Apex, TIDES Training and the Irish Council for Social Housing are collectively working to create opportunities to address community division and help break down the cultural and religious barriers that impact on tenants that contribute to the mistrust and misunderstanding of "others". This initiative is making a significant positive difference in the lives of participants and communities in social housing developments.

The project brings together social housing residents from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds to share experiences together, learn about differences and embrace diversity in the communities in which they live. In total 1000 social housing tenants were targeted to directly engage in community building activities within their communities and additionally engage in a wide range of opportunities for shared learning and experiences meeting and socialising with other participants from differing traditions, backgrounds and cultures. Eamon Melaugh, a tenant with Apex Housing Association, stated: "Having participated on this project, I completely relate to the aims of the Housing Associations Integration Project and I'm delighted to see that the team working with residents across Northern Ireland and the border counties. They are working to build a better society and I feel this initiative will have a huge impact on helping to bring communities together. It is important to be able to live and work well within any community."

The Community Evaluation NI conducted an independent interim evaluation of the project in May 2019. It states that;

The project has seen changes in individuals at a number of levels as follows:

- Development of confidence - in part, through the capacity building and training, but also through participants engaging with others within and outside of their own communities: 'tenants are doing things that they never thought was possible - engaging with different religions, different age groups, hearing from each other's stories ... they wouldn't have been able to do this before'.
- Willingness to engage in learning and development - for example, in one area young people who had participated in HAIP were described as 'like sponges' and in another, it was reported that residents were 'hungry for the chance to learn and debate'.
- Knowledge and learning about good relations issues - both from the trainer/facilitator and from each other; the accredited training in particular was seen as having provided 'an opportunity for reflection ... the learning has been incredible, very positive'.

- Demonstrating leadership and responsibility - for example, some groups were reported to be coming up with ideas for project activities and events.
- Changed attitudes - GROs reported on examples where individual participants had demonstrated - both verbally and in their actions - that they had 'changed their thinking' about 'others'.

Alfie McCrory, Choice tenant said "This project allows the residents of Cairnmartin Crescent an opportunity to get to know each other as a community to live, learn and socialise together free from prejudice and intolerance. Moving forward we hope we can meet with residents from other areas, cultures and religions, and begin to form cross border and inter-community partnerships for future working together".

Outcomes and achievements

The Housing Associations Integration Project has set very challenging and ambitious operational targets to maximise the opportunities and benefits of this innovative project which helps reinforce peace and stability. To date, the partnership has successfully delivered:

- 40 community audits completed in all participating neighbourhoods, providing unique insights into local issues in their communities.
- 35 community building events delivered attended by 1627 participants, helping to build community spirit and a sense of belonging for tenants in those areas.
- 351 tenants attending workshops to help build the local capacity and confidence of tenants
- 18 cross community/ inter community workshops delivered attended by 150 participants.

- 58 participants achieving a recognised OCN level 2 good relations qualifications
- 14 study visits and 5 cultural events delivered enabling tenants on a cross community basis to have shared learning experiences and develop their understanding of other communities' traditions and history.
- 2 community showcase events held attended by 64 participants providing the opportunity to celebrate together the achievements and journeys of those tenants involved with the project.
- 2 neighbourhoods twinned which brings together neighbourhoods to help build long term links and relations between tenants from differing backgrounds and traditions, working together on joint projects.

Radius Tenant Engagement

Radius Housing



Statement of support

Radius Area Panels have been established for 2 years with Tenant Chairs/Vice representing them at the Tenant Executive Committee along with a Tenant Board Member. In 2019/20, to date, 50 tenants have represented the views of tenants shaping service delivery by volunteering 169 hours of their time at meetings where they:

- agree priorities for service improvement
- ensure Radius is open and accountable through their “easy read scorecard” on performance of our Communities, Tenant Engagement & Assets Teams.
- act as a sounding board, leading the discussion ensuring we focus on what matters to them.

Service Improvement Groups have been created, focussing on the priorities identified by our tenants. Tenants, together with the relevant staff have completed scrutiny of our Grounds Maintenance Contract, Customer Charter, Disability Action Plan and Contractor Code of Conduct and continue to work together on service improvement in Anti-Social Behaviour, Reporting a Repair, Communal Cleaning & Communication.

Radius empowers tenants to have their say on their doorstep at Estate Walkabouts with dedicated time in the community by their Housing & Assets Officers to 10% of Radius stock annually. Support and guidance is provided to encourage the set-up of Tenant Associations with a start-up grant, support and training provided.

Tenants influence service delivery improvement by completing surveys. Seven TouchPoint Surveys have taken place about Radius services and projects such as communal cleaning, transfers and waste management through text, telephone, face to face and post. Radius commenced the Radius Experience following the customer journey of tenants from viewing their home periodically for up to five years. First results have shown Radius Experience participants’ rating Radius an average of 9.3/10 in their first 6 months of tenancy. This allows us to deep dive into the tenant experience through the various stages of their tenancy and their life whilst living in their Radius home.

Radius Community Chest offers grants from £250-£1,000 supporting the work of community groups throughout NI. £4,555 was awarded to local communities so far this financial year supporting a variety of projects including community gardens, projects tackling social isolation and community events.

The Team has engaged with USEL in a pilot which supported 27 new tenants, previously homeless, to furnish their new home with upcycled furniture helping sustain tenancies and increase workplace experience for people with disabilities. This included a waste management project with 61.2% tenants noticing improvement in the standard of their bin store since the project began.

Radius works closely with the Digital Assist Steering Group and Advice NI delivering digital training to tackle social isolation, developing new skills and promoting learning in our communities. Together with MW Advocate & Fusion, Radius at the Ritz hosted free movie showings tackling social isolation for over 55s bringing tenants together from across the country. Radius supports and develops the use of tenant skills aiding the invaluable work taking place in our communities by our tenants. Over 600 delegates were welcomed to our Tenant Forums (over 55s) and Conference (general housing) with an aim to empower tenants to use those skills to benefit their community while building relationships with staff. Those who attended said that they enjoyed “communicating with tenants and Radius staff” and the “event was fun and interesting” with 23 tenants wanting to know more on how to engage with Radius.

Radius thanked and celebrated tenants and groups who make a positive difference in their community. The Scheme Awards (over 55s) and Radius Heroes (general needs) celebrated excellence in the Good Neighbour, Community Pride, Healthy Living & Learning and Best Kept Garden Awards. Radius Board judged these awards, enhancing the connection from tenant to Board.

Outcomes and achievements

- Tenant Representation within our tenant engagement structure volunteering 169 hours over 13 meetings with elected office bearers in place:
 - 50 Tenant Area Panel Members
 - 9 Tenant Executive Committee Members
 - 1 Tenant Board Member
- Training, support and resources provided to tenants representing Area Panels, Tenant Executive Committee and Radius Board.
- Areas prioritised for service improvement:
 - Communication
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Communal Cleaning
 - Reporting a Repair
 - Customer Charter
 - Disability Action Plan
- £4,555 awarded to communities through Community Chest grants scheme
- Estate Walkabouts completed in 10% Radius stock annually.
- 600+ attendees at our annual Tenant Forums and Conference:
 - 93.75% tenants told us they learnt something new at our Tenant Conference
 - 100% of tenants told us our Tenant Conference gave them the opportunity to meaningfully engage with radius staff and 98% telling us this at our Forums.
 - 47 tenants/schemes nominated for Tenant Awards
- 25 tenants engaged in the Radius Experience sharing their journey as a tenant from their first interaction of viewing their new home.
- Working together with Aware NI, USEL, Empowering Communities, Business in the Community, Advice NI and more to encourage active learning in our communities.

This award recognises housing related initiatives that encourage the integration of people and communities from different backgrounds.

Travellers' Accommodation Action Plan

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

In March 2018, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) published an investigation into Travellers' accommodation 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers' Accommodation in NI'. This was the first major report on the subject in Northern Ireland for almost a decade and identified several concerns.

Following the report's publication, Apex Housing Association developed and implemented an action plan to address the issues raised. This action plan remains prominent within the organisation, with updates on its progress being reported to Apex's Housing Management Sub-committee on a quarterly basis.

Responsibility for implementing the action plan runs right across Apex as an organisation. It has prompted excellent collaborative working both internally and externally to ensure that the housing needs of our Traveller tenants are addressed.

Apex spoke at the NIHRC third roundtable meeting in April 2019 to showcase some of the good practice initiatives being developed in the Housing Association sector.

NIHRC Chief Commissioner Les Allamby commented:

"We would like to commend the work of Apex Housing Association who have demonstrated a commitment to human rights and equality through delivering quality and culturally adequate Travellers' accommodation in Northern Ireland. Apex have led by example in its approach to implementing the recommendations set out in our report. Apex has not shied away from learning from best practices and ensuring Travellers are at the heart of its work on this issue."

How Apex supports its Traveller tenants

'Traveller Awareness' training has been successfully developed and is delivered jointly with the Migrant Centre NI. This training for staff is delivered with a representative from the Traveller Community in the room; giving staff a genuine insight into the problems facing the community whilst also offering Travellers a voice within our organisation.

In March 2019, Apex in partnership with the Migrant Centre NI appointed a Good Relations Officer (GRO) who has worked to develop a good relations plan and will assist with a review of key policies to further improve the services we provide to Travellers.

We have embarked on an innovative pilot project in Coolcullen Meadow, Enniskillen - a development which receives 'Housing for All' support. Our Good Relations Officer works directly with all residents in the development to promote good relations and to support services, training and community events. We are also in the process of converting a property in the development into a Community Hub, to allow this invaluable work to develop further.

We have reviewed our local lettings allocations procedure for two designated group housing schemes for Travellers and this has been developed to take into account the recommendations of the NIHRC report and has been approved by the Department for Communities.

Information provided to Travellers at the start of their tenancies has also been reviewed jointly with the Migrant Centre NI. Staff meet with new tenants at their home and discuss and demonstrate heating systems etc along with the provision of an information pack. All new tenants are offered a benefits check and we are in the process of developing a list of ID requirements to further assist the sign-up process. We have also started a review of our sign-up process to ensure that Travellers are aware and understand their rights and responsibilities at the start of their tenancy.

In relation to future housing needs and requirements, Apex works with Occupational Therapists to identify adaptations that are required. In addition, we also give appropriate consideration to other requirements in terms of play areas and grazing areas in Traveller accommodation.

Traveller tenants attended and contributed to our anti-social behaviour (ASB) focus groups in September 2018 and were also invited to a follow up session in November 2019 to hear how their feedback would be incorporated into our new ASB policy and procedures.

When we do engage with Travellers and their families we achieve good outcomes by acting on what they tell us. A positive example of this is our success in dealing with Welfare Reform / Universal Credit, to ensure that our Traveller tenants are supported through this unfamiliar online process.

Outcomes and achievements

To date, 105 Apex staff members have received 'Traveller Awareness' training. This training has been added to Apex's formal training programme with refresher training delivered on a rolling three year basis.

One participant said: "As a result of the training I have a better understanding of the Traveller culture. In my role, I will be more empathetic and more aware of literacy issues when I am communicating with a tenant from the community."

The Good Relations Officer (GRO) working in Coolcullen Meadow in Enniskillen has delivered a successful programme since March 2019, including

a welcome event in May 2019 and an 'Arts Week' in July 2019, that were both well supported by the local community. These initial events have helped build relationships and laid the foundation for future events.

We have also funded a gardening project with the Radius supported living scheme opposite Coolcullen Meadow as part of the bridging aspect of the Good Relations Plan; and relationships with this scheme have greatly improved since the GRO has been in post.

Promoting Age Equality in Housing

Clúid Housing



Statement of support

The primary aim of the project is to promote Equality in Housing for older people, empowering them and tackling stigma through community engagement activities and partnership work with local community resources.

This Project is based in St Joseph's Court, Clifden, Galway and provides tenants with access to family, friends, services and support. In consultation with tenants, the project provides a wide range of services to empower them to participate more fully in events both in house, and in the wider community, ensuring they have equal access to community support services and social engagement activities. The implementation of these services is essential to their physical and mental well-being - it empowers them to live independently with respect and dignity and feel they can still positively contribute to society and that they are valued. These services provide stimulation on every level with social outlets and companionship for senior tenants. The Project works collaboratively with many wonderful organisations / agencies who are also passionate in promoting equality in housing for older people.

This Project is fortunate to receive funding which allows us to provide the following services:-

- Male Support Worker - assisting older men engage with local services, help with shopping and appointments, maintaining their apartments and encouraging and facilitating participation in events
- Events Co-ordinator - Plans and oversees events, projects, day trips and information and wellbeing days

- Computer teacher – who teaches computer and mobile phone skills on a weekly basis enabling our tenants to communicate easily with family and friends who live further afield and abroad
- Meals on Wheels – this service is available to people who are no longer able to cook and it also provides social contact
- Food Cloud – Two to three times a week tenants collect surplus food from local Aldi. It is stored in dedicated communal fridge and pantry from where residents can help themselves. This tackles food poverty on the scheme, as well as food waste.
- FAS and TUS placements - facilitates events and regularly visit tenants providing a befriending service
- Weekly hairdressing, reflexology and chiropody services / sessions.
- Night Warden Service - adds to the sense of safety and security of vulnerable tenants
- Link with local groups like Ability West, Active Retirement Group, transition year students and national school children to provide social inclusive inter-generational, well-being and fun events both in-house and in the community

The Project runs wonderful Health and wellbeing programmes, these include information days run in conjunction with local gardai and PHN, low impact exercise classes for e.g chairobics and regular walks. There are weekly coffee mornings, respite breaks, day trips, art and craft classes, fundraising events, Bealtaine / culture night events, social inclusion weeks and Christmas events.

All activities are funded by grants received from Galway County Council, Age and Opportunity, HSE, Cluid Housing and Go for Life. Clúid provides 3 part time staff who look after the housing function but are

also involved with the organisation of events. The Galway & Roscommon Education Training Board have seconded an events co-ordinator for 15 hours per week. She oversees events, classes and organises respite and day trips. They also provide the Scheme with a computer/media teacher one day per week.

The reflexologist, chiropodist and hairdresser all provide their services at a reduced rate which are subsidised by grants received. Their visits are eagerly anticipated by residents and the booking sheets are always full.

The HSE provide a Male Support Worker who works 15 hours per week. He organises activities to promote social contact and encourages older vulnerable male tenants to participate in events. He liaises with family members, medical staff and social workers, care staff and any other appropriate agencies that contribute to the health and well-being of male residents on the scheme.

TUS and FAS provide a part time workers who assist tenants to maintain their apartments and who facilitate events and provide a befriending service.

Information provided to Travellers at the start of their tenancies has also been reviewed jointly with the Migrant Centre NI. Staff meet with new tenants at their home and discuss and demonstrate heating systems etc along with the provision of an information pack. All new tenants are offered a benefits check and we are in the process of developing a list of ID requirements to further assist the sign-up process. We have also started a review of our sign-up process to ensure that Travellers are aware and understand their rights and responsibilities at the start of their tenancy.

Outcomes and achievements

This Project in St Joseph's Court empowers and support older people to enjoy physical and mental health and well-being to their full potential. It tackles inequality in housing for older people and fosters better solidarity between generations. It has created a community in which the equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people can be pursued at all times.

Inequality is tackled through this project in the following ways:-

Promoting access - affordability, transport availability, accessibility of venue to a wide range of opportunities for continued learning, education and social engagement for older people.

Promote the active citizenship and the value of volunteering, and encourage people of all ages to become more involved in and to contribute to their own communities.

Promote the development of opportunities for engagement and participation of people of all ages in a range of arts, cultural, spiritual, leisure, learning and physical activities in their local communities.

Enable people as they age 'to get out and about' through the provision of accessible, affordable, and flexible transport systems in both rural and urban areas.

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Team

Housing Executive



Statement of support

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme programme was established in January 2014. Initially the programme was relatively small scale with only 239 refugees being settled in the UK in its first year. As part of a Government UK wide expansion, the OFMDFM indicated a desire to resettle up to 2,000 Syrian refugees over a five year period within Northern Ireland. The Scheme is targeted towards Syrians with:

- Complex health and social care needs
- Survivors of violence and torture
- Women and Children at risk

The NIHE's SVPR Team have welcomed 400 families (1637 individuals) into NI and have managed to permanently rehouse 56 of these families. This is a great achievement considering the extremely complex nature and challenging needs the Team are being met with. Their work is highly sensitive, difficult and time consuming, however the Team has shown that through liaison with PSNI, Housing Associations, Lettings Managers, medical professionals and Key Workers successful outcomes are possible. The approach the team has taken in Northern Ireland to sourcing temporary accommodation, and permanently rehousing has been highly recognised by the Home Office, DfC, Health Trusts and Education and is seen by the Home Office as best practice across the UK. The

Syrian refugees are some of the most vulnerable in society and the work of the team has transformed their lives.

Meeting the demands of the SVPRS regional dispersal strategy for accommodating the Syrian Refugees is challenging, i.e. local housing market, safety concerns raised by the PSNI, Health needs, educational requirements all place enormous pressure on staff to secure a range of housing types to address the needs of these families. Despite this, the team have succeeded in maintaining a wide geographical spread. The team are confronted by racially motivated attacks on the families. Many families who have arrived have at least one or more members of their household with serious medical illness and special housing needs. However, the team always approach their role with great sympathy, responding with utmost sensitivity and professionalism. The team go the extra mile, working tirelessly to address to meet the needs of these vulnerable clients and ensure they are integrated into their new communities.

Ian Snowden DfC endorses this nomination. "The small but highly effective Team has worked collaboratively for a number of years with the Department and all its partners in delivering the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. It is widely known that without securing appropriate accommodation for all the families, Northern Ireland could not deliver on the commitments made to the Prime Minister back in 2015. We have received some of the most complex cases and the Team has displayed great co-operation and partnership working, in particular with the Health Trusts and the Education Authority, to ensure all family needs are met. We are aware that the task of identifying suitable temporary accommodation and assessing families for permanent accommodation is not an easy task but the team goes the extra mile to achieve the goal set out for arrivals every 2 months"

Stephen Long Lead Officer, Belfast Trust. "Despite all the challenges presented to the NIHE, the Team continue to deliver suitable accommodation across the spectrum to ensure the most vulnerable in society are placed in suitable accommodation. While working closely with individual Trusts and OT departments to deliver on the future need and provision of accommodation. This is no mean feat given the complexity of the presentations to NI. The NIHE should take great pride in this team who continue to accept to all cases put in front of them, helping to secure a better future for these families and their children"

Outcomes and achievements

To date, the NIHE's SVPR Team have welcomed 400 families (1637 individuals) into NI and have managed to permanently rehouse 56 families. Northern Ireland has resettled 9% of Syrian refugees brought to the UK, proportionately more than any other part of the UK. 0.08% of Northern Ireland's population is made up of refugees resettled from the conflict in Syria.

These families are the most vulnerable in society and it is recognised by UNHCR and the Home Office that the NIHE in partnership with the HSCT has taken the most vulnerable families from refugee camps as Local Authorities in the rest of the UK were unable to make provisions to accept these families.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of hate crimes through the duration of the scheme. The team, working with PSNI, Community Groups, the responsible individuals and Good Relations Officers have managed not just to sustain families within their properties but integrate them through running community events and raising awareness. This has led to funding being awarded to some of the Syrian Community Groups, and more satisfying is that this funding was awarded based on the community votes and they prioritised the Syrian Group over other local community initiatives.

East Belfast Cultural Parade & Festival Fun Day

Radius Housing Association



Statement of support

Cultural Parade and Festival Fun Day Event The T:BUC Shared Housing supported Cultural Parade and Festival Fun Day developed with a focus on bringing a wide range of cultural and diverse groups and organisations together in one space. It aimed to build community cohesion, relationships for tenants and the wider community, raising awareness and understanding of difference and culture and promoting improved community cohesion, understanding, acceptance and awareness of diversity in a community context through delivery of - Drama, Movement & Cultural Diversity Workshops

- Key Stage 1, 2 & 3 children

Children across East Belfast came together taking part in a Drama programme to create a celebration of

culture, diversity, acceptance and inclusion through drama & movement and cultural music workshops delivered by CMAC Drama Academy & Releasing Rhythm's, culminating in a carnival performance by the children at East Belfast's first Cultural Parade and Festival Fun Day

Tenant Quote 'I am Somalian and my girls love coming to the drama afterschools, they have made new friends, have fun, are learning new skills and how to become more confident. They feel part of the community as they are not treated any differently and feel accepted. It has opened up other opportunities for them to get involved in community activities organised by Radius.'

Radius T:BUC Shared Housing Cultural Festival Parade and Fun Day

The cultural parade was a first for East Belfast and has set precedence for future cultural festivals. It sought to promote cultural acceptance and understanding within an area that often receives negative media publicity in the context of reported hate crime and racist attacks.

The Parade was led by a Chinese Dragon and Festival Heads and included participation from a diverse range of organisations with many cultures represented including Irish, Ulster Scots, British, Scottish, Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian, Roma, African, Jamaican and more providing a range of cultural dress, dance, music and performance. Radius tenants from Shared housing and sheltered housing schemes across the province, joined members of the East Belfast community and local community organisations taking part in this landmark event to support the message of cultural diversity in East Belfast. It showed support, acceptance and solidarity, promoting a positive message about shared housing and good relations in East Belfast.

Organisational Quote (Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community) 'I am so happy that we have been part of the whole event today, it was such an amazing atmosphere. I was home sick and this made me feel at home'

This Cultural Festival was attended by more than 2500 participants who had the opportunity to sample and experience a wide range of cultural cuisine & craft as well as experience the music and dance performances in any of the 27 marquees. Participants who attended the Global Voices Marquee were provided with the opportunity to increase their understanding of cultural differences, listening to the personal testimonies of people from a diverse range of backgrounds who shared their experiences about their birth country and of living in Belfast. A range of family activities, inflatables, a petting zoo and mocktail bar allowed

young and older to join in the fun in a safe and shared environment. Advice and support stands were busy assisting on a range of services including mental health and addiction support.

Tenant quote 'I am Polish and have lived in East Belfast for 14 years and this Cultural Festival made me cry today, it is the best event I have ever attended. The atmosphere was so warm, welcoming and universal. It didn't matter what you looked like or where you came from, there was a real sense of belonging'

Outcomes and achievements

Project Outcomes and Achievement's

Drama Workshops x 40 participants

Learnt

- New skills

Increased

- Understanding of cultural diversity
- Levels of confidence

Improved

- Sense of wellbeing
- Levels of self-esteem

Cultural Parade and Festival Fun Day

- A wide range of culturally diverse groups/ organisations together in one space.
- Improved community cohesion & relationships for tenants and the wider community,
- A raised awareness and better understanding of difference, culture & diversity in a community context
- Improved levels of acceptance

Quantity - over 2500 participants

- 742 participants made up the cultural parade
- 123 performers (Festival)
- 11 External Support Organisations provided advice and information at the event
- 40 opportunities for culturally diverse experiences

Quantitative - strongly agreed or agreed

- 98.21% said the event was very good/good
- 90% had developed more positive relationships with their neighbours after attending the event
- 93.81% felt more favourably towards people from different backgrounds after attending the event
- 98.21% would take part in future activities with people from a different background
- 96.43% felt more strongly that the culture and traditions of different backgrounds adds to the richness of diversity of society after taking part in the event.

Working in partnership

sponsored by



respond

building homes,
improving lives

This award commends collaboration between organisations or groups that achieves the best possible outcomes.

Supporting the journey out of poverty

Apex Housing Association



Statement of support

In April 2016, Apex worked with private and voluntary organisations to found Foyle Foodbank. Within the first year over 4,000 people were fed, but it was apparent that although the Foodbank was a vital service, it was not addressing the root causes of poverty. In February 2018 Apex expanded its services to become an all-encompassing poverty project.

Apex Community Supermarket is a partnership between 22 referral agencies, DfC, FareShare, Foyle Foodbank and local food and drinks manufacturers. Whilst foodbanks provide a 'handout' of three food parcels in any six months, the community supermarket is a longer term initiative to assist people on their journey out of poverty. It helps to address members' financial, social and environmental needs.

For a small charge of £5, members shop once a week and choose approximately £40 worth of food. Members have a range of circumstances that contribute to food poverty, including limited household incomes, debt obligations and low self-efficacy. For this reason, a person centred approach is developed from the outset to help support

members with their issues. Members choose the support services that may help overcome their present situation and are empowered to develop a success plan which evolves as members' needs and requirements adjust and change.

27 partner organisations work from the Community Supermarket premises and provide wrap around services and support to members depending on their needs. Partners include:

- Job Assist Centre who provide employment mentoring services through the provision of a café service at the supermarket
- Advice NI assists people with benefits and debt advice
- 'Make the Call' provides support with existing benefit applications
- Ulster Bank delivers 1:1 budgeting skills and advice
- Bryson Energy provides energy advice and support, equipping members with the skills and capacity to manage their fuel bills longer term
- Supporting Communities provides an introduction to computers skills courses
- Ulster University delivers IT qualifications for members

The project is managed by two paid members of staff and 12 volunteers. Just over half of the current volunteers are former members of the supermarket; helping to build their self-esteem, confidence and essential skills for employment. One volunteer said:

"Before I came to the supermarket my life revolved around supporting my disabled daughter and I suffered from depression as I didn't have enough money to make ends meet. Now, I love volunteering at the supermarket, helping other people who are in the same situation as I was. I know I can help them to improve their lives. For the first time in 11 years, I feel confident enough to apply for a part time job."

The supermarket is supported by the Apex inner city allotments. The allotments were borne out of the desire to use spare 'green belt' land in the Creggan area of Derry~Londonderry. Rather than paying a fee for maintenance of the land, Apex funds a local charity which supports 60 families to grow fresh fruit and vegetables. This provides long term health

benefits for people in one of the most deprived areas of the UK. Excess vegetables from the allotments are donated to Apex Community Supermarket and members are encouraged to take as many as they can use.

In 2017, due to our successful partnership with FareShare, Apex developed the project further and now facilitates a refrigerated van and driver to redirect 28 tonne of food to 11 different charities in Derry~Londonderry, helping them sustain their services.

Bernardine Donohow, Surestart, Edenballymore said:

"The food delivered by Apex each week means that parents and children in this deprived inner city area can avail of nutritious and varied food each day, it adds so much benefit to our project."

Outcomes and achievements

The following outcomes were recorded by the Strategic Investment Board in their recent report on Apex Community Supermarket:

Insufficient access to food - 96% upon entry, 29% upon exit

Regularly went without food - 73% upon entry, 21% upon exit

Regularly had 5 portions of fruit & veg - 18% upon entry, 75% upon exit

In control of their life - 45% upon entry, 75% upon exit

Good level of access to services locally - 42% upon entry, 75% upon exit

In addition, in the past year the project has:

- Supported 108 families through the Apex Community Supermarket, providing 23,619 kg of food from 9 generous suppliers to support people struggling with financial stress
- Redirected a further 28 tonne of food from landfill to 11 different local charities, helping to sustain their future
- Supported 36 people through intensive food planning and cookery courses

- Facilitated benefit advice and help for 43 tenants through our partnership with Advice NI
- Assisted 21 members through DfC's 'Make the Call' campaign
- Supported 13 members with intensive budgeting advice with the help of Ulster Bank's community banker
- Provided 40 people with grants and energy advice, facilitated by Bryson Energy
- Supported 10 people with finding employment or further education
- Helped 20 members to start saving with the affordable credit project
- Facilitated 60 inner city families to grow their own vegetables
- Supported a horticulturalist to deliver 60 hours of classes and workshops
- Facilitated 200 trees to be planted by local primary school children next to the allotments
- Avoiled of 1,668 volunteer hours including 355 supported volunteer hours

Destitute Asylum Seekers Project

Choice Housing Ireland Ltd

Partner organisations: participation and Practice of Rights, Housing Solutions NIHE, East Belfast Mission, Communities Foundation NI, Housing4All



Statement of support

The plight of refugees and asylum seekers is well documented. Destitute asylum seekers have had claims refused by the UK Home Office leaving them without entitlement to benefits or housing, often resulting in destitution and homelessness.

To explore the potential within the housing sector to secure accommodation for this client group, Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR), as project lead, established a project partnership group. Consisting of representatives from Choice, Housing Solutions (NIHE), East Belfast Mission (EBM), Communities Foundation NI (CFNI) and Housing4All (H4A), the group sought to undertake a pilot to test the viability of such an accommodation model.

Following initial discussions it was determined that existing vacant social housing stock could not be utilised as it would effectively reduce availability of accommodation for applicants on the Waiting List and as such disadvantage current homeless applicants in NI. It was therefore agreed that only private housing stock could be used. Choice is committed to inclusion and alleviating homelessness and, in line with its charitable purposes, is keen to support initiatives to help the most vulnerable. As such, in conjunction with its subsidiary Maple & May, Choice provided property (2 x 2-bedroom self-contained flats in South Belfast) to facilitate a 12 month pilot, which has now been extended for a further 12 months.

Research carried out by Housing4All among destitute asylum seekers in Belfast found that 63% had been homeless on more than one occasion since seeking asylum in Northern Ireland, and 50% of these individuals had been homeless on more than three occasions.

These statistics demonstrate a clear need for this innovative project, particularly as established approaches to dealing with such homelessness are denied in law. The pilot recognises that there are severe restrictions on organisations providing support in the current legal framework and the partners involved in this pilot believe that the situation facing destitute asylum seekers cannot afford to wait for a change in legislation. Independent initiatives such as this can provide both immediate relief and act as an example of what is possible.

The pilot officially started in Autumn 2018, with four female residents moving into accommodation in September. As well as providing basic accommodation and support needs, project partners were eager to evaluate progress of the pilot and promote sustainability from the outset. Partners have invested human and financial resources to make the pilot a success. Choice provided 2 x 2 bedroom self-contained flats in South Belfast at no charge with white goods, beds and wardrobes as well as, £15 per week per flat toward utility costs.

Providing accommodation alone was insufficient to address destitution, people have living expenses. Prior to the commencement of the pilot, CFNI had secured £22,000 to meet the living expenses and support elements of the pilot. This was to cover an allowance of £37 a week (equivalence with Home Office provision) to each asylum seeker and any excess utility bills not covered through Choice's contribution. The CFNI contribution also funded EBM for the provision of basic support services.

The nature of support required by the residents was a key issue which needed to be explored. It was important to determine whether destitute asylum seekers, having been provided with accommodation and minimal financial support, could manage well. This has been found to be the case.

The pilot has been life changing for the women with one commenting, "I felt my sanity return. I walked around and felt invisible at times and there were times I felt like all eyes were looking at me and pitying me. I finally got the strength to put some evidence together for a fresh claim."

Outcomes and achievements

In February 2019, H4A and PPR conducted recorded interviews with each of the residents and overall, there has been an incredible positive impact for the women. The model of minimal support has been proven to work well. The view that destitute asylum seekers are resilient and can manage well, once the crippling effects of destitution are removed, is clear.

The pilot is a powerful example of partners coming together to achieve a shared goal of helping the most vulnerable and excluded in our society. From suffering stress and depression whilst destitute, three out of the four women have gone on to make fresh asylum claims. They report their health as good and their lives transformed.

H4A- "The project gave the women their sense of dignity, hope and courage to start afresh and gather their evidence again. They had a sense of belonging again. The project partners stepped in where the state failed to honour its obligations. We are proud to be a part of this ongoing project and look forward to it going from strength to strength."

Project partners are eager to grow this model and help make this enforced type of homelessness and destitution a thing of the past.

Housing Associations Integration Project

Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations

Partner organisations: NIFHA, Apex, Radius, Choice, Clanmil, TIDES Training, Irish Council for Social Housing



Statement of support

Segregation continues to be a core societal issue across Northern Ireland, particularly in social housing where 90% of social housing developments are classed as single identity neighbourhoods. This legacy from the "troubles" impacts on community relations, stability and cohesion. Furthermore, creative vision for future social housing supply and development continues to be curtailed and confined by community divides. Social housing providers can play a key role in linking and bonding communities and shaping a Northern Ireland that is inclusive and safe for all.

The Housing Associations Integration Project (HAIP)

is a unique initiative promoting a collaborative partnership approach to building good relations across Housing Association stock in Northern Ireland and the border regions of Republic of Ireland. This partnership of housing providers has potential to make significant change.

The project epitomises a new and innovative way of collaborative working within the social housing sector. The lead partner in this initiative is the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) working with the other delivery partners including four of Northern Ireland's largest Housing Associations - Radius, Clanmil, Choice and Apex, the project training partner TIDES Training and the Irish Council for Social Housing. The partners came together because of their desire to promote good relations and their experience of good relations work.

The project brings together social housing residents from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds to share experiences together, learn about differences and embrace diversity in the communities in which they live. Project partners identified 40 neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland and Co Donegal for participation on the programme. In total 1000 social housing tenants were targeted to directly engage in community building activities within their communities and additionally engage in a wide range of opportunities for shared learning and experiences meeting and socialising with other participants from differing traditions, backgrounds and cultures.

The project has been recognised as a model of best practice for partnership working by an independent interim evaluation carried out by Community Evaluation NI. The report published in May 2019 reinforces the value and benefit of the project partners coming together to pool their resources, knowledge and expertise in order to collectively find solutions to challenges affecting them all in the delivery of this initiative.

Project partners created a governance structure to ensure that there was effective and collective strategic and operational management of HAIP. Embedding the partnership ethos within all levels of participating

organisations delivering the project. A Project Steering Committee comprising senior directors and CEO's of the formal project partners alongside senior representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Community Relations Council provide a strategic overview of the project with responsibilities for monitoring and scrutiny. A separate Project Board has responsibilities for operational decision. This Board comprises management representatives from each of the employing partners. A small project staff team delivered the activities within the target communities.

HAIP, through effective partnership working, has impacted positively on communities and individuals participating in community capacity building and

good relations activities and events offered through the project. Community Evaluation NI state "the partnership has, from the beginning, been very effective in establishing the structures, resource and supports necessary to service an effective partnership".

This project reflects the key qualities and attributes of this category. It represents a project underpinned by collaborative practice, focused on innovation to challenge the status quo and motivated by achieving outcomes which will create a positive legacy through the promotion of diversity, respect and mutual understanding with its participants.

Outcomes and achievements

The Housing Associations Integration Project has set very challenging and ambitious operational targets to maximise the opportunities and benefits of this innovative project which helps reinforce peace and stability.

To date, this partnership has successfully delivered:

- 40 community audits completed in all participating neighbourhoods, providing unique insights into local issues in their communities.
- 35 community building events delivered attended by 1627 participants, helping to build community spirit and a sense of belonging for tenants in those areas.
- 351 tenants attending workshops to help build the local capacity and confidence of tenants
- 18 cross community/ inter community workshops delivered attended by 150 participants.

- 58 participants achieving a recognised OCN level 2 good relations qualifications
- 14 study visits and 5 cultural events delivered enabling tenants on a cross community basis to have shared learning experiences and develop their understanding of other communities' traditions and history.
- 2 community showcase events held attended by 64 participants providing the opportunity to celebrate together the achievements and journeys of those tenants involved with the project.
- 2 neighbourhoods twinned which brings together neighbourhoods to help build long term links and relations between tenants from differing backgrounds and traditions, working together on joint projects.

Young Person's Peer Mentoring Project

Housing Executive

Partner organisations: Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Department for Communities



Statement of support

This project is the culmination of several years of work between the Northern Ireland Youth Forum (NIHF) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) as part of the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy. As part of engagement with the Central Housing Forum NIHF committed to working with the NIHF to address issues around homelessness in young people. This subsequently involved sitting on a steering group for 'Pinball - A film exploring young people's journeys into homelessness which can be found on this link' which can be found on this link. This video highlights a number of emotive and personal journeys into homelessness with circumstances that perhaps could have been avoided had there have been a better awareness of available support services. Additionally, NIHF engaged with NIHF as part of the Homelessness Strategy Service User Forum. This engagement highlighted the need for an innovative solution to addressing homelessness amongst young people and through the provision of the Department for Communities (DfC) Change Fund a Young Person's Peer Mentoring Project was developed with funding provided for five years. This project is innovative in that it allows those who have previously experienced homelessness to have a direct input in to the implementation of homelessness policy and associated services.

As part of the project two apprentices, who have both experienced homelessness, have been employed and it is their role to work with NIHF to prevent homelessness amongst other young people and provide support for those who do present as homelessness. The video in the earlier link highlighted a number of challenges for the Housing Executive and other statutory organisations such as the Health Trusts in terms of how we deliver homelessness services to young people. The apprentices, and wider outputs from this project, has enabled and will enable young people to directly challenge our organisations in how effectively we are assisting young people. As part of this project the NIHF have the opportunity to input in to the training of Housing Executive staff who deal with homelessness on a daily basis. Additionally, the apprentices and NIHF are responsible for the creation of new initiatives including an annual conference that will focus on homelessness amongst young people and how NIHF and other agencies can address this growing issue.

This project has also improved the well-being of communities through a workplan which involves the apprentices leading on:

- The delivery of focus groups which will include the identification of gaps/areas of good practice etc;
- The identification of and liaising with key contacts in social services and NIHF to agree referral processes;
- The creation of a digital platform to raise awareness of homelessness amongst young people

NIHF and DfC will provide support and assistance where required in the delivery of this workplan.

Reference from Deirdre Coyle, Social Care Commissioning Lead, Children and Families, HSCB
The Health and Social Care Board welcomes this initiative and commends the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland Youth Forum for listening to and acting on the voice and recommendations of young people through the establishment of this project.

It is an excellent example of co-production, innovative service delivery and cross agency working.

The reach of this project across partner agencies, community organisations and directly with young people is immense with great potential to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and to supporting, assisting and advising young people who face homelessness.

It will contribute to driving a collective approach across key agencies, bring much needed focus to youth homelessness and inevitably assist commissioners, policy makers and providers in designing and delivering services and interventions that are young person focused, more responsive to need and beneficial in terms of improving outcomes .

Outcomes and achievements

First and foremost, a major outcome from this project has been the recruitment of two youth apprentices who have been through the difficult journey that is entailed with homelessness. The NIYF video 'Pinball' was a keynote presentation at the launch of the Homelessness Strategy Annual Progress Report and this was followed by a speech from one of the youth apprentices who delivered a challenging and confident summary of her journey from homelessness to a youth apprentice in front of a crowd of 160 people.

This presentation has enabled the youth apprentices to build contacts across the statutory and voluntary sectors and to strengthen the aim of the project in

shaping the delivery of homelessness services to meet the needs of young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The NIYF has met with the Housing Executive's training department and the youth apprentices will be trained to provide awareness of homelessness amongst their peers and all future training courses on homelessness will involve input from the youth apprentices. The youth apprentices have also presented at a recent health and homelessness conference and this again challenged statutory agencies to deliver services that are effective in meeting the needs of young people.

Addictions Outreach Service

Simon Community NI

in partnership with: Public Health Authority



Statement of support

Funded by the Public Health Authority, Simon Community's Addictions Outreach Service (AO Service) supports clients with drugs and/or alcohol addiction problems - ending homelessness and saving lives.

New and innovative ways of working:

Between 2007 and 2016, over 3,500 people in Northern Ireland died of an alcohol related death with alcohol misuse costing almost £900m a year in NI.

Developed in 2016, the AO Service was created to help tackle the increase in drug and alcohol related deaths happening across NI. Providing a new, innovative and non-judgemental way of working, each year the service bridges the gap between clients and effective treatment.

"Extremely valuable service, staff have engaged very chaotic clients and liaised appropriately with tier three services to facilitate the smooth and timely transfer and management of patients as required without this service very vulnerable clients would become lost to the system. Outreach workers have good skills of engagement and a good understanding of harm reduction and treatment principles."

(Dr Siobhan Flanagan NHS, South Eastern Trust Addiction Service)

"I and the rest of the team have found Simon Outreach to be an invaluable resource particularly in their engagement of clients that traditionally were not ready or unwilling to engage with ourselves."

(John Campbell, Community Addictions Team)

Improving service delivery and quality as a result of partnership working:

With a long history of supporting vulnerable clients with mixed needs (alcohol, drug and mental health), we recognised that our expertise in providing support within hostels could be put into practice across a community-based setting. Within our 21 hostel sites, we saw the consequences of individuals who were excluded from timely support and correct treatment - homelessness, suicide and premature deaths.

"I really wish to highlight the excellent communication between the key workers and our service which has been integral to arranging follow up and support for client's leaving hospital or for being referred to Community Addictions/accessing rehab"

(Vanda Johnston, South Eastern Trust Substance Misuse Liaison)

Demonstrating best practice and improving well-being of communities through working together:

The AO Service follows a model of practice recognised by the NHS Models of Care for Treatment of Adult Drug Misusers. Strengthening communities, the approach provides best practice value for money e.g. the team worked with 21 patients with Alcohol Related

Brain Injury with 16 clients remaining abstinent after discharge - providing savings to the tax payer:

"...a study from the Ulster Hospital last year has shown that a small group of these patients (19) who had alcohol related brain damage (ARBD) cost the Trust 2 Million pounds over a 5-year period in bed days alone."

(Dr Joy Watson NHS, South Eastern Trust Addiction service).

The service empowers communities by providing skills and knowledge that saves lives. Last year, 151 Simon Community staff received specialist Naloxone training (a response to opiate overdoses) - providing expert knowledge that leads to saved lives.

"We were given practical tools to assist our young person and information. We also received training in Naloxone which helped us even further. I cannot praise the support enough" (Catherine McNally Team Leader MACS Supported Living)

"I had to respond to a client who had overdosed. It was only thanks to the training I received that I was able to help sustain life until the ambulance arrived."

Luke Cheeseman, Simon Community Support Worker

Similar services funded by the PHA in each of NI's five Health Trust areas meet annually to present their work. At this forum, the AO Service is held up as a model of best practice.

Outcomes and achievements

Continually inundated with referrals from third-party organisations and granted increased funding from the PHA, the AO services continually outperforms its annual target of 181 clients set by the Public Health Authority, with 294 engaged users in 2017-2018 and 521 clients in 2018-2019.

During the period April 2017 to February 2019, successes included;

- The average client reducing alcohol intake by 47 units per week
- 178 individuals participating with substance misuse services
- 171 individuals receiving Primary Care treatment i.e. GP, pharmacy, dentist
- 101 individuals claiming correct Benefits
- 75 individuals accessing Mental Health services

- 64 individuals finding Employment / availing of employment services
- 25 individuals accessing Physical Disability services
- 32 clients tested for Hepatitis C
- 151 Simon Community staff receiving overdose training with 16 potential deaths due to overdoses being averted in 2018-2019.
- 38 external training sessions delivered
- 94 training sessions delivered to clients and 35 to family members of clients

The project receives 'Excellent' scores from referral doctors, nurses and agencies in the areas of reliability, flexibility and adaptability. Additionally, similar services funded by the PHA in each of Northern Ireland's five Health Trust areas meet annually to present their work and hold the service up as a model of best practice.

Empowerment through Media; Energy Efficiencies

Triangle Housing Association

in partnership with: The Consumer Council Northern Ireland



Statement of support

Triangle Housing worked in partnership with The Consumer Council to create a new and innovative way to educate, inform and empower tenants with learning disabilities in supported living to manage their household energy. This was done via a video modelling project, producing 5 short explainer videos, which is part of a bigger empowerment plan through media.

We identified a gap as info and resources available re. energy efficiencies were booklets and leaflets which were not suitable for all audiences due to literacy and numeracy levels.

We met with The Consumer Council and through collaborative working agreed scripts for the videos. Our Tenant Advisory Group members reviewed the scripts, ensuring that people with learning disabilities were involved every step of the way from script writing, filming and editing.

This was not only a partnership between Triangle Housing and The Consumer Council, but also Triangle Housing staff and service users.

As well as being new and innovative for Triangle Housing, it offered The Consumer Council a new way of working, as they had never done a collaborative project with people with learning disabilities.

The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Councillor Maureen Morrow, said, "The videos contain helpful information that all residents of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council area may find useful, not just Triangle Housing service users. I encourage everyone to watch the videos for ideas to reduce your energy bill and manage your home energy."

This project broke down barriers in society. The videos raise the profile of learning disabilities and showcase service users' abilities not disabilities to the wider community.

Making the videos improved well-being of those involved, as they felt they were making a meaningful difference. They learnt new skills, it improved their confidence and made them feel like valued citizens. One service user involved said; 'It was great to be part of the filming, it was good to show others how to phone for help and how to check your electric and what to do in a power cut so that you wouldn't be left in the cold and dark in the bad weather'. Another service user helped create a video to raise awareness of the critical care register; 'Due to my health I'm not able to get out and about so much anymore so it was great for the film crew to come to me in my home. I was able to tell my family all about the great day we had when they came to visit.'

The videos have helped improve service delivery as it created new resources which are available online 24/7 when staff are not available, for example in a power cut tenants can watch the videos on their phone about what to do. Rewards worked two ways as Triangle Housing helped The Consumer Council reach one of their priority audiences, and the knowledge of The Consumer Council is passed on via the videos to Triangle Housing service users and staff.

To ensure best practice, we checked with Mid & East Antrim's Community Health and Well-Being Officer to ensure content was accurate, up-to-date and relevant. The Consumer Council brought a wealth of knowledge and are leaders in best practice on the topic of home energy.

The Consumer Council also brought in best practice of media use with their knowledge and skills and enlisted the help of a video production company through a robust tender exercise.

As well as using best practice, feedback has been that this sets standard for best practice of what other housing associations could be doing to help tenants.

The videos are available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwZz-OqZiv0&list=PLOOg86e6oRC18F90mKUYRSRm0uQhUI31b>

Outcomes and achievements

The videos are used by existing staff and tenants and will be used as a learning resource for future staff/tenants, giving value for money as an ongoing tool.

The Consumer Council has used the videos during outreach activity and on their website, YouTube and social media.

Mid & East Antrim published the videos on their website for residents in the area.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has arranged a meeting about using the videos.

The videos free up staff time to deliver other support to other service users and the community. The videos benefit service users by promoting independence and reducing vulnerability. Staff are also better informed in

their own lives passing on knowledge to colleagues in the housing sector.

The Tenant Advisory Group Ballymena are working with The Consumer Council to make easy-read versions of their resources. Together we wish to continue 'Empowerment Through Media' creating more videos on other subjects e.g. Scams.

Other organisations have expressed interest in using the videos; ARC, Orchardville Society as well as Freedom Acts and Belfast Unemployment Advice Centre. Although this was aimed at tenants in supported living, it has proven accessible and interesting to migrants and people in unemployment also.

Housing hero

sponsored by



This award celebrates outstanding individuals who have used new approaches to help solve housing problems they see around them.

Mary Canavan

Habinteg Housing Association



Statement of support

Mary has been involved in housing for the last 16 ½ years working across Northern Ireland. She came into housing because of her own experiences living in a hostel as a younger person. She understands how hard it is to ask for help and knows that it is in recognising people's difficulties and sometimes quietly doing something to help, rather than asking what they want, can make the real difference.

During this time she has worked in several hostels for homeless families as a support worker, a risk assessment officer she came to Habinteg to work at our Ardnaclowney scheme. This scheme is designated as sheltered, many of the tenants living there have complex needs and Mary has adapted her role to help meet each individual's needs, not only through the formal support process, but giving her own time to ensure people know they are respected and valued.

Many of these tenants have no family or are estranged from them. If they are not feeling well, she will pick up groceries for them when they have no one to go to the shops. It is fair to say she has given up lots of her time ensuring tenants in hospital have visits. Even when the tenant has family, Mary is so highly thought of that she frequently supports all the family members. One example of this was a tenant who was gravely

ill and would not go to the hospital for his family. He was frightened and would only go with Mary. At the request of the family Mary was with him when he died on an Easter Sunday.

Mary always ensures people get the best service and her dogged determination means she never gives up. A tenant with complex needs was refusing to eat anything For 7 weeks Mary called all possible agencies to get this lady into hospital, whilst coaxing the tenant to sip water and ice lollies she brought in for her. Mary always tells new staff about the importance of treat people as individuals.

Mary's outlook on life and her commitment to all people in need, stems she says from being in difficult circumstances herself. In her youth she spent time in a hostel and those feeling of isolation, are what drives her to ensure no matter what the reason or circumstance those she meets know that they are valued. Mary's non-judgemental approach to everyone she meets, means she is highly valued not just by her tenants and community but also the staff here at Habinteg.

Mary deals with some of the most challenging issues and behaviours from chronic alcoholism; drug abuse issues; depression; schizophrenia; tendencies and those who have suffered from sexual and physical abuse as children which has had a devastating impact on their lives. Mary states "There is no 'one size fits all' solution to people's problems and most do not react well to someone telling them they should get involved in activities; join a support group etc. They have coped as best they can for many years and resent that someone can come along and tell them what they should be doing. Establishing a good relationship with people means it is sometimes possible to get them to let you guide them forwards be that meeting a mental health professional; or getting practical help in their home."

Mary's attitude and approach spreads outside of her work into her community and she is well-known for her work through her church, supporting and visiting Women's aid once a month, Setting up volunteer food banks and ensuring those in need get care packages.

Outcomes and achievements

Mary's achievements are about People She has made people who felt worthless feel valued. People who moved in with no furniture have something to sit on and eat off, people who are alone and ill, know someone cares about them enough to get food in and visit them in hospital. She has given her time to ensure women who left their belonging to run to safe hostels had care packages. She has made Christmas dinners for those who had no reason and no one to celebrate with and she has sat and held the hand of a frightened dying tenant who trusted her.

These things are hard to quantify but Mary represents the many people who do these extras for no recognition or reward, simply because they respect, care and believe in people. Mary has a great sense of humour and manages to resolve difficult situations by talking and reasoning with tenants, she will always see the positive in everyone. In the words of Mary's manager Barbara *"What also makes Mary a great person and employee is her ability to make those around her feel good - Every visit to Mary makes me laugh or smile at her stories"*.

Robin Bigger

Habinteg Housing Association



Statement of support

We are delighted to shine light on this individual who throughout his long career and contribution to housing in Northern Ireland consistently goes the extra mile to ensure that the current and future needs of all our tenants is at the core of every development project. Robin's career started as an Architect over 30 years ago where he managed housing projects across Northern Ireland for a range of Housing Associations in the Consultant/Lead designer role. Having worked on wide range of housing projects Robin greatly admired the role that Housing Associations have in providing the highest standard of homes to the people in most need.

30 years on Robins passion for delivering high quality housing solutions continues. In his current role as Senior Development Officer in Habinteg Robin is co-ordinating the design and construction of a range of social housing projects. Robin lives and breathes the Associations values in every aspect of his job.

Robin is a real ambassador for equality and accessibility through design innovation to create the best housing solutions for the tenants. He drives change in this area by consistently keeping the end

users' needs at the forefront of every decision. Robin has demonstrated the highest level of professional commitment within the organisation and with every person he meets along the way.

Robin always seeks to apply Innovative construction solutions looking holistically at each project and applies himself to all aspects of his role with Enthusiasm, Fairness, Resilience in the face of challenge and always with Imagination and Vision.

Stephen Lowry - Lowry Construction - *"We have always found Robin to be extremely cooperative and has a sensible pragmatic approach to 'getting things done' and providing successful project delivery with minimal hassle for all involved. Robin is extremely intelligent and although may not say very much at times, he knows what's is going on and is working out solutions to problems whilst others are talking about them"*

Lee Williamson - Lowry Construction - *"It is with pleasure that I write in support of Robin for CIH Housing Hero. Robin has a sincere passion for the end user/future tenant. Robin is greatly admired and respected for his fairness and integrity. Any direction from Robin is wholeheartedly directed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for the tenants of Habinteg. Our recent involvement with Milburn Close, Knockbraken provided a little insight to Robin's passion. A complex to support residents with enhanced needs and supported living, providing housing to people and contributing to social value. We can't think of a more deserving recipient of Housing Hero, than Robin"*

Alastair Fyfe- Director Andrew Bradley Ltd - *"We have worked with Robin over the years on a range of construction projects and his professionalism, innovative vision and positive contribution to these projects make him an exemplar candidate for this award. It has been a pleasure working with him on these schemes including Knockbracken Phase 1 where Robin's experience and overall innovative approach to the design proved pivotal in successful Project Completion. Robin would always approach us to find out if there was any problems and took a great interest in the construction materials, the construction methods and the tradesmen carrying out the works. I have found Robin's knowledge and experience a great source of comfort in all the schemes we have worked on"*

together and genuinely hope he is recognised for his contribution to construction and housing over a long and distinguished career.”

Outcomes and achievements

Robin is very proud to have been involved with Millburn Close at Knockbracken Healthcare Park. Robin was the Architect on Phase 1 of this flagship supported housing development in partnership with Inspire Wellbeing and Belfast Trust. With 24 hour support for residents within their own homes, assisting with wellbeing and recovery on the resettlement journey from long stays in hospital or more intensive support facilities.

Robin then had the opportunity to work on phase 2 of this scheme as a development officer at Habinteg which provided an additional 6 units designed for users with enduring mental illness.

Millburn Close is widely viewed as a model of excellence in supporting individuals to experience flourishing wellbeing and offers equality, choice and rights in all aspects of housing needs rather than their insecure previous temporary placements in hostels, hospital inpatient care or nursing care. Robin’s involvement in both phases of this development was pivotal to its success. Thanks to a sensitive collaborative approach to design construction and housing lives have been transformed by the move to Millburn Close with residents developing positive relationships and friendships with neighbours and staff at the scheme.

Pamela Johnston

Housing Executive



Statement of support

For the past thirty years there has been a bonfire on a green area in Longstone, part of the Ballybeen estate. It has been a controversial bonfire given its size and proximity to dwellings in the Ballybeen estate. Collection for the bonfire begins each year in April and this in turn prompts general dumping of materials on the green. In the weeks leading up to the 11th night there is increased tension within the community and with other competing bonfire builders in the Ballybeen estate (Davarr). In 2018 the Housing Executive spent £1,500 removing general waste and combustible materials from the site prior to the 11th July. The bonfire reached a height of approximately 15 metres and a base diameter of 6 metres. Adjacent resident dwellings have their windows boarded up and any

uPVC rainwater goods temporarily removed. On the 11th night the Fire Service are in attendance and, when necessary, hose down the dwellings to prevent potential fire spread.

The remnants of the bonfire would continue to smoulder for three days resulting in the Housing Executive carrying out remedial repairs which involved removing the remaining materials, excavating the burnt area of ground to a depth of one foot and reinstating with clay and grass. In 2018 the cost of this work was £5,000. Each year following the bonfire the DTI Road Service would repair adjacent footpath and road surface. In 2018 Pamela Johnston initiated indirect talks with the ‘Bonfire Builders’ via Ballybeen Improvement Group (BIG). After a number of months, this led to direct talks with main Longstone bonfire representatives and other community activists. Her negotiations resulted in agreed protocols regarding keeping the site tidy and identification and removal of general waste. An undertaking was also reached on not burning tyres or similar materials which would harm the environment. The Housing Executive in return provided funding towards diversionary youth activities on the 11th afternoon. Although the bonfire went ahead and was as big as previous years the agreement around site management was a major breakthrough in engagement with local community in terms of establishing trust.

This year Pamela commenced negotiations with BIG and the bonfire rep around the bonfire in March. The initial focus was on having a community festival on the afternoon of the 11th July and securing a commitment to reduce the size of the bonfire. Agreement was achieved early on in the discussions. The suggestion of a beacon was rejected by the Bonfire Builders but Pamela persuaded a number of the reps to visit the Beacon site in Carryduff and chat with the Killynure community group who organise their beacon. Discussions on the content and format of the 11th

community festival continued and other key partners such as the PSNI and Lisburn Council came on board. Pamela continued to highlight the advantages of a beacon and early in April 2019 BIG advised that bonfire builders were minded to move away from a bonfire to the beacon concept. Internal consultations took place within the community over a number of weeks and the outcome was 'to give the beacon a go this year'.

The 11th Community festival went ahead and was a resounding success. All involved were pleasantly surprised by the huge community turnout and positive feedback on having a beacon this year. The success of the transformation from bonfire to beacon was summed up by Bonfire Builder rep William Anderson when he commented 'only for the intervention of Pamela Johnston we never would have considered a beacon and given the positive feedback from our community I would have no hesitation recommending it to other communities'.

Outcomes and achievements

The key outcome from Pamela's approach to such a sensitive issue was being able to persuade the community to move away from the long established tradition of a bonfire to a beacon. The following outcomes are also benefits arising from her interaction:

- Community festival approach to the 11th July evening
- Greater involvement by the community and interaction with the Housing Executive and other statutory bodies
- Safer environment : no dwellings temporarily boarded up and no fire risk or toxic smoke
- No remedial cost of repairing the bonfire site and adjacent road and footpath.
- Plans are currently being drawn up for a community garden on the former bonfire site with a completion date of April 2020. A central paved area within the garden will be the location for future beacons. Pamela has secured an undertaking from the former bonfire builders to talk to other PUL community groups about their positive experience in transforming from bonfire to beacon, with a view to persuade them to take a similar step.

Colm McDaid

Supporting Communities



Statement of support

This nomination recognises the huge contribution Colm McDaid has made in Northern Ireland supporting and promoting Tenant Participation.

After completing the Housing Degree at University of Ulster, Colm began his career with the Residents group in Clonard an area undergoing major

redevelopment. There Colm cut his teeth in the real world of resident engagement and he quickly learned that to create sustainable and vibrant communities, resident voices need to be listened to and importantly acted on. Those early days were to be the foundation on which he built his career. Today he leads Supporting Communities (SC) (Independent Tenant Organisation, endorsed by Dept for Communities), an organisation that champions tenant and community participation through grass root approach to Community Development. Colm has fostered an excellent working relationship with SC's key stakeholder Housing Executive and under his leadership the organisation continues to facilitate Housing Executives tenant engagement through their Housing Community Network, referred to by Customer Service Excellence assessor as Housing Executives "jewel in the crown" - high praise indeed. This facilitation is embedded in grass roots community development and modeled on estate inspection and Inter agency work, combined with a structure that incorporates involvement at local, Regional and province wide levels.

In terms of innovation Colm is very keen to demonstrate the impact of grass root community development and to evidence that by providing a Social Return On Investment (SROI). This initiative is being piloted at present along with Housing Executive looking at SROI on grants provided by Housing Executive. Colm, however sees the bigger picture

and is keen to drive this further so that all tenants/residents know the value of their involvement.

Through his work in the social housing sector Colm is at the forefront extolling the virtues of resident engagement, he has been a key partner in Rethinking Social Housing Group, participated in Government working groups, actively engaged in research projects looking at models of tenant participation to name but a few. In addition he never misses an opportunity to give presentations here in NI and further afield, firmly believing that in NI we have fine examples of excellent engagement and to that end he uses every opportunity to showcase.

Testimonial from Lorraine Campbell Chair Supporting Communities Board

"Supporting Communities Board was delighted to hear the staff wish to nominate Colm for the Housing Hero Award. Behind his kind thoughtful manner lies a strength of character and determination which has allowed him to take the organisation to an entirely new level. Through his collaborative approach with Housing Executive and Housing Associations he has

championed the cause for tenant empowerment and has made a real difference to communities across NI. Once problematic estates have been transformed through the grass roots approach to Community Development model and made sustainable by estate inspection and Inter-agency management approach. The Board is privileged to have Colm as Chief Executive and is appreciative of his immense commitment and proud to endorse this nomination"

It is without doubt that Supporting Communities is in the standing it is today because of the hard work, dedication and commitment of Colm. He is a true ambassador and champion of all things Tenant / Resident involvement. His heart is firmly embedded in the Community something he has never lost sight of throughout his career. To top it all he is a kind, caring, down to earth, honest, hard working man. As a staff team we are both immensely proud and extremely lucky to have him lead the organisation.

To that end we firmly believe that Colm McDaid would be the utmost worthy recipient of CIH Housing hero award.

Outcomes and achievements

Achievements

- Introduction of Tenant Participation Strategy NI 2015-2020, under Colm's leadership SC worked very closely with DfC to coordinate consultation events all over NI ensuring tenants were at the table to get their voice heard.

Outcome: tenants voice reflected in Strategy.

Achievement

- As part of Supporting Communities (SC) ITO role, SC established a Housing Policy Panel (HPP), made up of tenants from the social housing sector across NI to act as a sounding board to DfC. Recognising the major importance of this panel, Colm has acted as interim chair.

Outcomes

- in its short tenure the HPP has made very valuable contributions to key pieces of housing legislation around allocations, house sales, and housing

affordability to name but a few. The Panel has also developed a very ambitious Action Plan which includes performing a key role in guiding the Dept on the new Tenant Participation Strategy 2020 - 2025 pushing the frontiers for tenant engagement further.

Achievement

- Colm has been instrumental in establishing Empowering Communities the trading subsidiary of Supporting Communities, set up to allow the organisation to diversify and grow.
- Outcome 16 of 20 Housing Associations are now members availing of services on offer and guiding EC on other services required. EC is bringing its expertise in Tenant Engagement to our colleagues in Republic of Ireland, an avenue that Colm as Chief Executive and the Board is very keen to drive forward.

Philip Corrway

Tuath Housing Association



Statement of support

Philip has been instrumental in the planning, organising and the disseminating of information to our tenants so that they can get the opportunity to learn new skills within their local areas. Philip has been very involved with encouraging tenants to partake in Age Actions getting started computer classes. In addition, he has provided his time to age action in terms of becoming a one to one tutor to assist with the learning and development of our tenants. This is separate to his role which is a Customer care co-ordinator. In addition, Philip has also sourced and communicated with CoderDojo - a computer coding class for children. Numerous children in our schemes have taken the opportunity to become involved within their community in these classes. Below are some testimonials from representatives of Age Action and CoderDojo, and tenants who have partook in these wonderful initiatives which have been driven by Philip.

Sarah Boyd Age Action - "Thanks to Philip Corrway he has provided social tenants the opportunity to link in with our invaluable service of one to one computer classes in the community through Age Actions Getting Started Programme. Philip has worked hard to encourage tenants to engage with the service while also giving his time in volunteering as being a tutor for some of the classes held. We look forward to working with Tuath Housing and Philip for future upcoming classes."

Seamus Reilly Drogheda Age Action Classes - "I found Philip to be very helpful and patient during my Age Action computer classes. Philip was excellent in explaining the different functions of the computer and found the whole experience very helpful. I am very grateful to him"

Noeleen Morgan Dundalk "I really enjoyed the classes and felt I learned a lot during the computer classes I attended. I had limited knowledge and was a little nervous when searching the internet. During the classes I have now learned how to shop online, complete online payments and search for flights over to see my daughter. Philip was very helpful during the class and gave all he could give as an instructor. I look forward to joining future computer classes with Philip in Tuath Housing and Age Action"

Rachel Schoene CoderDojo - "Philip Corrway has provided opportunities to social tenants to become involved with CoderDojo's in their area. To date numerous families have taken the opportunity to become involved with their local dojo in DKIT Dundalk, Navan & Dunshaughlin. We hope Philip continues promoting our wonderful CoderDojo coding classes to the families within Tuath Housing. "

Amanda Kelly, Dunshaughlin "Our son attended the CoderDojo class which was set up and assisted by Philip in Tuath Housing. Philip contacted us about the class and Seanan was delighted. Philip was in constant contact with us and sourced all the information we needed prior to the class. Philip was very easy to work with and this was a fantastic initiative. Seanan is looking forward to the next class. Thanks Philip!"

Sarah McCarthy, Dundalk "My son attended classes in September and October. He found them very interesting and was always enthusiastic to attend. The class introduced him to coding and programming and is a great concept for children. This would not have been possible without Philip who introduced us to the class. He was very helpful throughout the process and when I had trouble logging on in the beginning, he got me set up and sorted very quickly. Dermot and I really appreciate all the effort."

Executive. Colm, however sees the bigger picture

Outcomes and achievements

Tenants have had the opportunity to upskill and become more digitally included through Philip's initiative of becoming involved with Age Action's 5-week computer classes, and Coder Dojo classes for children. This has provided our tenants the ability to shop online, complete online payments, booking holidays and learning how to communicate via email to their families and indeed to organisations, whilst also learning to use their smartphone, laptop or tablet. It has greatly benefited our elderly tenants in terms of isolation and has increased our resident's independence and equality. This has had a very

positive effect on our residents with the result more and more residents are looking for these classes and want to become involved with them.

The children have equally had a similar opportunity to engage and become socially included in their communities while learning invaluable coding skills which may become beneficial to them in later years. These CoderDojo classes have provided children the opportunity to learn and collaborate to develop exciting skills in the world of IT.

Housing team of the year

sponsored by  **Ulster Bank**

This award is for teams that had made an outstanding contribution to their organisation and the delivery of its objectives.

Choice Housing Ireland Ltd

Team Nominated:

Aidan McCrea, financial inclusion manager
Carleen Stevenson, financial inclusion officer
Tom Reilly, financial inclusion officer.



Statement of support

Following the biggest changes to the welfare and benefits system in over 60 years, Choice introduced a Financial Inclusion Team.

Choice is committed to sustaining tenancies by supporting customers with their money management skills. The Financial Inclusion Team ensures that tenants can plan effectively, as well as receive support and advice for any money concerns. As living costs continue to rise, and Universal Credit (UC) is rolled out alongside other aspects of welfare reform, tenant's budgets are stretched. The Financial Inclusion Team work with clients to complete benefit health checks and confirm they are receiving benefits they are entitled to, as well as giving advice on bedroom tax, benefit cap, and help claiming and renewing PIPs. The team also assist with first time applications for Universal Credit and maintenance of UC Journals online.

Financial Inclusion Manager, Aidan McCrea, began working with Choice in January 2019. Choice has three core values, Customer Focused, Dynamic and Trustworthy. The team embody these values and are excellent ambassadors for the Association and the wider housing sector.

Aidan leads his team by promoting a customer focused approach, working tirelessly to ensure his team are equipped to provide support and advice to the Association's tenants, *"If a tenant is struggling, we look at their budget and give advice. All new tenants are offered a benefit check at sign up and are advised of local charities and grants to assist them when setting up. Our work is centred on creating sustainable tenancies for tenants who are finding it difficult to manage their income."*

Joanne, a Choice tenant commented *"I cannot even start to put into words the help the team have given me. For two years I was not in a good place, and as a result I let my finances slip badly, I was facing eviction. Carleen was an absolute angel and helped me access £3,400 of benevolent fund money to stop my eviction. She has worked with me since, helping me maintain my arrangement to pay and I feel like a new person. I really feel Carleen went over and above and without her I believe I may have lost my home. My tenancy is stable and I'm able to manage my finances, even my home life has improved as a result of addressing these issues! I cannot thank Carleen enough as she still continues to support me on my journey to become debt free."*

Although the Financial Inclusion Team has not been in post for long, they have made a significant impact. With over 350 referrals to the service to date, tenants who have availed of the support have seen an average increase of £35.50 to their weekly income, going some way to alleviate their financial concerns.

The team has developed partnerships with local community organisations such as the Trussel Trust food banks and Debt Action NI. As members of Advice NI's independent advice network, the team champion their tenants by regularly raising policy issues on Welfare Reform.

Personal finances can be a challenge to confront, but the team consistently display sensitivity and discretion with tenants. They have been able to use their combined experience over many years, responding quickly and creatively to tenants' concerns. The support they deliver has built a sense of trust and positive reputation amongst Choice tenants and colleagues alike.

The Team are ambitious and have plans to branch out into full in-house debt advice in the future. They intend to expand on partnerships with local Credit Unions and promote the Choice Savings Scheme so tenants can have peace of mind knowing they have savings set aside.

Outcomes and achievements

The Financial Inclusion team are delivering value for money for both the organisation and tenants alike. In just 9 months of operating, over £900k in financial gains has been secured for tenants through:

- Benefit maximisation and help applying for financial uplifts
- Securing grants to help set up home
- Support for tenants in arrears by establishing sustainable repayment plans based on the tenants personal budget

- Applications to benevolent funds
- Support with Universal Credit applications and maintenance of claims.

A family member of a Choice tenant, who was contacted by the team when her brother had fallen into arrears after his benefits had stopped, commented. *"We could not have managed without the help of the Financial Inclusion Team. I would encourage anyone to make use of this service. If you need help just ask for it...The team are more than happy to help."*

Clare County Council

Team Nominated:

Anne Haugh, director of service

Siobhan McNulty, senior executive officer

Adrian Headd, senior executive engineer

Etain McCooey, administrative officer

Liam O'Connor, administrative officer

Mairead Corbett, administrative officer

Mairin Hill, senior staff officer

Steve Lahiffe, senior staff officer

Tony Neville, senior executive engineer



Statement of support

Clare County Council is one of 31 Local Authorities in the Republic of Ireland; all Local Authorities deliver housing services.

What makes Clare's Housing Team unique are the staff of Clare County Council who work tirelessly for our customers. Clare County Council's housing department has a directly employed staff of 68 people of all grades and competencies; what unifies the department is the common goal of meeting the needs of our customers.

The experience of customers who engage with this department has been enhanced during 2019. This is confirmed in the recent customer satisfaction survey

which was completed during 2019 and indicated an average satisfaction rate of 88% from the ~20% of the respondents who had availed of housing services in the previous 12 months.

Local initiatives such as the Planned Maintenance programme, the establishment of the Homeless Action Team and the successful delivery and pipeline for additional social housing is positively improving performance of the organisation.

Planned Maintenance & Energy Efficiency

The maintenance, comfort and affordability of our housing stock are forefront consideration in the management of the Council's social housing stock of approximately 2600 dwellings. In order to better manage the maintenance of our housing stock Clare County Council commissioned a stock condition survey of all local authority owned stock. This survey information was then used to create cost reports in order to profile expenditure on our stock over the next 30 years. Our award winning planned maintenance programme is now being used as the pilot for a national planned maintenance programme for all 30 other Local Authorities.

To address the comfort element this Council will imminently complete works under the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Energy Efficiency Programme whereby all works to improve energy performance in our social housing stock will be complete.

Homeless Action Team

Individually and collectively staff work with and for customers, many of our customers are vulnerable and/ have additional need, in particular those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To this end Clare County Council initiated an interagency response to homeless services in the County. The Clare Homeless Action Team (HAT) office opened on 1st February, 2019. Clare's new service provides an interagency, integrated approach to homelessness. Issues and needs around accommodation, health and social inclusion are all interlinked and it is only by working together that a sustainable outcome for clients and the Housing Authority may be achieved. 2019 has seen a

significant number of successful exits from homeless services.

Capital Project delivery

2019 has seen the completion of the first directly provided local authority house scheme since 2014. The schemes at Feakle and Clonlara comprising 22 new homes were completed and allocated in recent weeks. The impact for our customers is that 22 households have new A2 rated energy efficient homes in time for Christmas.

Further we are working closely with the DHPLG to ensure a strong delivery pipeline to meet the targets

set under Rebuilding Ireland. In addition to the local authority's own direct build activity, the Council works in collaboration with the Approved Housing Body sector to augment the number of new homes we can provide for those in need of housing in the County.

In the midst of the madness and chaos of local authority housing delivery this team and all staff support each other. We have cake to celebrate success, birthdays and some weeks Fridays! The comradery in times of professional and personal difficulty is heartening. Never shy to organise a night out or party our 'mini' social club ensure our hard working staff get time to play.

Outcomes and achievements

The team's achievements are many, however local authorities are not good to announce their achievements are we are conscious for every achievement/success there are people struggling. That said this team works hard to improve outcomes for our customers and this is worthy of celebration.

This team in Clare County Council won an award from the Irish Council for Social Housing for our planned maintenance project under the housing Management Initiative. This award recognised the value in the innovative project taken on and supported by this Council. In addition Clare County Council is to the fore in the national development of the planned maintenance model for the local authority sector.

Our direct build capital build projects at Feakle and Clonlara were completed ahead of schedule in 2019 thereby ensuring families are settled in their new homes in time for Christmas.

Clare County Council will be one of, if not the, first local authority to complete energy efficiency works to improve building energy performance on all social housing stock. This is a culmination of nearly 10 years of cooperation with the DHPLG in relation to the implementation of the various iterations of the Energy Efficiency Programme.

Co-Ownership

Team Nominated:

Person first programme delivery: key names:

Eileen Hopkins, head of ICT

Glynis Hopkins, director of customer services

Victoria Dunn, customer services manager

Gareth McFarland, operations manager

people to access quality homes and guide them on their home ownership journey. Our brand values help us achieve this, providing a framework of development and enhancement to continually improve the service we offer to potential home owners and our existing co-owners.

Co-Ownership has been on a transformational journey since 2017. In 2018, we achieved the first milestone on our journey - the launch of a new application process including online applications. This was supported by a new brand identity, new website and supporting literature as well as internal restructuring and the introduction of new roles.

We formed a working group covering each department involved in delivering the project. Key decision makers from IT, Finance, Customer Services, Legal, HR and Marketing & Communications came together under a shared vision to build the requirements, plan the build and bring it to life both externally and internally. Each team member brought their own knowledge and expertise as to how to deliver it, and engaged with both the full project team and in smaller teams to achieve all the milestones along the way to deliver the full project.

They brought passion and a desire to deliver the best outcome possible for the customer. Many hours were spent drafting and testing business requirements, training teams and developing comms material to help



Statement of support

At Co-Ownership, we exist to deliver opportunities for

prospective co-owners understand the new process and the benefit it would bring them.

Long hours were worked to overcome problems, and lateral thinking was applied within small groups working together to achieve the outcomes we wanted. We talk about people living the values of an organisation, this team are doing exactly that. In every decision they make, they put our customers first, they bring the right people into working groups in order to work through a particular issue, they strive to bring excellence in everything they do, and work together to make a difference to mention but a few.

Since then we have been continuing down the road of digital transformation and improving our service to customers. Rent management is next on the agenda and the team have been collaborating to improve the service we offer customers and make the process slicker and easier for staff. We have given customers choice around direct debit payment dates which we were unable to do previously, which in turn has increased the number of people switching to direct debit and away from standing order. This is a particularly important win as customers on standing order need to change it themselves when the rent increases annual, with direct debits it happens automatically. This will reduce the number of people falling in to arrears, and we've already seen a significant reduction in arrears as a result of the work already done. 25% fewer customers are in arrears levels now than this time last year.

Our performance has improved dramatically as a result of what this team has delivered. We've moved from a heavy paper-based organisation to an increasingly digital one and there's still more to do in this area for different parts of the customer life cycle. The application is much quicker, as detailed below. The new process ultimately means that we can process more applicants in the year than we could have previously when it was entirely paper based. Here is what some of our co-owners have said on Trustpilot, on which 89% of reviewers have given us 5 stars:

Very clear and simple. All information is available on the website which was helpful. Extremely easy process, application only took around half an hour to complete. They were very quick to get back to me with their decision. I also had to phone them during my application and they were very helpful too. All in all, Co-Ownership is a god send! Amazing what they do here, they can help so many people get on the property ladder but don't necessarily have enough money for a deposit. Would recommend to anyone looking to buy their first home.

Simple stress-free process and help only a phone call away.

Great service which allowed us to buy the house we really needed. Very efficient with no delays at all.

Outcomes and achievements

As mentioned above, our performance has improved dramatically since we delivered this project. Here are a few highlights:

- We give our applicants a decision on their application within 2-3 days, a figure that used to be more like 19 days.
- It previously took 3-4 hours to complete an application form, it now takes about 20 minutes.
- The whole application process is quicker now, and we have had some customers who have completed their house purchase in as little as 5 weeks.
- 45% of applicants now apply directly to Co-Own, showing how straightforward application is and the ease of finding the information. This figure was around 15% previously, with the rest using a financial adviser.
- 24% of customers are now taking a higher share of their home, helping our funds to go further.
- Customers in arrears down 25% on previous year.

Simon Community NI

Team Nominated:
HOME Team



Statement of support

In 2016, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) launched its 'Ending Homelessness Together' strategy to improve housing outcomes for those experiencing homelessness. As the largest homelessness charity in Northern Ireland, we recognised that we were best placed to align the charity with the NIHE's new strategy.

The establishment of the Housing Options Made Easy (HOME) team was the pathway for Simon Community to reduce the likelihood of rough sleeping and the time individuals remain homeless.

What makes the team outstanding?: Working in partnership, Simon Community staff are placed within the NIHE to provide homelessness advice, faster access to temporary accommodation and specialist support. This team's successes have resulted in this approach to homelessness being established as an effective partnership model in Belfast, Lisburn, Bangor and Coleraine. This has enabled priority access for NIHE referrals to Simon hostels, regular housing clinics improving move on options for clients and better understanding on both sides of the issues facing our staff and homeless individuals.

"The HOME team worked with me not to find any roof but to find the right home for my needs. In the Summer of 2018, the HOME team called to say that I had enough points and was allocated a flat in a FOLD. Since then, they've helped me adjust to independent living. I've come a long way from standing over a motorway contemplating suicide to visiting my daughter in New Zealand and volunteering with the charity throughout 2019. None of this would have

been possible without the kindness, support and love from the HOME angels." (Phil, HOME Client)

Particular projects or difficult tasks that they have tackled well together:

The team's unique position within the NIHE has enabled different thinking and solutions to projects and tasks that were impacting the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

Four key areas of concern for the team were:

1. Incorrect needs assessments at point of referral

The team tackled this problem using a hot desk approach to support the front line NIHE Housing Advisors. By developing a 120-hour introduction contract for new clients within Simon accommodation services, the HOME team were able to admit individuals to a project more quickly and use the referral timeframe to assess the full nature of a person's homelessness.

2. Inappropriate placements into Simon services

Responding to a legacy approach of placing individuals into the first available hostel bed, the HOME worked with the NIHE to introduce priority access - whereby appropriateness of a placement was considered. In conjunction, the HOME team analysed individuals who had multiple stays in temporary accommodation to identify trends and develop a better response to chronic homelessness

3. Early intervention and tenancy sustainment

By working at the earliest point of contact, the HOME team were better placed to reduce the likelihood of someone entering the hostel cycle by providing debt reconciliation advice, landlord mediation, connecting individuals to relevant floating support or remaining in contact with those who have successfully found homes.

How the team has improved the performance of their organisation:

Acting as a bridge between the NIHE and Simon Community projects, the HOME team have streamlined the emergency/temporary housing allocation process. They have been responsible for improved awareness for Simon Community NI staff of the Housing Solutions model and the important role this plays in ending homelessness. The HOME team deliver housing clinics across a range of hostels, providing necessary advice and support to staff - reviewing client cases, advising on housing opportunities and working with colleagues to best match individuals to projects e.g. limiting the number of people with alcohol addictions at any one site in order to reduce tensions.

Outcomes and achievements

Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, the team:

- assessed more than 1,200 referrals from Housing Executive advisers
- supported 1,086 clients via housing clinics
- stopped 112 people in crisis from entering temporary accommodation
- found 44 people social homes
- moved 50 clients on to Housing Association tenancies
- worked with 12 clients to find shared accommodation
- encouraged 14 clients to consider the private rental sector

"I had a great job; my own home and I was in love, but my partner turned out to be a bad guy and put me through years of domestic torture. I had lost everything when the HOME team came upon me by accident and saved my life."

"It wasn't easy. I refused to leave my dog and a member of the HOME team adopted him. I was angry, and the HOME team understood that it came from a place of hurt. I became isolated and the HOME team would phone or visit. They helped me move into my new home and without their support I wouldn't be alive. Also, my dog Max wouldn't have the life he has now with his wonderful new family" (Nichola, HOME Client)

Young professional of the year

sponsored by



This award recognises and celebrates the successes of housing professionals who have been working in the housing industry for less than three years.

Christopher Gaffney

Clúid Housing



Statement of support

I would like to nominate Christopher Gaffney for the young professional of the year award for the hard work and initiative that he has demonstrated both in his daily practice as a student housing officer in 2019 and also across a number of large development projects and initiatives. During Chris' time as a student officer he has shown a keen desire to learn and reflect on practice improvements in order to become a more complete and well-rounded practitioner. Part of this desire has been reflected in Chris' commitment to his college course, which has necessitated Chris to give up a minimum of two evenings every week to attend class in addition to weekend modules as set out in his course schedule in property and facilities management in TUD. Chris has taken these learnings and not only applied them to practice but has shared learnings with his peers when the opportunity has arisen. An example of these learnings include a more in depth understanding of building regulations and also a robust understanding of air to heat systems. In addition to these examples,

Chris has strong understanding of his practice across a range of disciplines such as income management, estate management, community development, Voids & allocations and tenancy sustainment. Chris had a particularly challenging case involving a tenant who was reluctant to engage in a matter involving rent arrears, which posed an imminent risk of homelessness. Chris' ability to be empathic, persistent and solution focused culminated in the tenancy being sustained and the arrears outstanding being covered. As part of Chris' development programme, he was assigned a project to identify and address tenant accounts with rental arrears owing under the value of €400 for both Chris' catchment area as well as those of his team. Chris developed and implemented an 8 week project that required persistence, innovation and intense collaboration with his colleagues, tenants and the Clúid Contact Centre. Chris' hard work and determination culminated in a reduction of arrears of over €10,000. This work had a positive impact on Chris' development, his colleague's catchment areas, and the cash flow of the organisation. In addition to this visible impact, the work that Chris' undertook has since influenced the department structure and housing management model of Clúid.

The best example of Chris' professionalism and excellence in service has been his contribution towards the implementation of a new integrated Housing Management system in Clúid. With the introduction of the system, there was a continued need to identify implementation errors, system glitches and gaps in training resources. Chris played a lead role in this project and was at the forefront of identifying solutions, enhancements and training resources for all staff in Clúid. I believe that this example in particular has shone a light in Chris' professionalism and commitment to the values and needs of Clúid Housing.

Outcomes and achievements

The outcomes and achievements of Christopher's work is as follows:

1. A new low level arrears officer post has been created to replicate the work that Chris pioneered on as part of his development project.
2. A resource library has been developed to support all housing staff to navigate and make use of the new Clúid Housing Management system. This library

includes a quickguide manual (circa 10 pages) and a CRM manual (circa 40 pages) that Chris specifically developed. Chris also support his colleague to develop a video library (circa 40 videos). The development of these resources has enhanced the ability of over 60 housing staff to effectively navigate and utilise Clúids Housing Management system.

Caoimhe McAllister

Housing Executive



Statement of support

Caoimhe McAllister joined the Housing Executive in October 2018 through the GEM programme (Graduate Employment Mentoring Programme). The GEM programme is a 12 month innovative self-development and career building programme seeking to progress and equip the next generation of leaders within the Housing Sector. Caoimhe embraced every opportunity afforded her through the Programme, seeking to learn from work placements and through the associated Level 4 CIH Qualification which she has recently completed.

GEM Programme

Throughout her time as a GEM Caoimhe has gained understanding of various business areas within the Housing Executive including Income Collection, frontline Patch Management, Complex Needs and Complaints. Caoimhe approached her placements with enthusiasm and drive to gain an understanding of different professional roles within the Housing Executive and the importance of a joined up approach to delivering excellent customer services.

In May 2019 Caoimhe along with 2 other GEMs organised "The Belfast GEM Shack". This was a 2 day intensive experiential learning session for over 50

housing professionals from across the UK focusing on Equality and Diversity. Caoimhe worked with management and various departments to plan, organise and deliver a valuable day that showcased the work of the Housing Executive and housing sector within Northern Ireland as bastions of equality, diversity, developing strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and brokering good relations between groups and communities. Leadership within the GEM programme state this was one of the most beneficial and enjoyed parts of the GEM programme and this is largely due to the exceptional work of Caoimhe designing and organising this event.

JAM Card

Caoimhe's passion and drive to deliver effective services to the Housing Executive's most vulnerable customers is evidenced through her role in the implementation of the JAM card in the Housing Executive. The JAM Card© and app lets people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need "Just A Minute" discreetly and easily. Those with a communication barrier can be reluctant or unable to tell others about their condition. JAM Card© allows this to happen in a simple, effective non-verbal manner.

Through working with the NOW group, a social enterprise based in Belfast Caoimhe identified how the JAM card could be used within the Housing Executive to better support customers with communication difficulties. Caoimhe met with the NOW group to discuss the potential of the Housing Executive becoming a "JAM Card Friendly organisation", agreed training needs, sought the appropriate approvals from senior managers, established the approach to ensure it met organisational needs and delivered the training. Caoimhe is already looking to how this approach can be future proofed with a train the trainer approach after the initial training completes. Some of the professional skills Caoimhe demonstrated through the implementation of the JAM card and associated training are:

- Ability to identify areas for improvement and organise and deliver a programme of improvement
- Innovation
- Inter-agency working
- Excellent communication and negotiation skills

- Ability to act in a representational role for the Housing Executive with external partner agencies
- Organisation and problem solving skills

In addition to the skills demonstrated Caoimhe's drive to see the JAM Card successfully implemented in the Housing Executive demonstrates her commitment to the ethics and standards of the housing sector,

her desire to see these standards improve among colleagues and passion for delivering high quality services for vulnerable people.

The contribution Caoimhe has made to the Housing Executive in her first year far exceeds expectations and I look forward to seeing how she progresses throughout her career as a remarkable Housing Professional.

Outcomes and achievements

Caoimhe is a vivacious and innovative housing professional. Some of her achievements include:

- The organisation of "The Belfast GEM Shack" (May 2019). This was a 2 day intensive experiential learning session for over 50 housing professionals from across the UK focusing on Equality and Diversity.
- Work that resulted in the Housing Executive becoming a "JAM Card Friendly organisation." The JAM Card© and app lets people with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier tell others they need "Just A Minute" discreetly and easily. Caoimhe has worked with the NOW group,

a social enterprise based in Belfast Caoimhe to identify how the JAM card could be used within the Housing Executive to better support customers with communication difficulties. Caoimhe's work has resulted in the Housing Executive becoming a "JAM Card Friendly organisation", training being delivered to ensure better understanding among staff of how the JAM card works and how to best support customers with communication difficulties. Caoimhe's enthusiasm infectious and her achievements reflect her hard work and determination to improve services for vulnerable people.

Gavin Norris

Housing Executive



Statement of support

Gavin joined the Housing Executive in October 2018 as a Graduate Trainee based in Housing Services. In his 1st year in housing Gavin has shown personal achievement, professional development and contributed to the organisation and wider housing and homeless sector in a way that is exceptional for his short time in the Housing Executive.

Since starting his career in the Housing Executive Gavin has excelled in both frontline operational roles

as a Housing Advisor in Belfast Housing Solutions and in a strategic role in an important project team. As a housing advisor Gavin's attention to detail, his systematic and thorough approach balanced with a genuine concern for vulnerable customers made him a popular staff member both among his colleagues and customers.

Gavin's potential was quickly identified and has been harnessed and further developed through his work in the Housing Solutions Assessment and Access Project (HSAPP), an important strategic project seeking to improve services to homeless people.

The Housing Solutions Assessment and Access Project (HSAAP) is a small team working with providers in the homeless sector to reduce the number of referral forms used for temporary accommodation and homeless services from each provider having a separate referral form to one common form. This project will streamline the delivery of services, making the administration of homeless services more effective and efficient for those working in the homeless sector, in turn creating capacity for staff to spend more time with vulnerable people. Gavin's specific role in this has been:

- Stakeholder engagement with Homeless Support Providers from across the sector, senior managers within the Housing Executive and operational staff to establish need and requirements from a common assessment framework.
- Designing a suitable common assessment form and engaging with stakeholders, receiving feedback and making relevant changes.

- Training homeless support providers and Housing Executive Housing Advisors in the use of a new file sharing application system integral to the progression of the HSAPP.
- Completing research in best practice approaches to common assessment frameworks.

Throughout his time working on the HSAAP Gavin has demonstrated:

- Excellence in communication
- Exceptional skills in building relationships and partnership working
- Consistently high levels of commitment to improving customer service
- Passion for and dedication to improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in Northern Ireland
- Innovation
- Problem solving at a level surpassing the expectation at his grade

Gavin's commitment to helping vulnerable people is further seen in his recent participation in the Belfast rough Sleepers Street count, working through the night with partner agencies to identify people sleeping rough on the streets of Belfast and identifying how they could be helped. In addition to his outstanding

professional performance and commitment to driving forward professional standards within housing Gavin's personal responsibility for his own professional development is demonstrated through his academic achievement. Gavin completed the PG Cert in Business Administration at UUU in September 2019 with the Course Director describing Gavin's marks as "atypically high, a superb achievement". The course director emailed the Housing Executive to congratulate them on the caliber of Gavin's work stating,

"My experience of Gavin is that he approached each module with a quiet determination and would contribute to lectures with insight and careful reflection. He also volunteered to be the NIHE student representative and collated worthwhile feedback which was much appreciated by myself as Course Director."

This praise is unsurprising to those who work with Gavin and see his daily commitment to "going the extra mile" for customers and colleagues alike. Gavin is currently undertaking the CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing and I look forward to watching Gavin progress as a remarkable Housing Professional.

Outcomes and achievements

Gavin is an accomplished housing professional who has exceeded the expectations placed on a member of staff of his grade and time in housing. Some of these achievements include:

- Successful research and innovative delivery of a presentation on "Embracing positive expressions of culture" to 140 senior housing professionals at the Housing Executive's Graduate Trainee Conference (November 19).
- Excellent academic achievement recognised by the University of Ulster MBA Course Director.
- A leading role in the Housing Solutions Assessment and Access Project (HSAAP) working with providers in the homeless sector to reduce the number of

referral forms used for temporary accommodation and homeless services from each provider having a separate referral form to one common form. This project will streamline the delivery of services, making the administration of homeless services more effective and efficient for those working in the homeless sector, in turn creating capacity for staff to spend more time with vulnerable people.

Through his work on the Housing Solutions Assessment and Access Project and work in front line services Gavin has achieved a reputation for being a highly skilled housing professional the Housing Executive is proud to nominate for the award of young professional of the year.

Andrea Martin

Smartmove Housing



Statement of support

Upon graduating with a 2.1 in Housing Management in 2017, Andrea Martin was established as a full time Housing Officer with Smartmove Housing. Her calm, measured and responsible approach to a role to what can often offer challenging situations commanded the respect and admiration of her colleagues. Soon after making her mark as a valued member of the team, Andrea was promoted Deputy Manager in August 2018, making her the youngest staff member to hold a managerial position within the organisation.

At the time of her appointment as Deputy Manager, UC was rolling out across Northern Ireland. Against a background of stagnating real incomes, significant reductions in benefits and rising market rents, the limitation of Local Housing Allowance resulting in a growing gap between LHA and contractual rents, Smartmove Housing began to experience a significant increase in the volume of benefits and rent arrears related cases. Within its property portfolio, there had been an increase in the number of its tenants at high risk due to increasing rent arrears directly linked by the impact of welfare reform.

Welfare reform has also impacted the organisations landlords and potential landlords. With the majority landlords owning one or two properties, they found themselves being unable to withstand escalating arrears with some having concerns in accepting UC claimants which in the past would have never been an issue. Calls to Smartmove from concerned landlords

regarding their tenants ability to pay and confusion on the welfare system increased.

Andrea took it upon herself to address these challenges and the difficult task of tackling the growing arrears cases, with the aim of reducing tenant's rental arrears and by doing so - ensuring tenancy sustainment.

Firstly dedicating herself in resolving the high risk cases, Andrea provided one to one assistance with each tenant, reviewing their benefit elements and successfully increasing the entitlements of some clients. Andrea would then follow by implementing an affordable, sustainable repayment plan satisfactory to both the landlord and tenant.

Andrea extended the allocated sign up time of every new tenancy ensuring that adequate time is spent with those claiming Universal Credit for the first time or moving over from Housing Benefit - providing IT support to those not comfortable with using computers. Andrea would help every tenant in receipt of UC complete their online rate rebate entitlement whilst also ensuring that landlords fulfilled their obligation in completing their part to the process.

Andrea held one to one meetings with landlords, providing them with up-to-date information on changes to the benefit system, how it may affect them and how they can prepare for such changes. Andrea maintained contact with landlords on a weekly basis providing them with updates on benefit claims and tenant progress. This commitment in addressing landlord concerns and improving their understanding of the benefit system provided peace of mind and restored confidence in accepting benefit claimants while allowing time and negotiation to take place, whereby otherwise the tenancies may have been lost.

Andrea has shown great leadership in the ever changing and challenging landscape of the PRS, consistently finding new ways in helping and supporting both landlord and tenant. Her willingness to assist others and commitment in promoting the PRS as a sustainable, viable option for those most vulnerable within our society is unparalleled.

Andrea is a true ambassador for the Smartmove Project and embodies Smartmove's core values, regularly taking on duties beyond her remit to ensure that tenants well being is at the centre of everything she does. Because of this, Smartmove proudly submits this nomination for Andrea Martin to be recognised for the young professional of the year award.

Outcomes and achievements

Within one year Andrea successfully reduced the organisations rental arrear cases by 45%, which continues to improve.

Andrea's active engagement with landlords has seen the number of those availing of the Smartmove's management services continue to grow. Her caring approach has built a trusted rapport with both tenants and landlords, future enhancing the organisations satisfaction rate by 95% amongst service users and 90% amongst its landlords.

Tenant testimony "I found it challenging to manage my finances; I quickly fell behind on my rent and was expecting to be evicted. Andrea was able to quickly put in place a repayment plan, increased my entitlement through the DHP and rates relief which I

knew nothing about. Since then, the relationship with my landlord has improved and by summer 2020 my arrears will be cleared"

Landlord testimony

"Due to mortgage repayments, I rely heavy on the income of rental payments. I was very worried to hear my tenant was moving to UC. Andrea explained the whole process and what to expect so I was able to plan ahead, I was able to communicate better with my tenant and had a clearer understanding of the stress the change also placing on them."



Thank you for attending, we hope
to see you again next year.



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