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**Housing**  
Executive

# Older People Strategy Year One Action Plan Year 1 Update



**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Exploring Housing options for Older People**

**Publish our Strategic Housing Market Analysis (SHMA) for Belfast and Derry/Londonderry and commence work on further council areas during 2021/22**

We published the SHMA for Belfast and Derry/Londonderry in early 2021. The remaining Council areas were published in autumn 2022.

The SHMA reports set out projections of future housing need and demand, including for older people. The main purpose of the reports is to assist policymakers in their understanding of the dynamics of these Housing Market Areas and to inform Local Development Plans.

Issues affecting older people are:

- Accessing more affordable homes;
- Under-occupancy, suitability/accessibility, fuel poverty, affordability, tenure-specific issues; and
- An increase in demand for housing that meets the needs of older people.

**Assist people to remain in their own homes by providing grants based on an Occupational Therapists recommendation**

We administer a Disabled Facilities Grant which funds adaptations for homes in the private sector for people with a disability, based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist. This is available to owner occupiers, landlords or private tenants.

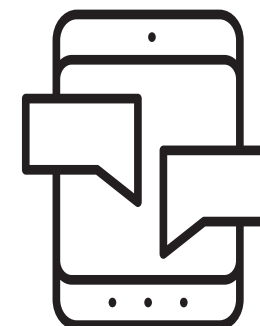
We approved 757 Disabled Facilities Grants in 2021/22 (of which 488 were for an older person) and completed 414 for older people with total expenditure of £8.73m.

**Raise awareness and provide enhanced information on the services and options available for older people**

The Housing Executive continues to provide information for older people through a variety of channels including:

- Face to face discussions between tenants and frontline staff;
- Social media and our website;
- Advertising in local media ('Young at Heart' magazine, running targeted campaigns including winter campaigns, unknown caller and scam alerts);
- Our network of local offices; and
- Our partnership with the Housing Community Network.

As part of our 50th anniversary celebrations the Housing Executive interviewed some of our [tenants](#), colleagues and partners as well as people making a difference in our communities to give us their views and memories of the Housing Executive.



**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**We will pilot a scheme to increase the supply of smaller accommodation through the conversion of larger existing stock**

In Year 1 we explored many flexible options that may assist older people to transition from one type of house to another later in life as their circumstances require. A pilot scheme in Killaney Avenue, Lisburn converted two maisonettes into four flats. The project has been completed and building control for the conversion has been signed off.

Following initial approvals, there were some unforeseen delays with construction works, however once completed the flats will be allocated.

**Continue to deliver our major and minor adaptations service for our vulnerable customers**

In 2021/22 the Housing Executive carried out 113 major adaptations and 4,779 minor adaptations to our housing stock. A minor adaptation may be installing grab rails or replacing a bath with a shower, whereas a major adaptation is more complex and could include bespoke adaptations to properties such as internal reconfigurations, single and double storey extensions and adding access ramps.

These have benefitted a range of tenants including those with disabilities, or those who require some assistance to remain independent in their homes as they age.

**Continue to work with other departments (DfC and DoH) to review and look for ways to reduce processing times to help reduce the inequalities faced by people with disabilities**

A fundamental review of our internal processes was carried out to streamline the process. There are two types of major grants funded by the Housing Executive: our major adaptations programme to our housing stock and a Disabled Facilities Grants scheme (DFGs) to home owners, landlords and private tenants.

From April 2021, we've started reporting on the time we take to process DFGs through those parts of the grants process the Housing Executive is responsible for. Processes outside of our control include provision of evidence from the applicant, planning permission and building control from the local Council and builder availability etc. A baseline of 318 calendar days was established at the end of March 2022 and we have set an improvement target to reduce the baseline by 5% by the end of 2022/23.

In Year 1 we had a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to reduce the timescales for major adaptations to our stock to 52 weeks, taking the impact of Covid-19 into consideration. The majority of live schemes have experienced delays due to challenges including issues with gaining access, delayed surveys, shielding and resourcing issues, all as a result of the pandemic and therefore the KPI was not fully met. We have however made good progress in reducing the time tenants have to wait for a major adaptation in recent years and will continue, where possible to reduce this further.

## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

**Following DfC approval, develop/ implement Year 1 of the Supporting People Strategy (specifically any actions relating to older people as informed by the Strategic Needs Assessment**

The work of Supporting People (SP) is focussed on four thematic areas; working with those who are experiencing homelessness, young people, those with a disability and older people.

The [Supporting People Three Year Draft Strategic Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Plan](#) remains in draft form and is anticipated to be published in autumn 2022.

The draft strategy was developed around four main objectives:

- Drive recovery and re-build from Covid-19, and prevent lasting adverse impacts from the pandemic, by targeting services towards those in need;
- Work towards closing the 14% gap between need and supply. This will be underpinned by evidence from the Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA), prioritising services for Older people; People with Mental health issues; Single homeless people with alcohol and drug problems; and women at risk of domestic abuse;
- Work with Supporting People providers, to invest in service innovation to achieve greater value for money and better outcomes for service users; and
- Strengthen relationships across health, criminal justice and housing to achieve greater collaboration and sharing of risk with the aim of generating greater value from public funds to enhance available resources for housing support.

The principles of the SP Programme inform five high level SP Programme Outcomes, which in turn links into the 11 SP Outcome Indicators (SPOIs) at service level. In 2021/22, the Older People Thematic Group reported an average 93% overall success rate against the indicators across 27 providers, delivering 396 services.

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Explore potential of options to develop/support options such ‘hub and spoke’ or ‘Extra Care’ style principles for housing for older people**

The ‘Hub and Spoke’ model offers services and facilities to the wider community, as well as to residents of the ‘Hub’ sheltered accommodation schemes. This means that a range of services including housing support can be provided from a central point over a defined geographical area to people in the surrounding community.



Older People Floating Support is being extended through piloting a hub and spoke model from existing sheltered schemes, funded through the Supporting People programme. This model was developed in partnership with Radius Housing Association, and became operational in May 2022, through a composite of sheltered accommodation schemes in Newcastle.

Glen Fold, Donard Fold and Lawnfield Court operate as a ‘Hub’, with the community based ‘Spoke’ element of the service operating on a pilot basis for two years.

The ‘Extra Care’ model is also known as an ‘integrated retirement community’. Integrated Retirement Communities combine high quality housing options for older people with tailored support services. They allow residents to rent or own a property and to maintain their privacy and independence, with the reassurance of 24-hour on-site staff, communal facilities, and optional care and support as needed.

ARCO, the main body representing the UK Integrated Retirement Community Sector, presented to the Supporting People team regarding the extra care model. In order to take this model further an SP Provider would have to bring a proposal through the commissioning process, to date none have been received.

**Supporting Independent Living**

**Reduce the time taken for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), from the agreed baseline**

A DFG is available to home owners and landlords to adapt the home of someone with a disability. We work on a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist.

A baseline of 318 calendar days was established at the end of March 2022. Processes have been impacted by pandemic related issues, and supply and demand issues affecting the construction industry. We have set an improvement target to reduce the baseline by 5% by the end of 2022/23.

**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Deliver the Affordable Warmth and Boiler Replacement Scheme; (Including the publication of customer satisfaction where applicable)**

In 2021/22 the Housing Executive improved 4,933 homes through the boiler replacement scheme and affordable warmth measures with a combined spend of £13.12m.

In the latest [customer satisfaction survey](#) 97% of customers agreed that the work carried out had made an improvement to the applicant’s ability to live independently and 94% of respondents said they were satisfied with the grants scheme overall. In addition to this, 58% of respondents to the survey were over 65, 36% of respondents were retired from work and 47% were in receipt of the State Retirement Pension.



**We will use a variety of methods to promote the use of Disabled Facilities Grants (DfGs)**

The Housing Executive uses a variety of channels to promote DFGs which include:

- Housing Executive’s website and social media;
- Housing Executive’s Energy Advice Line (NIEAL);
- NI Direct;
- ‘Young At Heart’ (a quarterly magazine for retired people living in Northern Ireland) advertising feature in publications
- ‘Rural Matters’ publication;
- Occupational Therapists;
- Community representatives and elected representatives including Councillors, MPs and MLAs;
- 11 local councils – for the Affordable Warmth Scheme; and
- On an ad-hoc basis leaflets have been produced and printed for distribution.

By using a variety of methods we aim to inform and promote the use of DFGs as widely as possible to maximise the number of people, including older people, who might benefit from them.

**Review the information that we provide in our offices and our website for Grants**

A review of information that we display and provide in local offices for our Grants service has been completed.

**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Commence a pilot tenant incentive scheme to maximise accessible housing stock**

In 2020/21 Housing Services carried out research and analysis to bring forward proposals to make best use of properties which are adapted or wheelchair standard stock. Following approval a pilot tenant incentive scheme initially commenced in June 2021 for a period of six months across three of our area offices.

Pandemic restrictions caused significant disruption to service delivery and our ability to carry out face to face visits. The incentive details are being reviewed and following approval in early 2022/23 the pilot scheme is expected to be extended and expanded across all our area offices.

**Subject to DfC approval, we will implement a Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)/Low Energy pilot re-provisioning scheme for delivering new social housing**

The Housing Executive is currently engaged in the provision of developing and delivering a sustainable future proofed social housing re-provision scheme using modern methods of construction to increase energy performance and carbon reduction targets.

Together with the Department for Communities, the Housing Executive is exploring the viability of combining energy efficiency measures with Modern Methods of Construction. The scheme has been tendered and the tender evaluation exercise is complete. As the price exceeds the previous DfC approval we have submitted an addendum to DfC seeking its revised approval. Subject to this approval being obtained we would hope to start on site later this financial year.

**We will undertake two pilot schemes to assess the suitability of Modern Methods of Construction in delivering major Adaptations**

Plans to be on site in 2021/22 with our Modern Methods of Construction/low energy re-provision scheme pilot in Belfast were delayed. The tender process has been completed and an appointment is due to be made on approval from the Department for Communities. It is hoped that the pilot will be on site by the end of the financial year.

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Carry out a pilot exploring if HAPPI style design principles could be applied to existing stock in the appropriate circumstances**

The HAPPI (Housing and Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) principles are based on 10 key design criteria. Many are recognisable from good design generally such as good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage, however they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons’ housing which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home, and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

A pilot scheme applying HAPPI principles to the typical standard category 1 scheme criteria (self-contained accommodation for active older people with a scheme supervisor and communal areas) was practically completed mid-April 2022 by Radius Housing Association with the following scheme enhancements for HAPPI applied:

- Balconies/covered patios;
- Window seats;
- Scooter entrance and storage area;
- Common room and kitchenette;
- Recessed entrances;
- Oversized windows and screens;
- Covered first floor terrace area;
- Extra wide corridors and staircases; and
- Additional landscaping works and additional external lighting.



The 20 unit scheme comprises of 14 apartments and 6 houses. The scheme is now occupied and Radius Housing Association, along with the Housing Executive and Department for Communities, will carry out an evaluation after six months and a further more detailed evaluation after 12 months.

**Deliver a reinstatement scheme for a derelict block of flats (Lisnafin) that will be aimed at older tenants and will involve the provision of assistive technology to support independent living**

The Housing Executive are giving consideration to how we can provide elderly and vulnerable tenants with Assistive Technology in their homes. This could help maintain or improve their ability to perform everyday activities and tasks by assisting with difficulties such as memory and mobility problems. With relatively low set-up and maintenance costs, this technology could minimise the frequency of support required and have positive outcomes for loneliness and isolation.

To test the effectiveness of this approach, we are currently renovating an empty block of six maisonettes in the Lisnafin estate in Strabane and installing broadband enabled Assistive Technology. Once completed, this scheme will be allocated to over 55s from the local waiting list and outcomes will be monitored through our local office.



**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE****Ensure the needs of older tenants are reflected in our planned and response maintenance programme**

In 2021/22 the Housing Executive spent £117m on stock investment and property adaptations. The Housing Executive carried out a number of adaptations to our properties to ensure our older tenants can remain in their own homes as long as possible. Some of the adaptations include installing 4,481 grab rails, hand rails and balustrades and 1,141 baths were replaced by shower installations.

Some other adaptations include outdoor lighting for elderly or disabled customers with visual or mobility difficulties; additional toilet facilities; widening of garden paths for wheelchair users or people with walking aids; and provision of lever taps at wash hand basins in the kitchen and bathroom.

**We will maximise the use of Floating Support for older people and will increase the number of floating support services for older people where appropriate, subject to available funding**

The Supporting People budget for 2021/22 was £75.6m. Of this 17.4% (£12.3m) was allocated to Floating Support Services. The Supporting People programme helps people to live independently. Floating Support is one element of the programme that assists people that need housing related support to maintain independence in their own home. Across Northern Ireland there are 13 floating support schemes for older people.

In 2021/22 Belfast Central Mission extended their floating support scheme in Belfast by 10 places.

A promotional video for [Floating Support](#) was released on Twitter in March. The video informs viewers that Floating Support assists both young and old to remain independent in their own homes through the provision of a range of housing related support.

**PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

**Encourage and support applications to the Provider Innovation Fund (PIF) particularly for assistive technology pilots and research into new and better ways of delivery our services for older people**

The Provider Investment Fund (PIF) is a competitive fund that aims to support improvements to the delivery of the Supporting People Programme. Existing Supporting People providers can bid for support to help them improve their delivery of the Supporting People Programme. Two examples supported through the PIF in Year 1 included:

**Radius Housing: Modernisation of Sheltered Housing Support**

The pandemic identified the need and urgency to prioritise the implementation of a Wi-Fi enabled mobile working solution within every sheltered housing scheme to ensure staff can remain in contact with our vulnerable older people and continue to provide a full support service to our customers. Radius recognised the importance and urgency of providing a digital platform where service users can interact and stay in touch with family friends and more importantly their health care and support providers. Through a total investment of £67,920 we have supported older people to remain connected with their care and support networks whilst also working to help combat loneliness and social isolation.

**Loughgiel Community Association: Loughgiel’s Keeping Connected Project**

We supported an investment of £18,263 to purchase six laptops and essential training and technical support for staff. These are used to collect monitoring data on the clients, to maintain contact with clients when staff are working remotely via Zoom and Skype; and for staff use when they are with clients to check on progress of benefit applications/ entitlements and to update support plans.

**Ensure that the needs of older people are considered in the context of each of the high level outcomes of the new Rural Strategy 2021-2025 and that details of services aimed at older people are included in every biennial edition of the Housing Executive’s “Rural Matters” publication.**

‘Reaching Rural’ the Rural Strategy for 2021-2025 focuses on three themes: supporting our rural customers; enabling the provision of affordable rural homes; and securing the future of our rural communities. There is one specific priority in relation to older people which is ‘we will continue to review and improve our housing support services to meet the needs of an ageing rural population’.

However whilst many of the actions don’t have a specific focus on older people, the activities provide benefits to older people ranging from improving the energy efficiency of our stock, to addressing homelessness, and making energy efficiency grants available to private home owners.

The summer 2021 edition of Rural Matters included a range of articles with useful information for rural tenants and customers including details on how to access the tenant portal, our dementia friendly champions, Home Swapper and with contact details for Rural Support Networks and a Domestic Abuse Helpline.



## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING DIGNITY

**Continue to roll out and deliver the Dementia Friendly approach for housing and response maintenance staff across our network of local offices**

In 2018, a ‘Dementia Friendly Homes’ pilot in our South Down area was carried out. Since then, we have trained 140 Dementia Friends throughout the organisation, providing bespoke support not only to our tenants living with dementia, but also to their families. We are able to support tenants in a number of ways, such as adapting their home, providing a ‘Dementia Friendly Pack’ full of items that can make doing everyday tasks easier, and can refer them to partner agencies that provide specialist support. With the tenant’s permission, an alert/trigger can also be added to our customer records on our housing management system so that when we get in touch, we do so in a way that meets their needs, and suits both the tenant and their family.



By March 2022, 175 Dementia Packs have been distributed across all of our offices which will help support customers to remain living independently in their home.

**Continue to roll out our Jam Training programme and provide communication support for a range of vulnerable customers**

Although no new JAM (Just a Minute) sessions were carried out in 2021/22 given the closure of our offices and the continuing impact of the pandemic, the Housing Executive remains a JAM friendly organisation.

**Tackle fear of crime issues for those elderly groups within our communities**

Housing related issues can disproportionately affect older people who may be more vulnerable and may be socially isolated, without a support network or with a disability. These may be further compounded by a number of age related issues such as dementia or frailty. Whilst the majority of our estates are safe and popular places to live, we recognise that nuisance and anti-social behaviour are real issues that impact on communities and individuals. Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is a key concern, particularly for our older customers and tenants and can have serious detrimental impacts on older people. These include loneliness and social isolation, negative impacts on mental health and confidence and also impacts upon their right to enjoy their home and their tenancy.

The Housing Executive’s Neighbourhood Officers tackle issues that affect all residents from environmental to addressing estate safety and working with the community. We also work with a number of partner agencies to address these issues.

As part of the ‘Respect’ Programme young people are taught about the consequences of anti-social behaviour and crime, including hate crime, on communities. The initiative is funded by the Housing Executive’s Community Safety team and was developed by the Children’s Safety Education Foundation.

**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING DIGNITY****Further develop the North West Assistive Technology pilot to support independent living for vulnerable tenants, including older tenants**

In September 2017, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive commenced a pilot project to install a range of assistive smart technology equipment into 15 tenant's homes in the North West, to support tenants with disability or mobility issues. The equipment supplied to tenants was tailored to their individual needs depending on their level of disability. In the case of tenants with limited mobility, voice recognition allowed them to issue commands to Alexa, such as turning on lights, switching television channels and keeping in touch with family members. In some instances such as limited dexterity, the tenant was supplied with a tablet to use. Nest thermostats, smart plugs, video doorbells, and Firesticks were also provided as part of the pilot.

Discussions with the Western Health & Social Care Trust to expand the scheme throughout the West area were put on hold in 2020 due to pandemic and lockdown restrictions.

Consideration is being given to develop a Smarter Homes Project which will maximise the use of assistive technology in older people's homes throughout Northern Ireland, which would be subject to business case approval and funding.

**Maximise the use of Floating Support for older people**

The Supporting People fund for 2021/22 was £70.7m. Of this, 17.4% (£12.3m) was allocated to Floating Support Services. Across Northern Ireland there are 13 floating support schemes for older people.

In 2021/22 Belfast Central Mission (BCM) extended their floating support scheme in Belfast by 10 places. BCM Housing Support provides support to help older people remain independent and continue to live in their own homes for as long as possible. Some of these tasks can be to help service users to look after their home as well as themselves, to learn how to budget and carry out personal administration and make choices in relation to their health and well-being.

A promotional video for [Floating Support](#) was released on Twitter in March. The video informs viewers that Floating Support assists both young and old to remain independent in their own homes through the provision of a range of housing related support.

**Consider the implications for Floating Support services following the review of the 'Two Year Rule'**

The Department for Communities (DfC) carried out a policy review which included the 'Two Year Rule' for floating support services.

**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING DIGNITY****Explore potential of options for ‘hub and spoke’ or ‘Extra Care’ style principles for housing for older people**

The ‘Hub and Spoke’ model offers services and facilities to the wider community, as well as to residents of the ‘Hub’ sheltered accommodation schemes. This means that a range of services including housing support can be provided from a central point over a defined geographical area to people in the surrounding community.

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ARCO is the main body representing the UK Integrated Retirement Community Sector presented to Supporting People about the extra care model. In order to take this model further an SP Provider would have to bring a proposal through the commissioning process, to date none have been received.

**Publish our Supporting People Strategy 2021-24 and deliver year 1 actions**

The [Supporting People Three Year Draft Strategic Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Plan](#) and associated action plan remain in draft form and is anticipated to be published in autumn 2022.

Some of the high level actions specific to older people in the draft Strategy are:

- Increase the number of floating support units for older people;
- Develop/remodel dementia and frail elderly services to address voids;
- Implement funding flexibility and a standard payment for sheltered accommodation services; and
- Work with providers to continue to review and research models of support for older people including Extra Care.

## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROMOTING AND MAINTAINING DIGNITY

**Provide a range of communication support through our JAM friendly offices and our equality and safeguarding team**

The JAM Card, which stands for 'Just A Minute', is a card that anyone with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier can use as a discreet way of letting people know that they need 'Just a minute' more. As full roll out was placed on hold given the Covid-19 situation and our counters were closed, this was paused and work is recommencing.

The Communication Support service provided linguistic and sensory disability support to over 5,600 customers in 38 languages including sign language. In 2021/22 we supported 36 communication requests for alternative formats, which included large print and braille.



**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PROVIDING HOUSING ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE****Deliver an enhanced range of housing advice and services for older people**

The Housing Executive delivers a range of housing advice and services that benefit older people including via 140 Dementia Friends throughout the organisation; by providing large scale print documentation; media campaigns for winter, how to identify an unknown caller at your door and scam alerts. We also offer the Next Generation Text service for use by those who are deaf, hearing or speech impaired. In 2021/22 the organisation received 207 calls from customers using the Video Relay Service (VRS).

We also contribute to a variety of media publications both internally and externally to communicate and publicise the range of services that we can offer to customers, including older people. We communicate any new initiatives or improvements to our services through the Housing Community Network, where representatives further disseminate this through the extensive network of community groups and organisations.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have continued to maintain a local presence in communities and estates to provide advice and assistance to our tenants and customers regarding a range of issues, including those that emerged as a result of the pandemic. In particular our network of Patch Managers and Housing Advisors offer advice and support on various initiatives, programmes and schemes at a community based level that can benefit our older customers in a number of ways.

**Build new or develop existing partnerships with those who support, advocate or represent older people**

Our Housing and Health team was formed in March 2021 and is a joint funded post with the Department of Health in order to promote collaborative working between agencies in the delivery of housing for people with disabilities. Through this role, we continued to build new, and strengthen existing relationships including through the formation of an Interdepartmental Housing and Health Adaptations Programme Board made up of Department for Communities, Department of Health and the Housing Executive.

We also delivered interagency training for complex case management with Health and Social Care Trust Occupational Therapy services and Housing Executive staff.

Throughout the year updates on services we provide that benefit older people were also provided to organisations and groups that support, advocate or represent older people including the Consultative Forum on Equality and the Housing Community Network.

**PROVIDING HOUSING ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

**Deliver Year 1 of our Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, of which older people have been identified as a potentially vulnerable group**

The Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy (CSTSS) was launched in late 2019 with an extension to the lifetime of the strategy approved by Board in May 2021.

The main focus of the 2021/22 CSTSS was the development and implementation of the Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme, which was launched in October 2021 to provide multi-year grants (between £5k and £50k) to organisations within the voluntary, community and charitable sector with the aim of improving the sustainability and resilience of Housing Executive tenancies.

A total of 20 Projects, which support the sustainability and resilience of Housing Executive tenancies and contribute to the comfort and wellbeing of our tenants, were offered funding. These projects include customers who fall into the ‘older people’ category. Another key achievement was the commencement of our research “Understanding Tenancy Termination and Issues for Sustainment” of which Older People are identified as a customer segment. This research is ongoing and we will consider the findings when completed.

**Deliver our ‘Making Your Money Work’ – Financial Advice for at risk groups and continue to maximise benefit uptake for older people**

In 2021 the Housing Executive launched the ‘Making Your Money Work’ initiative. This service is to help with budgeting, benefits, and making your money go further. Financial Inclusion Managers (FIMs) can do a free benefits check, help make a budget, and gives tips to make the most out of each customers income. We have also developed a budget calculator tool that creates a bespoke budget for each customer. Around 600 staff (Patch Managers, Income Collection Officers, and Housing Advisors) are trained to use the calculator and offer this service to tenants. A calculation is offered at multiple steps of the customer journey, and is currently availed of by an average of 50 tenants and customers per month.



The FIMs received 2,605 referrals from frontline staff during 2021/2022 they have helped customers in a variety of ways including through advice and assistance, advocacy and liaison work with benefits agencies, referrals and engaging with tenants at risk of court action and/or eviction due to arrears. Through their income maximisation work, the Financial Inclusion Managers have generated in excess of an additional £1 million in potential annual benefit entitlement for customers in the period from September 2021 to March 2022.


Under the next phase we are developing a range of other services, which includes providing advice and assistance about bank account options, credit unions, energy supplier options, media packages and employment opportunities.



## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROVIDING HOUSING ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

	<p>We also work with credit unions, and Advice NI, and the ‘Make the Call’ service. DfC provides the Make the Call Service which provides a full assessment of an individual’s benefit entitlement to ensure customers are maximising their income and receiving all the financial support they are entitled to.</p>
<p><b>Provide housing advice in various formats and channels</b></p>	<p>We provide housing advice in various formats and channels. We have 32 local outlets and five Customer Service Units (CSUs) spread geographically across Northern Ireland, many of these situated in the heart of local communities. These offer a range of services such as housing and tenancy management, maintenance, income collection and through our office network we engage on a variety of community based, and led, initiatives.</p> <p>Our Neighbourhood Wardens, Patch Managers, Housing Advisors and Good Relations Officers continue to deliver services in our estates and communities.</p> <p>Our local presence is further complemented by a range of other communication and engagement channels including through our website and social media channels and on the phone which includes 24/7 support for emergency repairs and homelessness services.</p> <p>We can provide advice around each customers need and customers can avail of various channels for a range of our services, depending on their preference. We also deliver and provide information through phone and sign language interpreters, information sessions, community workshops and leaflets and webinars on a range of issues that directly and indirectly effect older people.</p>
<p><b>Target information/Customer Segmentation for older people about issues that matter to them e.g. seasonal advice and working alongside statutory agencies</b></p>	<p>The Housing Executive has delivered a number of campaigns targeted at Older People. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through features in our annual tenant magazine, ‘Streets Ahead’ on areas such as: Dementia Friendly Homes/Pack; Supporting Independent Living; and Scam Awareness;</li> <li>• Promotion of Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding. This funding is open to community and voluntary groups and supports our tenants in creating more resilient, sustainable tenancies. There are 4 main priority funding areas, one being tackling social isolation; and</li> <li>• Top Tips for Winter Campaign. This campaign highlights simple tips on how to protect your home from and minimise damage that can be caused by cold weather.</li> </ul> 

## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROVIDING HOUSING ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

#### **Represent the Housing Executive at a range of external events and publications**

The Housing Executive continues to be represented at a variety of external events including community workshops and meetings; regional conferences; consultation events; cross-departmental working groups and forums.

In Year 1, having been identified as a key stakeholder, we commenced engagement and collaboration in relation to the development of a new Department for Communities led, active ageing strategy. Work on this will continue in Year 2 of the strategy.

Regular updates on the progress to date on Year 1 of the Older People's Housing Strategy Year 1 action plan have been provided to the Housing Community Network as well as Belfast City Council G6 Older People's Forum.

The Housing Executive publishes a number of magazines including Rural Matters, Streets Ahead, and Community Grant Funding magazines. In addition, we also contribute to a number of publications including Young at Heart, Supporting Communities E-Zine and Fuel Poverty Focus.

**PROMOTING PARTICIPATION****Deliver Year 2 of the ONSIDE Project which aims to increase the digital capability for those who are disabled and socially isolated**

In March 2020, in partnership with Disability Action Northern Ireland, the Independent Living Movement Ireland and Supporting Communities we launched the ONSIDE (Outreach & Navigation for Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement) Project. The ONSIDE project motto is “Creating Community Connections”. The project aims to address the barriers that prevent some of our disabled customers from becoming fully engaged through delivering projects designed to digitally include and increase social networks in the community and online and to promote health and wellbeing.

The project runs six week programmes for participants including providing a tablet device and training on how to use the tablet to access a variety of services. To date, 2,197 people have completed the training with 64% of participants aged 50+ and 43% participants aged 60+.

There are also ‘connection sessions’ each month where a number of agencies presenting their services include Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke and Northern Ireland Versus Arthritis. These sessions are very popular and are a great source of information for participants. Older people can keep up to date on the latest developments of the project by checking out the ONSIDE website and using social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter.

At the end of February 2022, ONSIDE hosted the first of three regional conferences and Mat Fraser (English rock musician, actor and comedian) was the VIP guest speaker. The event was well attended and celebrated the success of the project to date. The remaining two regional conferences will be held in 2022/23.

## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROMOTING PARTICIPATION

#### **Where possible, support and encourage increased digital inclusion and digital capability for older people**

During 2021/22 we supported two projects via our Community Grants programme awarding a total of £6,836.62. This included:

#### **West End Partnerships**

Tablet devices were purchased to enable older people in the area to become digitally connected. Our Digital Inclusion Officers arranged training to show how to use a tablet for everyday tasks including social media, emails and online banking.

#### **Digital Champions Project**

This cross community project in West Belfast that aims to tackle and address digital skills gap by training grassroots Digital Champions to deliver internet and digital technology training to others. The Digital Champions are volunteers from a range of community groups.

Working in partnership with the Innovation Factory, Digi Skills and Black Mountain Shared Space, the Digital Champions used the skills they have learnt and shared this with family, friends and the wider community. This has particularly benefited many older recipients of the project who would not have received any digital training through formal education. This skills transfer will provide a useful tool in helping address loneliness through enabling people to stay in touch with friends and family, look for work, make social connections and access key services online.

**PROMOTING PARTICIPATION**

**Continue to support a range of initiatives to reduce social isolation and loneliness and promote through our community grants scheme and the delivery of community based strategies**

To reduce social isolation and loneliness, in 2021/22 the Housing Executive supported over 40 older people specific community grants/community initiatives. In addition, a further five intergenerational projects were funded.

Some examples are listed below:

**Share and Care Project**

Two primary schools in Derry City have been ‘sharing and caring’ with older residents nearby as part of a community cohesion project funded by the Housing Executive. Delivered by Good Shepherd Primary School, the project saw pupils from Good Shepherd Primary School and nearby Oakgrove Integrated Primary School meet online via zoom calls with the Older Peoples Group from Inspire Community Wellbeing. The groups met over several sessions to explore who they were, learning a lot about each other’s age groups and getting to know what mattered to them. By taking photos with disposable cameras and creating scrapbooks, the children and older people built a mutual understanding and appreciation for each other.

**Loughries Men’s Shed**

Men’s Sheds are community spaces springing up all over Northern Ireland for men to get together, talk and create, and share their skills with each other, helping them build friendships and reducing isolation. A £4,550 grant from the Housing Executive has enabled the newly established Loughries Men’s Shed project to buy a shed and build a patio and disability access pathway.

In just over a year, the group has prepared and planted out land at Newtownards Allotments on the shores of Strangford Lough, with Scrabo Tower in the distance. The group has almost 20 members who come along once a week and up to 15 more who drop in occasionally. Men come together, socialise, share ideas and learn new DIY skills including woodwork. In addition to this the ‘Shedders’ planned further outreach into the local community with residents, day centres, youth schools and groups.

**YEAR 1 ACTION****UPDATE****PROMOTING PARTICIPATION**

**Develop an Older People’s Forum to better understand key issues for older people and to establish a forum to shape and scrutinise the services we deliver**

Proposals to develop an Older People’s Housing Forum through the Housing Community Network were not progressed as there are already a significant number of older people involved at all levels as part of the Housing Community Network.

In addition to this, Year 1 updates on the Older People’s Strategy Action Plan, were provided to a number of groups who are part of the wider Housing Community Network.

**Provide opportunities and activities for older people at local levels through our community based strategies**

To reduce social isolation and loneliness, in 2021/22 the Housing Executive supported over 40 older people specific community grants/community initiatives. In addition, a further five intergenerational projects were funded.

Some examples are listed below:

**Greysteel Community Garden**

With the help of this funding a community garden was created for the over 65s Lunch Club and their friends. Members of the group were able to plant flowers, shrubs and vegetables while also maintaining the upkeep of the garden. The garden is also used for small gatherings connected with the Community Association. The community garden has provided a much needed addition to the people of the local community, providing them with a place of relaxation and enjoyment

**Mourneview and Grey Micro Garden Project**

This grant helped bring about positive changes and benefits within the area through the establishment of a Nature Inspired Arts and Crafts Project. Following the pandemic the project helped to bring the community together again, reducing social isolation and loneliness. The project promoted health and nutrition with a focus on regular healthy eating, whilst also making links with the grant holders community house garden project. Overall this project helped sustain links and friendship groups between service-users.

## YEAR 1 ACTION

## UPDATE

### PROMOTING PARTICIPATION

#### Continue to deliver our community based initiatives and advice sessions targeted at older people

To reduce social isolation and loneliness, in 2021/22 the Housing Executive supported over 40 older people specific community grants/community initiatives. In addition, a further five intergenerational projects were funded. An example included:

#### **Moygashel Residents Association Mental Health & Well-being**

The project ran a series of events to support older people and residents to re-engage with the wider community following the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions. The group ran Health and Well Being talks in the local hall for residents over 60 years of age focusing on their mental health. They also delivered weekly walks around the village and in to Dungannon Park, which encouraged people to exercise and promoted engagement opportunities with others. Following the relaxation of pandemic restrictions, a Christmas dinner was also held which provided an opportunity to promote and encourage social interaction and engagement with others.

#### Deliver our Social Enterprise Strategy which supports a number of initiatives directly aimed at older people to increase their health and wellbeing

Since 2015, our Social Enterprise Programme has supported a range of social enterprises. These have delivered services from recycling and catering to graphic design and childcare. The Social Enterprise Strategy has been extended to 2024.

At present there is one initiative directly aimed at older people (Rural kitchen, providing meals for older residents in Drumahoe, Derry/ Londonderry) there are a number of Social Enterprises across Northern Ireland that benefit older people including:

- Sweet Sound Community Café in Dundonald is a community café that serves hot and cold food;
- Gardening and maintenance works across Belfast (gardening and outdoor maintenance); Limavady (grass cutting and garden maintenance); Armagh (community maintenance service); and Derry/Londonderry (low cost community maintenance);
- Sew Healthy in Bangor lead by a group of volunteers to hand-make post-surgery accessories; and
- A number of heritage projects across Belfast (Guided tours of Belfast's cemeteries), Ballyclare (Museum of War Memorabilia) and Derry City (Historical tours of Derry City Cemetery).



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