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Shared Housing

Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group
Code of Practice and Guiding Principles

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

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Introduction

The first phase of Government's Shared Housing Programme was delivered through the Northern Ireland Executive Together: Building a United Community strategy, which included the Headline Action; to deliver 10 new shared neighbourhoods.

The delivery of shared neighbourhoods is now a commitment in the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021, and it is badged "Housing for All". The Department for Communities is committed to delivering 200 shared units per year, as part of the Social Housing Development Programme.¹

Housing Associations delivering shared housing have access to funding ('Good Relations Support') to deliver five-year Good Relations Plans, which must include bridging and bonding projects delivered to the incoming shared community and between the surrounding communities.

In order to support the development and maintenance of the new shared neighbourhood, and to support the development and delivery of the scheme's Good Relations Plan, Housing Associations are obligated to establish Advisory Groups; a criterion for the release of the second Good Relations Support payment.

¹ The Housing Executive produces the Commissioning Prospectus to provide housing associations, developers and other interested stakeholders detailed information about the requirements for the provision of new social and affordable housing throughout Northern Ireland. The prospectus forms an integral part of the Social Housing Development Programme approved by the Minister (Department for Communities). The prospectus is updated and published annually to reflect the most recent assessment of local market issues and unmet housing needs.

1. Name and Status

1.1 The name of the Advisory Group shall be the xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group (hereinafter referred to as “the Advisory Group”), which has been established to develop and oversee the development and delivery of the xx Good Relations Plan (hereinafter referred to as “the Plan”).

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 The Housing Association and members of the Advisory Group should have a good working knowledge of the xx area and its community, and have aspirations of how they want the new xx shared neighbourhood and wider area to develop for the benefit of all residents in the future. It is important that the Plan’s aspirations align with the Together: Building a United Community vision of:
“A united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation - one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.”

2.2 The overall aim of the Advisory Group is to support the good relations initiatives detailed in the xx shared neighbourhood Plan.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of the Advisory Group

3.1 Housing Associations should invite representation from (this list is not exhaustive):

- Local political representatives;
- Police and Community Safety Partnerships;
- Local Council Good Relations Officers;
- Local Community and Voluntary Sector organisations, including local Forums or residents/tenants groups ²
- The Housing Executive’s Local Area Officer and Good Relations Officer.

3.2 The Advisory Group will:

- i. Identify the ‘good relations’ needs of the area by taking account of evidence based community needs that can be supported through good relations projects.

² Participating Community and Voluntary organisations should have a Management Committee and current Constitution.

ii. Publicise and build awareness of the xx shared neighbourhood and associated Plan, and inform and update their communities of progress made.

iii. Consent to the publication, by internet and other media, of the details of the Advisory Group membership and minutes of meetings to ensure openness and transparency.

iv. Ensure that duplication of services is avoided.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of the Housing Association

4.1 The Housing Association is responsible for:

i. Accommodating, chairing and managing the Advisory Group meetings, including minute taking.

ii. Consulting and supporting local communities in the development and implementation of the Plan, including how best projects can be delivered; for example, by statutory,

community and voluntary sector and/or private sector bodies.

iii. Detail and prioritise the good relations activities to meet the needs identified.

iv. Develop and agree the Plan for submission to the Oversight Group, for approval.³

v. Overseeing the implementation of the Plan.

vi. Reviewing the Plan annually (or adhoc to meet an immediate need), in order to monitor progress and ensure that it is fit for purpose and is delivering the stated good relations outcomes.⁴

vii. Retaining overall responsibility for the Plan, including the management of finances to implement delivery of the projects/activities within the Plan.

viii. Ensuring that adequate monitoring and evaluation of good relations projects is carried out (through relevant data collection).

³ The Oversight Group draws membership from officials in the Department for Communities and the Housing Executive.

⁴ Any substantial changes to the Plan must be approved by the Oversight Group; for example:

- If there is a 10% increase in a project's financial projection
 - If a project within the Plan will not be delivered
 - Where a new project is required to meet an identified need
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ix. Assessing all proposed uses of funding; ensuring the Good Relations Support Grant conditions have been met and funding is meeting the evidenced need.

x. Allocating and accounting for Good Relations Support funding to the various providers appointed to take forward the programmes, projects and activities within the Plan.

xi. Promoting projects via the Department for Communities website and other media deemed appropriate.

xii. Maintaining details on Advisory Group membership and the minutes of Advisory Group meetings.

xiii. Supporting relevant training for Advisory Group members to develop their skills and knowledge, as required.

5. Representation

5.1 The Advisory Group may include a broad range of representatives, and may draw from the local voluntary and community sector, statutory organisations, schools, private sector,

faith based organisations and local elected representatives (each of which for ease of reference will be called 'member organisations').⁵

There should be a balance of representation on the Advisory Group; one that reflects the needs of the area.

5.2 Advisory Group members should ensure that effective communications are maintained with other strategic partnerships that they work with, or are members of; for example, the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership etc.

5.3 Representatives from member organisations will be invited to join the Advisory Group by the relevant Housing Association, and members (through the Advisory Group Chair) may recommend individuals to join the Advisory Group; any member recommendations should clearly demonstrate benefits to the delivery of the Plan.

5.4 Details of the composition (and member sectors/organisations) of the Advisory Group are shown at [Annex A](#).

⁵ Members are responsible for bringing their knowledge, expertise and experience to the work of the Advisory Group, in order to support the delivery of the Good Relations Plan.

6. Roles and Responsibility of the Advisory Group Chairperson

6.1 The Chairperson is responsible for:

- i. Agreeing a conducive date, time, place and agenda for each meeting; evening meetings should be given primary consideration where these would facilitate majority attendance (the timing of meetings should be consistent with deadlines for the decisions required on the agenda items).
- ii. Ensuring that all business is carried out in a structured manner and that all views are heard other than in extreme circumstances, every member should be given the opportunity to express a view and have it considered.
- iii. Ensuring that accurate records of meetings are held and are available for consideration by the Department for Communities.
- iv. Ensuring that all records, minutes of meetings and information relating to Advisory Group business are retained for a period of not less than 7 years, and to make any such records available to the Department for Communities upon request.

v. Ensuring that all conflicts of interest are recorded in the minutes (see also [Annex B](#)).

vi. Maintaining a record of attendance and notifying the Department for Communities of any members who are in danger of being disqualified.

vii. Ensuring any concerns raised by members against decisions of the Advisory Group are referred to the Oversight Group.

viii. Ensuring that each member completes a Membership Declaration, on joining the Advisory Group (see [Annex C](#)).

7. Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Group Members

7.1 Members must:

i. Sign a declaration confirming that they will comply with the conditions set out in the Advisory Group's Code of Practice and Guiding Principles.

ii. Disclose any potential conflict of interest on joining the Advisory Group.

iii. Engage in two-way communications with their organisations and/or sector on key issues being considered by the Advisory Group, so that they can express the views and interests of their organisation and/or sector.

iv. Undertake to bring any criticisms or concerns they might have about the value, role and functioning of the Advisory Group to the meeting for discussion, in order to provide the Advisory Group with an opportunity to address them.

v. Participate in an honest manner; to achieve openness it is important for members to feel able to share information and express their opinions freely in meetings.

vi. Treat each other with respect; aggressive, threatening or abusive behaviour or language will not be tolerated.

vii. Keep in confidence any information that has not yet been made public and/or is provided in confidence; members must not use confidential information for their individual personal advantage, or for anyone known to them. Such information should also not be used to disadvantage or discredit the Advisory Group or anyone else.

viii. Declare (on an ongoing basis) any personal or business interests (conflicts of interest) which may, or may be perceived to influence their judgement when performing their duties as a member of the Advisory Group. If at a meeting of the Advisory Group a particular issue arises that could give rise to a potential conflict of interest, then the member should disclose their interest and withdraw from any further discussion or consideration of the matter.

ix. Where receiving remuneration from the Housing Association through their professional engagement in the delivery of the Good Relations Plan, members shall withdraw from any meeting at which his/her own instruction or remuneration (or that of his/her organisation) is under discussion by the Advisory Group.

x. Inform the Chair of any circumstances which will, or may effect their ability to carry out his/her role and responsibilities.

xi. Comply with the equality legislation to the extent that it applies to the Advisory Group.

xii. Be guided by the Seven Principles in Public Life identified by the Nolan Committee see [Annex D](#).

8. Attendance

- 8.1 The relevant Housing Association shall agree an annual schedule of meetings for the Advisory Group.
- 8.2 Any member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Advisory Group without reasonable explanation may be disqualified from membership for non-attendance. In such an event the member organisation shall be informed and requested to nominate a replacement member.
- 8.3 A member may, at any time, resign by giving not less than one month's notice in writing to the Advisory Group Chairperson; a member vacancy arising from a resignation will be referred to the Chairperson to be filled.
- 8.4 The Chair of the Advisory Group may, with good reason and with the consent of the Oversight Group, terminate the membership of any individual or member organisation; providing that the individual concerned or the appointed representative of the member organisation concerned (as the case may be) shall have the right to be heard by the Advisory Group before a final decision is made.

- 8.5 The Advisory Group may from time to time invite people to attend and speak/present at meetings.

9. Sub-Groups and their Function

- 9.1 The Advisory Group may establish Sub-Groups; any such Sub-Group should be developed around the delivery of specific good relations projects detailed in the Plan.
- 9.2 Sub-Groups may plan, deliver, monitor and/or review specific themes or projects in the Plan, as directed by the Chairperson of the Advisory Group.
- 9.3 Membership may include external advisors to contribute to the work of the Sub-Groups, as appropriate.
- 9.4 Sub-Group Membership must be agreed with the Advisory Group.
- 9.5 All activities carried out by Sub-Groups will be routinely reported to the next available Advisory Group meeting. Recommendations made by a Sub-Group, unless otherwise delegated, will be subject to approval by the Advisory Group.

10. Governance and Accountability

10.1 Lead Partner:

i. As the Advisory Group is not a legally constituted body/organisation, the Housing Association will be responsible for the management and oversight of each project in the Plan. This role may be delegated to a member organisation, a Sub-group, or a service provider with responsibility for managing/delivering a specific project detailed in the Plan (see also Section 9).

10.2 Sharing of Information:

i. All Government Departments, Agencies and other funding bodies may share information on programmes and projects to enable them to prevent and detect fraudulent applications and/or to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications. Accordingly, information provided by the Advisory Group on monitoring returns (and any other information provided) may be stored electronically and may be made available to

other Departments/Agencies for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of information and preventing or detecting crime. Such information may also be placed in the public domain.

ii. For the purposes of monitoring the regularity of meetings and budgeting, the Advisory Group will operate on the same financial period as the Department; commencing on 1st April each year and ending on 31st March each year.

11. Fraud and Irregularity

11.1 The Advisory Group shall be aware that the Department for Communities is required to adopt and implement policies and practices to safeguard itself against fraud and irregularity. All cases of attempted, suspected or proven fraud shall be reported by the Advisory Group Chairperson to the Department and other relevant authorities as soon as they are discovered, irrespective of the amount of money involved (see [Annex E](#)).

Annex A

Composition of the Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group

Housing Association:	Chairperson:
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Sector / Organisation:	Representative:
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Sector / Organisation:	Representative:
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Statement on Conflict of Interest

- 1.1 Members of the Advisory Group should not allow the impression to be created that they are, or may be, using their position to promote a private or personal interest rather than the general interests of the area and the aspirations of the shared neighbourhood Good Relations Plan.
- 1.2 If a member of the Advisory Group has a private or personal interest in a matter arising at an Advisory Group meeting, they should disclose it to that meeting, unless it is completely insignificant, or an interest that is generally shared with others attending the meeting.
- 1.3 Members of the Advisory Group who have direct financial interest in any project being considered (by the Advisory Group) for support should declare the nature of the interest. Following such a disclosure the other members of the Advisory Group shall discuss and agree whether the declared interest can reasonably be regarded as likely to influence the member in the assessment and discussion of that particular project.
- 1.4 If the members agree that the declared direct pecuniary interest is remote or insignificant and cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to influence the relevant member, the member may proceed to be involved in the assessment and discussion of the project as if no conflict of interest arose.
- 1.5 If members agree that the interest can reasonably be regarded as likely to influence the relevant member, the member will be required to take no part in the assessment/discussion/decision process.
- 1.6 The declaration and decision of the members must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 1.7 Members of the Advisory Group who have a direct interest which is not a financial interest in any project which is being considered should declare the nature of the interest. Once the interest is declared the member may then take part in the assessment/discussion/decision process, as if no conflict of interest arose. The declaration must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

1.8 Members of the Advisory Group may acquire information that has not yet been made public and/or is confidential. It is a betrayal of trust to breach such confidences; members must not use confidential information either:

- (a) For the personal advantage of themselves or anyone known to them
- or (b) To disadvantage or discredit the Advisory Group or any of its members.

1.9 Members of the Advisory Group and persons who are otherwise associated with it may, from time to time, be offered hospitality or tokens of

goodwill; for example, working lunches may be a proper way of conducting business provided that no extravagance is involved.

1.10 Similarly, it is reasonable for a member to represent the Advisory Group at a social function organised by outside persons or bodies. Members are advised to err on the side of caution in such matters. Members will be personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance or offer of gifts or hospitality and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in the Advisory Group.

Annex C

Xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group Declaration for advisory group members

I have read and fully understood the details contained within the Code of Practice and Guiding Principles between the xx Housing Association and the xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group.

I agree to comply with the conditions as detailed in this document, and to abide by those principles and procedures in my role as a member of the xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group.

Signature:

Print Name:

Organisation:

Date:

The Seven Principles in Public Life identified by the Nolan Committee

Selflessness - Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or friends

Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligations that might influence them in the performance of their duties

Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals / organisation for regards, benefit or grant aid, holders of public office should make choices on merit

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions

to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office

Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest demands

Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest

Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example

Fraud Awareness

- 1.1 The Advisory Group requires all members (and any members of staff) to act at all times with honesty and integrity and to safeguard the resources for which they are responsible.
- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the responsibility of the xx Housing Association and the xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group in preventing fraud and the procedures to be followed where fraud is detected or suspected.
- 1.3 **Definitions of Fraud:** Deception; Bribery; Forgery; Extortion; Corruption; Theft; Conspiracy; Embezzlement; Misappropriation; Concealment; Collusion; and False Representation.
- 1.4 Persons outside as well as inside an organisation can perpetrate fraud and attempted fraud should be treated as seriously as accomplished fraud.
- 1.5 Computer fraud is where information technology equipment manipulates programs or data dishonestly, or where the use of an IT system is a material factor in the perpetration of fraud; theft or fraudulent use of computer time and resources is included in this definition
- 1.6 **Fraud Responsibility:** If fraud does occur (or is suspected) a vigorous and prompt investigation must be carried out by the relevant Housing Association.
- 1.7 The xx Housing Association or (members of) the xx Shared Neighbourhood Advisory Group will refer any suspected cases of fraud to the Department for Communities, take the appropriate disciplinary and legal action and make any necessary changes to systems and procedures to ensure it will not happen again.

Available in alternative formats.

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