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**Communities**

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# Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan

Year 3 Action Plan

# Introduction

1. This Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan has been developed to complement the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy 2017–2022.
2. While the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy focuses on accommodation based or housing-led solutions to homelessness, this plan focuses on addressing gaps in 'non-accommodation' services beyond the remit of the Housing Executive. These are services that have the potential to positively impact on the lives and life chances of people who are homeless and those who are most at risk of homelessness.
3. The Action Plan is a rolling plan that will evolve over the last year of the Homelessness Strategy (and the soon to be published 2022 – 2027 Strategy) and will support the delivery of Outcome 8 within the draft Programme for Government.
4. The Year 3 Action Plan has been equality screened and the actions included reflect feedback from stakeholders. As detailed in the equality screening form for the Action Plan, individual actions will be subject to screening by the responsible lead Departments in line with their respective Equality Scheme.
5. Feedback from the homelessness provider sector on the Year 2 Action Plan was positive. Whilst it was noted that all actions could not be completed due to the Pandemic, there was an acknowledgement from the sector that there continued to be a collaborative approach across Government Departments which in turn led to a more coherent Action Plan. The Year 2 Action Plan & Report can be accessed via the link below.  
  
**<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/interdepartmental-homelessness-action-plans>**

## Development of the Action Plan

6. As with previous years, a co-production approach has been adopted from the outset to develop the Year 3 Action Plan. This is in recognition that input from those who are experiencing or who have experienced homelessness during the development, implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan is essential to its success.


tasked with giving feedback on all draft iterations, and providing advice and guidance during the development of the Year 3 Action Plan. To ensure that there was appropriate linkage with the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy 2017–2022 representatives from the Housing Executive were also included in discussions.
7. To facilitate this approach, communication was regular and ongoing between the Department for Communities, a number of Government Departments and the voluntary sector. All stakeholders were
8. Once agreement was reached between all stakeholders on the draft plan, it was presented to the Homeless Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) for approval.

# Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

9. Our focus will be to evaluate how the Action Plan contributes to our overall objective of improving the lives and life chances of those who are homeless and those most at risk of homelessness. The Action Plan will remain a 'living document' throughout the lifetime of the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy so that the Department for Communities with input from partner organisations, service providers and service users, can keep it up-to-date and responsive.
10. HSSG will have overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan. This group, which meets quarterly, also has responsibility for monitoring the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy. The HSSG will review quarterly progress reports on the Action Plan and will also be responsible for signing off an annual progress report and any future iterations of the Action Plan.
11. A policy lead has been allocated for each action within the Action Plan. There will be regular meetings of policy leads and quarterly progress reports will then be provided to DfC prior to submission for HSSG review/approval. The quarterly meetings will include Housing Executive representatives to ensure that there is a continued connection with the Homelessness Strategy.
12. If the Pandemic allows and in order to facilitate ongoing stakeholder engagement, an annual conference/workshop will be convened involving Government Departments, statutory agencies, service providers and service users. The objective for this event will be to review the draft annual progress report, review the impact of the actions to date, assist in the identification of available data to inform the monitoring and evaluation of impacts, agree any actions that should carry forward to the following year including any refinement or further development that is necessary and agree any new actions that should be added to the Action Plan.
13. The annual conference/workshop will be arranged prior to the HSSG's review of the annual progress report to allow stakeholder feedback to be incorporated within the draft annual report.


14. Finally, we will seek to ensure that the wide range of mechanisms which are already in existence are utilised to their full potential to promote the maximum impact in sharing learning and good practice and improving communication among and between all interests.


<b>PRIORITY AREA 1</b> <b>Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p><b>DoH</b> Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p><b>DoJ</b> Department of Justice <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>1. Belfast Inclusion Hub</b> – Continued development and progression of the Belfast inclusion hub within existing budgets and with learning from Covid-19</p>	<p>Ongoing development - Recurrent funding was secured in October 2021 and this will facilitate further recruitment, improve stability within the team and offer enhanced service delivery for service users.</p>


Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>DoH Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>2. <b>Mental Health Strategy</b> - Development of an action plan for promoting mental health through early intervention and prevention which will consider groups disproportionately affected by mental ill health (Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031, Action 2)</p>	<p>Timescales – commencing 2022/23 and ongoing throughout lifespan of Strategy</p>


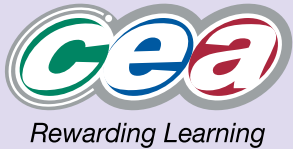
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p><b>DoH</b> Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department fur <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>3. <b>Covid- 19</b> - Continue to seek to support the provision of accommodation for those with no recourse to public funds while the Covid-19 Public Health restrictions remain in place through the existing MOU.</p>	<p>Ongoing through Pandemic</p>






Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk</p>	<p>4. <b>Development of a new strategy to prevent and address the harm related to substance use</b>, with appropriate links to the mental health strategy and homelessness.</p>	<p>Strategy published Sept 2021 - Ongoing</p> <p>The Department of Health is now setting up implementation structures to support the delivery of the new strategy. The new substance use strategy programme board will be chaired by Prof Sir McBride and will involve key stakeholders and a range of departments (including DfC), service users and their families as well as community and voluntary sector representatives.</p> <p>There may be a number of sub-groups established, for example there may be one on research, monitoring and indicators. In addition, the Health and Social Care system are setting up a strategic planning group to take forward the implementation of the non-cross departmental actions and the development of a new strategic plan for alcohol and drug services. Again service users will be involved in this structure. DoH will also develop regular reports on progress that will be formally published.</p>



Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>DoH Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>5. <b>Role of Peer Support</b> - Consider exploring options on Peer Support Workers in relation to Health and the Belfast Inclusion Service.</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Regional Homeless Inclusion Hub with Belfast being the centre which spreads across HSCTS area - (Utilizing the expertise from Belfast Inclusion Hub) this would include a multidisciplinary workforce - Band 7 Public Health Nurse, mental health nurse, GPs sessions, AHPs- Podiatry and, support workers.</li> <li>• Increase health support to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness who have moved into supported living accommodation.</li> <li>• A flexible alcohol and drugs service that responds to the needs from this client group. This is an ongoing development with a specific focus on Blood Borne Virus at present.</li> </ul>




Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>DoH Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p>6. <b>Seek funding for an evaluated pilot of a dedicated social work service in a psychiatric hospital</b> to prevent homelessness on discharge. A proposal has been developed to pilot this in Holywell Hospital in the NHST. The service would provide relationship based support for a very personalised wrap around care model with the use of personalised/self-directed budgets as appropriate and would also bridge the difficult transition from hospital to community services.</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b> A funding bid was submitted in June 2021 monitoring but was unsuccessful. Further bids will be made as opportunities arise.</p>

PRIORITY AREA 2 Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 	<p>7. Given the continuing pressure on CCEA staff due to Covid-19 and in the absence of additional funding, CCEA will maintain the resources concerning homelessness, financial capability and well-being with schools across NI.</p> <p>Additional budget would be required to deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further collaboration with the homeless sector and schools;</li> <li>• Updating of resources;</li> <li>• Promotion and evaluation of resources; and</li> <li>• Work / preparation for Homelessness Awareness week.</li> </ul>	<p>By June 2022 CCEA will produce an analysis of website diagnostics based on homelessness resources.</p>


<b>PRIORITY AREA 3</b> <b>Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p><b>DoJ</b> Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>8. Release from Custody</b> - Review findings and develop action plan to implement the recommendations of research commissioned to outline the processes involved and challenges faced by individuals released from custody in acquiring and retaining stable accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>To gain a better understanding of the issues faced by individuals released from custody in accessing and retaining accommodation, also to establish the effectiveness of current resettlement and housing interventions and provision.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b></p> <p>Research to be finalized by the end of 2021 and Action Plan to be developed by Jan 2022.</p>
 <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> www.communities-ni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>9. Homelessness Branch in DfC will gather and analyse data provided by the Youth Justice Agency</b> on its work to help young people stay safely in their communities i.e. the number of interventions and outcomes.</p>	<p>By 31 March 2022 DfC will produce findings on the number of interventions and highlight any lessons learned that could be used to prevent youth homelessness.</p>


<b>PRIORITY AREA 4</b> <b>Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p> <b>DoJ</b>                      Department                      of Justice  <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a> </p>	<p><b>10. To consider the impact of new domestic violence and abuse initiatives</b>, in terms of how these may impact on homelessness levels, and what steps may be taken to address this.</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Conduct homelessness impact assessments (HIA) using the agreed template, during the development and evaluation of domestic abuse policies and initiatives in 2021/22.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To carry out a HIA on all substantive DVA Policy proposals during 2021/22;</li> <li>• To provide bi-annual updates on assessments for the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan and to the APG on Homelessness on request. DoH and DfC are both represented on the APG.</li> </ul>

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 <p>Department of Justice <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Department fur Commonities <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p><b>Housing</b> Executive</p>	<p><b>11. To review the current systems for accessing accommodation for offenders with service providers</b> and NIHE to bring forward a revised framework for co-operation by 31 March 2022.</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b> To enable the accommodation and associated support needs of those entering and leaving custody to be met.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b> By 31 March 2022, to complete review and bring forward a revised framework for co-operation.</p>

Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p><b>DoH</b> Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p><b>DoJ</b> Department of Justice <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>12. 24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline</b> – Continued provision to ensure a first point of contact for victims of domestic and sexual abuse</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b> Victims are supported to find emergency accommodation through the NI Housing Executive and other agencies.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b> Completion of end of year report for 2021/22 to detail the number of callers that were supported to find emergency accommodation.</p>



PRIORITY AREA 5 Employability, financial capability and access to benefits		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>Department for <b>Communities</b></p> <p>An Roinn <b>Pobal</b></p> <p>Department fur <b>Commonities</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>13. NIHE to inform relevant tenants of The Condition Management Programme.</b> The programme provides professional support to participants in managing their health conditions, enabling them to progress towards, move into and remain in work. Engagement with the programme will support tenants with health conditions maintain their tenancies.</p>	<p>By March 2022 evaluate NIHE engagement with the Condition Management Programme and consider roll out to Housing Associations.</p>

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 <p>Department for <b>Communities</b></p> <p>An Roinn <b>Pobal</b></p> <p>Department for <b>Commonities</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>14. To implement 5 further homelessness initiatives across Northern Ireland</b> where local Jobs &amp; Benefits offices will work closely with local homelessness support organisations to support customers experiencing homelessness. Covid-19 restrictions allowing, these will involve services being delivered in partner sites to ensure that homeless individuals can access financial support, are assisted to maintain their claims and receive tailored employability support. The 5 sites to be added are Newry, Enniskillen, Foyle, Antrim and North Belfast.</p>	<p>By 31 Dec 2021 to have the 5 homelessness initiatives implemented.</p> <p>This proposal builds on work carried out by the Falls Rd JBO with the Welcome Organisation prior to the pandemic. This work has been taken forward on an informal ‘test and learn’ basis with the aim of avoiding customers falling out of the system through failure to attend appointments.</p> <p>By expanding the initiative, the aim is to both support customers experiencing homelessness both in terms of financial security (making and maintaining benefit claims) and also employability. Support will be tailored to the needs of individuals and does not preclude into work outcomes where that is appropriate. It may also include participation in relevant provision to build skills and capacity, work experience and/or training again depending on the circumstances of the individual.</p> <p>DFC to work with UC Operations to analyse relevant data.</p>

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