

**Housing**  
Executive

2023 EDITION

# streets ahead

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The magazine for  
Housing Executive  
tenants



News > Features > Advice > Community

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## Housing Executive

# Welcome

### Dear tenant, Welcome to this edition of Streets Ahead!

It has been another busy and fulfilling year as we provide services to you and to your community.

As your landlord, our priority is making sure your home is safe, warm and dry. We have a programme of work to improve your home so that it meets our standards, and a 24 hour responsive service to undertake repairs when things go wrong.

Over the last number of years I know that some of you have had to wait longer for this work to be completed. Earlier this year we signed off on new maintenance and improvement contracts, worth a total of £252 million. These contracts are a significant investment in the Housing Executive homes and mean that we will see more homes improved over the next few years.

This year we reached a milestone as our 1,000th house was retrofitted. This scheme has helped us to make homes warmer, more energy efficient and fit for the future. (Find out more on page 8.)

As a landlord we want to support everyone who may be struggling with the cost of living, so this year we further expanded our Financial Inclusion Team to help tenants deal with financial issues. Since 2020 the team have secured over £3.3m in unclaimed benefits for tenants. With three more Financial Inclusion Officers in the team we can continue to develop this service. The story on

page 12 tells you how to get in contact with the team.

We have also continued to support your work in building cohesive, thriving and supportive communities with an investment of £1.3 million on community development during 2022/23.

We supported local communities through our community grants, community safety and community cohesion programmes. Our staff are committed to working with you to ensure that inclusion and good relations are at the heart of your neighbourhoods.

Looking ahead to next year I am thrilled to announce that we will be building homes for the first time in nearly 25 years. As part of a new build pilot, we will be working with GEDA Construction to deliver six semi-detached dwellings at Sunningdale Gardens, North Belfast. The houses will be built using ultra-low energy building techniques and will have some of the highest efficiency standards of any housing in Northern Ireland. I hope this is just the start, and that we can build homes like this in the future, across every Council area.

Of course we would not have insight into the things that matter to you without the valued contribution of our tenants on the Central Housing Forum. As always, I am grateful for their work and contribution which



ensures that your voice is heard and reflected in the services we provide. If you would like to get involved in your community, more information is available on page 20.

I hope you enjoy catching up on our news in this edition of Streets Ahead. I wish you a happy and peaceful holiday over the festive period.

Grainia Long  
Chief Executive

# How we're doing - 2023



**81,200**

homes managed (approx) by the Housing Executive

**154,598**

tenants - 30,872 younger than 16 years old and 44,934 older than 60 years old



Received over **440,000**

phone calls to our offices

**93%** of you were satisfied with how we managed your repair(s)

**90%** of you were satisfied with your neighbourhood as a place to live

**78%** of you were satisfied with the overall service provided by us

**79%** of you were satisfied with the quality of your home

**£87.4m**

spent on approximately 239,000 response maintenance jobs

**122 MAJOR ADAPTATIONS** **4,100 MINOR ADAPTATIONS**

started so people could continue to live independently in their home

**119** community groups received grants



**11,490** native trees planted

**£545k** invested to address community safety issues in our estates

**85%** of you said that your rent and rates provide value for money



## Building for the future

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has started its first housing development in nearly 25 years.

The development will see six semi-detached dwellings built at Sunningdale Gardens, North Belfast by construction company, GEDA

Part of a new build pilot, the six homes will be built using Modern Methods of Construction and ultra-low energy building techniques, to Passive House standard.

Our Chief Executive, Grainia Long said: "We are excited to see work begin on these modern homes which we hope will offer a blueprint for the future of social housing."

"We are not just building new homes for our tenants for the first time in a generation. We are building future-proofed homes that will be constructed to a standard beyond that of current building regulations in Northern Ireland."

"Making sure our tenants have homes that are safe, warm and dry is always our priority and this pilot pairs that with our commitment to reaching net zero."

"The ultra-low energy building methods being used to construct

these houses will mean that our tenants benefit from improved energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon emissions, lower heating bills, savings from reduced fuel costs and more comfortable homes.

"This pilot will also give us the opportunity to explore the practicalities of returning to building homes as part of the revitalisation of our organization."

Ms Long continued: "We are keen for work to get underway so that people on the waiting list can benefit from these additional homes."

"It is important for us, as the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland, to influence the future of social housing and reimagine what estates and housing developments could look like."

"This scheme will help us to investigate how Modern Methods of Construction can be utilised to deliver much needed homes within a faster timeframe, to a higher level of fabric performance and explore ways to drive down costs, in comparison

(L-R) Sharon Poots, Project Architect NIHE, Caroline Best, Senior Principal Officer, Land and Regeneration Services NIHE, Adrian Blythe, Quality Improvement Manager NIHE, Grainia Long, NIHE Chief Executive and Nicole Lappin, Chair of the Housing Executive Board.

with traditional construction methods."

Construction Director for GEDA, Damian Murray, welcomed the partnership with NIHE and said: "Geda Construction, as prominent social housing builders, are delighted to be involved in this pilot scheme that builds on our long-standing eco credentials."

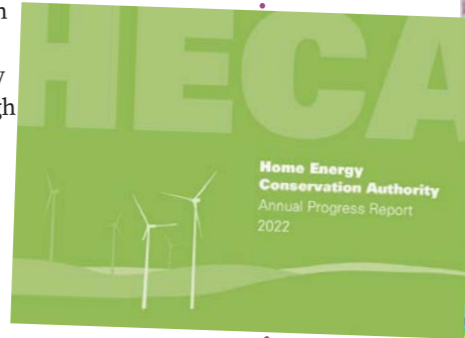
"Bringing Passive House standards to social housing helps tackle the fuel poverty crisis and aligns perfectly with our Net Zero ambitions."

From the Department for Communities, Director of Social Housing Paul Price said: "We're marking the start of this a significant, and welcome, development at Sunningdale Gardens for a number of reasons. Primarily, these homes will help address the need for quality housing which exists in our society. Alongside this, these homes will be built to energy efficiency standards at a time when tackling climate change is a key strand of government policy."

# Milestones from our year

Coming to the end of another busy year we look back at some of the work and events that stood out in our calendar.

The latest Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA) progress report was published in **March**. It detailed how almost £36m was invested on energy efficiency measures through a wide range of programmes by the Housing Executive and Department for Communities during 2022.



## FRA Project Implementation

In **January**, we announced changes to the **Housing Selection Scheme in Northern Ireland**. The changes

were made following the Fundamental Review of Allocations to ensure that those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need.



In **February**, building firm M&M Contractors/Mascott presented brand new power tools to Newry Street Unite community group in Killeel as part of a social value condition in their contract with us. More details on page 34.



In **March**, the work of unsung heroes from across Northern Ireland were recognised in our annual Rural Community Awards competition. Individuals and groups who are making a difference in rural areas received awards for a wide range of activities, which improve quality of life and create cleaner, safer and more vibrant places to live.



In **May**, we donated a massive £16,867 to three local charities, Aware NI, Action Mental Health and PIPs, following a series of fundraising events and activities carried out by our staff, together with payroll giving.



Also in **May**, we took delivery of 10 'green' vehicles as part of our drive to cut CO2 emissions from our fleet, reducing our carbon footprint and improving air quality - read more on page 9.



In **June**, Monkscoole House in Rathcoole, Newtownabbey, became the first tower block to be demolished as part of our Tower Block Action Plan - you can find an update on page 18.



Also in **June**, we celebrated 20 years of the Supporting People programme, which has invested over £1.2 billion into providing housing support services and assisting vulnerable people to live more independently in communities across Northern Ireland.



In **July**, we completed retrofitting 1,000 of our homes in making them warmer and more energy efficient for tenants. The work included external wall insulation, cladding and roofing work, and fascia and gutter replacement. Roof space insulation was also upgraded where needed. Read more on page 8.



In **August** we supported a project to help young people develop new cross-community friendships in the New Lodge and Limestone areas of North Belfast. The project provided opportunities for young people to develop their skills, build new relationships and look at the world around them with new perspectives.



We launched our new updated mobile phone app and a new telephone payment number for tenants and customers in **October**. Both payment options are a convenient way for tenants to pay their rent, service charges, damages or repairs and legal costs, and housing benefit overpayments. The new app can be downloaded free of charge directly from the Apple app or Google Play stores, by searching 'Housing Executive' or 'NIHE.' The app can also be used to make payments at any of the over 450 PayPoint machines in local stores across Northern Ireland.

In **July**, we carried out research into the demand for social and affordable housing in Lislagan, Ballymoney in Co. Antrim. This was one of 11 rural needs tests carried out during the year - read more on page 38



In **August** we began the launch of our Housing Investment Plans for each council area. These set out our commitment to meeting the housing needs of our customers for the year ahead. Flick back to page 4 to find out how we're doing.



During Good Relations Week in **September**, we supported an inspiring exhibition led by young people called Our Lives, Our Legacy. Organised by Belfast charity, Springboard Opportunities, Fifteen young people from Belfast explored the legacy of the Troubles and shared their hopes for the future in the cross-community project which marked the UN International Day of Peace and the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement.



In **September**, we announced details of new improvement contracts worth a total of £252 million awarded in the last six months. The new contracts mean more than 9,000 homes will benefit from bathroom replacements, while kitchens will be replaced in more than 5,000 properties. Over 6,500 new windows will be fitted, while 8,000 new doors are set to be installed in our homes. Read more on page 16.



Resident Marjorie Coid with Housing Executive Chief Executive Grainia Long.

# Building on our 1,000th home retrofit

We've recently completed retrofitting 1,000 of our homes in Northern Ireland, making them warmer and more energy efficient for tenants.

A house in Redmanville Estate in Portadown is the 1,000th property to benefit from the extensive revamp. Taking a fabric first approach, the work includes external wall insulation, cladding and roofing work, and fascia and gutter replacement. Roof space insulation is also upgraded where needed. Ongoing retrofitting is being carried out in homes across Northern Ireland as we continue to help tenants tackle the cost of living crisis and reduce carbon emissions from our stock. David Palmer, our Regional Project Delivery Manager, said: "Our main focus is to improve people's lives, make the planet a better place and to make a difference in local communities. "This European funded scheme is expected to complete this year and we will continue to develop our housing estates in the years to follow." He said the feedback from our tenants once the work was completed was very positive and we were delighted to hand over greatly improved and more comfortable homes to tenants. Tony Collum, from contractor IRS Scotland, said: "We have extensive experience in retrofitting houses and we are delighted to be able to use our expertise to ensure families in Northern Ireland can enjoy better, warmer homes."

The Department for Communities was successful in securing funding for the Energy Efficiency in Social Housing project on our behalf from the European Regional Development Fund through the Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme for Northern Ireland, managed by the Department for the Economy with additional investment by the Housing Executive.

# Driving down CO<sub>2</sub> with electric vans

Keep an eye on the roads for our plumbers, painters, electricians and stores staff zooming around in a brand new fleet of electric vans.

Over £400,000 has been invested in ten 'green' vehicles as part of our plan to reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality.

The vans are garaged in the Belfast, Coleraine and Portadown depots but, with a range of around 200 miles, they will travel all over Northern Ireland.

Stephen Moore, Assistant Director of our Direct Labour Organisation, said: "Electric vehicles are the key technology to decarbonise road transport, which accounts for 16% of global emissions.

"They will help us in our drive to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from our fleet in line with our energy efficiency and sustainability policies.

"These new energy efficient vans have replaced 10 of our old diesel vehicles and we hope to expand this in the future to include reviewing our grounds machinery as well."

David Roe, the Fleet Support Operations Manager, said: "Our new vans are quite powerful and very comfortable to drive and there is plenty of space for our tools and equipment.

"All our maintenance depots are equipped with fast charging points which will enable us to cover a wide geographical area."

Housing Executive Chair Nicole Lappin said: "We are delighted to receive delivery of these smart new-technology vans.

"Vehicles are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and this



Housing Executive Chair Nicole Lappin inspects our new fleet of 10 electric vans along with staff members (l-r) David Roe, Fleet Support Operations Manager, Stephen Moore, Assistant Director of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), and John Lamont, DLO Operations.

transition to cleaner technology will help provide a healthier environment for everyone.

"Our organisation is committed to addressing the impact of climate change and we intend to play our part in sustaining the environment for future generations.

"We have a target of producing net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and plan to do this not only by decarbonising our fleet but also by improving energy efficiency in our organisation, supporting the building of low-carbon homes and decarbonising our housing stock."

"Vehicles are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions and this transition to cleaner technology will help provide a healthier environment for everyone."

# Energy Saving Tips

As household bills rise, we take a look at three ways you can spend less on your home heating and energy costs



## Turn it down

Turning down your thermostat by just one degree could cut your heating bill significantly. Work with your controls until you find a temperature that suits you. You can also save money by setting your heating and hot water to come on or go off only when you need it.



## Are you getting the best deal?

Compare energy suppliers to see if you're getting the best value for money.

The Consumer Council NI website compares up to date NI electricity and gas tariffs.

Chat to your energy supplier - you may be able to get a discount if you change the way you pay your bill. Or, get in touch with our Energy Advisors.



## Switch off and unplug

Appliances like hairdryers, microwaves, televisions, PC monitors and game consoles continue to use electricity even when they're on standby. If you don't use these all the time, unplug them so you're not wasting energy.

## Customer view

**Barbara Ross, from north Belfast, has been a tenant for 43 years. When she wanted to switch her electricity provider in July, she enlisted the help of our NI Energy Advice Service - and she hasn't looked back since.**

"I pay for my electricity using a card meter but I wasn't happy with the rate I was getting. The meter was just eating my money, it was ridiculous.

"My provider told me I was free to shop around for another supplier, so I called the Housing Executive's NI Energy Advice Service for help.

"I spoke with Nikki and she was really lovely, top-notch.

"I thought there were only two NI electricity providers but Nikki highlighted five companies that I could look at.

"I'm 75 and not very good with computers and gadgets, so Nikki went online and found out what other suppliers were charging. It was very clear which was the cheapest.

"Nikki gave me time to write down all the information I needed. She was very patient.

"Next, I simply phoned a new provider and the switch was made quite easily. I estimate I could save up to £500 a year with my new deal, which is an awful lot to me and will help towards my other bills.

"Nikki also advised me to join the Oil Savings Network. When I placed my first 200L order during the summer I made a saving of £16, which is great."

## Contact our Energy Advisors

To get free independent and impartial advice:

- Email the Housing Executive's NI Energy Advice service on [nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)
- Call the **NI Energy Advice Line** on **0800 111 4455**
- [www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice/ni-energy-advice-get-in-touch](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice/ni-energy-advice-get-in-touch)

# Oil Savings Network



**The NI Oil Savings Network (NIOSN) is open to all householders across Northern Ireland. We can usually find you a price which is lower than NI's average heating costs per litre.**

Please note, supplier savings can differ depending on your postcode.

## How do I join?

Send an email to [oilsavings@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:oilsavings@nihe.gov.uk) with the subject 'Register' in the title. Please provide your:

**First Name**  
**Mobile Number**  
**Postcode**

You become a member once we receive your details. You can take advantage of the current savings **immediately**.

## We contact you

You will receive a weekly request by email, text, or (in exceptional circumstances) by phone for your 'potential' order.

To gauge the current market and to offer updates to our members, the Oil Savings team check prices with our registered suppliers every day.

## How do I place an order?

Joining the NIOSN means you can order your oil at a discount each week (or whenever you need a refill).

The chosen supplier(s) provides **negotiated discounts** on 200L, 300L and/or 400L. **Members had an average weekly savings of £10 to £25 for 200ls in 2022/23.**

You are sent a negotiated discount code, e.g. OIL0801, to place and pay for your own order with the chosen supplier.

Discounts are valid for up to one week, starting Wednesday.

## Find out more

If you are interested in joining the NI Oil Savings Network, you can find out more from our team by emailing [oilsavings@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:oilsavings@nihe.gov.uk)

**JOIN NOW. Send your first name, mobile number, and postcode by email, text 07507 301 980 or call 0800 111 4455.**

The NI Oil Savings Network (NIOSN) is managed by the Housing Executive's NI Energy Advice Service.

## Sarah's story

"You definitely make good savings using the Network. I regularly make savings of between £18 and £30 with each 300L I buy. I'm a pensioner so that makes a big difference to me. Even if it's only £18, that can go towards my electricity bill.

"It costs nothing to join and the system is easy to use. I phoned up and they took my name. Every week I get a text with the new price and I text back if I am interested.

"They tell you what savings you can make that week.

"Then I ring the supplier and place my order. It's as simple as that.

"I don't use Facebook or emails but texting works for me."

**Sarah**  
**Derry/Londonderry**

# A little money advice can go a long way

Since 2020 our Financial Inclusion Team have secured over £3.3 million in additional finances for our tenants.

In January 2023 we expanded the Team and now have three new Financial Inclusion Officers supporting our four Financial Inclusion Managers.

Together, the team works with tenants to make sure they are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to. They also help tenants become empowered to make the right financial decisions, helping them cope with the cost of living crisis.

To date, around 9,000 tenants have accessed support and, on average, 210 households are receiving help every month.

Our larger team means we are now able to reach a wider range of tenants, they have started contacting tenants who are pension age to check they're claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.

The Financial Inclusion team urge anyone who has reached pension age, or anyone facing financial difficulty to come forward and speak to them.

Your conversation will be private and confidential. Our staff can also refer you to a range of other services you might need.

The Financial Inclusion Team can help you by:

- Providing benefits checks to make sure you are receiving everything you are entitled to;
- Performing 'Better off' calculations to help you make informed decisions about your finances;
- Helping to resolve complex benefits issues;
- Providing money and budgeting advice;
- Signposting to other specialist sources of debt advice;
- Assisting with access to other sources of support (such as charitable organisations, discretionary support, foodbanks).

## Case Study

Our Financial Inclusion Team recently contacted a pension age tenant to offer her a benefit check. The tenant didn't think she would be entitled to Housing Benefit due to having savings; she was paying her full rent and rates out of her state pension of only £181 per week.

After carrying out a benefit check with her, the Team discovered she was actually entitled to an extra £64.71 of pension credit per week. Because of this, she is now entitled to full Housing Benefit to cover her rent and rates. Overall, this tenant is now better off by over £6,000 per year.

## Find out more

If you'd like to chat to one of the Financial Inclusion team, contact your local patch manager to ask for a referral by phoning our general enquiries line on **03448 920 900**.



Financial Inclusion team members: (L-R) Niamh Kelly, Nisha Kelly, Michael Lyttle, Sinead Lagan, Donna Millar and Sarah McCrossan.

It is estimated around £1.1 billion of pension credit goes unclaimed each year in the UK, and our Financial Inclusion Team have been able to access extra money for many tenants who didn't think they would be entitled to anything - even those with savings!

## New Financial Inclusion Strategy

In June 2023 we approved a new Financial Inclusion Strategy. The strategy will shape our financial inclusion services until 2028. It has been designed after speaking with tenants through the membership of our Housing Community Network.

We aim to put financial inclusion at the heart of all our customer services. This means you'll be able to access the help you need, whenever you need it - at every stage of your journey with us.

Our new strategy expands the number of ways we can support you and your family to deal with financial issues and planning.

Our new plans will focus on helping you to maximise your income,



increase your financial flexibility and help you access financial services. We will also connect you to other products, services, employment and learning opportunities.

Many of our new support systems will be embedded into our existing Making Your Money Work service which you can read more about on page 14.

# Making Your Money Work

If you are struggling financially, did you know that you can use our 'Making Your Money Work' service?

If you have fallen into rent arrears, had a reduction in or lost your entitlement to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, or have had a significant change in your circumstances, we can help.

Our dedicated service could help you by providing:

- A benefits assessment to make sure you are receiving all the support you are entitled to, and giving you accurate benefits advice;
- A budgeting assessment to assess your income and outgoings to help you with household budgeting;
- Referral to one of our Financial Inclusion Managers if (see page 12)
- Referral to Advice NI if you need specialist debt advice
- A referral to other specialist support organisations if you require advice or assistance with other issues

## Want to know more?

For help and advice on using our **Making Your Money Work service**, contact your local **Patch Manager on 03448 920 900**.

## Floating Support

### What is Floating Support?

Floating Support refers to the network of other organisations we work with, who can help tenants with issues directly impacting their housing or financial situation.

### How can I be referred?

If, while offering the 'Making Your Money Work' service you tell our staff that you have an issue which is covered by a Floating Support provider, and which is causing you housing or financial stress, you may be referred for further assistance.

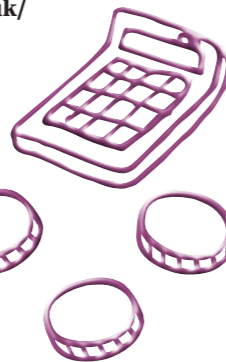
The staff member you are dealing with can make this referral for you. Alternatively, they can provide you with the contact details so you can speak to the organisation directly if you would prefer.



**Advice NI** is a registered charity partnered with the Housing Executive to provide free, specialist, independent, debt advice to our tenants. They are experts in debt management and solutions.

Our staff can refer you to Advice NI, but if you would like to get in contact yourself you can get in touch with them easily:

- **Freephone** number **0800 915 4604**
- **Text 'ACTION'** to **81025** for a call back to your mobile number
- E-mail [advice@adviceni.net](mailto:advice@adviceni.net)
- Contact the **Advice NI online "Let's Chat" service** between 10.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday, accessible via their website, [www.adviceni.net](http://www.adviceni.net)



## Build your own Budget

A budget is a great way to keep track of your spending - you can put aside money for the things you need and maximise your income. It's easier than you think!

Our benefits & budget calculator, which you can find on our website, can help you work out what benefits you're entitled to. You can also see how a change in earnings or the numbers of hours you work will impact your monthly income.

It only takes a few minutes, so pop the kettle on, pour yourself a cuppa, and build a budget that works for you.

The 'Better Off' calculator can be found on our website at [www.nihe.gov.uk/home/news/making-your-money-work](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/home/news/making-your-money-work)

# Adapting your home

## Did you know we carry out adaptations to your home to help you continue living independently?

There is **NO** need for you to contact your local GP or medical staff to ask for any medical evidence to support any applications. In fact, we can complete some minor adaptations without the help of an occupational therapist (OT), such as:

- fitting handrails
- lowering electrical sockets to an accessible level
- adding power points
- defining steps for people with visual impairments

However, some minor adaptations require an OT recommendation such as a level access shower. Again, there is **NO** need for you to contact your GP for any medical evidence. On the very rare occasion that we might need a GP or Doctor's report, WE will do this on your behalf.

It's important to inform your patch manager about any difficulties you are having in your home, so we can find out how to best meet your needs.

The process for each adaptation is different and timescales can vary significantly, so it's worth talking to us.

If we need to carry out major work to your home, the patch manager will direct you to your OT Service.

A major adaptation can include building an extension or installing a stair lift, and an OT must carry out an assessment. This considers your needs and how they can be met through a range of services.

The OT will forward a recommendation if they think adapting your home helps you. We will contact you to arrange a home visit, carry out an inspection to determine if changes can be made and then discuss the options for adapting your home with you. Our appointed contractor will agree on a start date and timescales with you.

## Want to know more?

For more information on adaptations, contact your local district office by calling **03448 920 900**







# Repairs and maintenance

Over the last three years, the construction industry has been heavily impacted by rising prices together with labour and material availability.

These issues were initially caused as a result of the pandemic and have been further affected by recent global events. This meant many of our local contractors faced large cost increases as well as labour and material shortages. As a result, a number of our

maintenance services and programmes were disrupted. In November 2022, we allowed a number of contractors to be released from their contracts to help stabilise workforces and protect jobs. Despite this situation, our annual investment of just over £205m in improving and maintaining our own homes in 2022/23 was the highest

achieved since 2015. This brings the total Housing Executive spend in our homes to £907m in the last five years - thanks to the hard work and commitment of our staff, working in close partnership with the industry. We recently announced details of new improvement contracts worth a total of £252m. These new

contracts will help us provide tenants with a high quality repairs service and a planned programme of improvements. More than 9,000 homes are set to benefit from bathroom replacements, while kitchens will be replaced in more than 5,000 properties. Over 6,500 new windows will be fitted, while 8,000 new doors are set to be installed in Housing Executive homes. These new contracts will facilitate the delivery of quality services and standards for our tenants which demonstrate value for money and are sustainable for contractors.

Our key focus is to ensure that, going forward, we have contracts in place to deliver on our ambitious plans to maintain and improve our homes.

It represents a significant investment in the construction industry and economy and our local communities will also benefit from social value clauses we've included, which means improvements for local communities alongside improvements to their homes.

**Want to know more?**  
Read more about social value clauses on page 34



## Report a repair

We want to provide you with an effective repair service. To help do this we group repairs so we can prioritise them.

- There are three types of repairs:
- **Emergency** - e.g. burst pipe or water tank/failure of all lights and power/no heating
  - **Urgent** - e.g. broken radiator/light/temporary repairs to broken window/ blocked drain
  - **Routine** - e.g. blocked or broken guttering/broken roof tile/fence/gate.
- There are also some repairs you can do yourself. These are called self-help repairs and we can contribute towards costs (see page 43 for more details)
- If you need a repair, the first step is to call us on 03448 920 901. Or alternatively you can report and track a repair request on the My Housing Executive portal - if you are a registered user (for more details see page 52) or by texting 'REPAIR' and your address to 07507 302 011.
- When reporting a repair by telephone or 'My Housing Executive' Portal, there are a few things you can do to help us:
- Give as much information about the nature and extent of the repair
  - Tell us if it has led to other damage in your home
  - Tell us when you are normally at home so a contractor can get in
  - Leave a telephone number so we can call you
  - Let us know if your access details change

**How to report an emergency repair**  
To report an emergency repair call us on 03448 920 901. In these cases we will attempt to have a contractor at your home the same day or within 24 hours. The contractor will also inform us if more work is required.



# Tower blocks update

Our Tower Blocks Action Plan is ongoing, with work progressing in each of the three phases. Residents and owners across all the tower blocks are kept updated via our bi-annual newsletter. The most recent edition was issued in October 2023 and can be found on our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) by searching for 'tower block update.'

The decommissioning of our tower blocks continues across three phases:

## Phase One

(Monkscoole, Latharna, Coolmoyne, Rathmoyne, Kilbroney, Clarawood, Abbotscoole, Moylena, Breda, Oisin, Ross, Woodland, Beechwood and Magowan)

The first tower block to be decommissioned, Monkscoole House in the Rathcoole estate (pictured), was demolished in July.

Other blocks in this phase either have plans approved for demolition, or proposals for decommissioning within a five year time period.

Latharna House in Larne is now fully cleared and demolition works will begin this winter.

We are currently rehousing residents in a number of other tower blocks that have been approved for demolition, to allow work to begin: Coolmoyne, Rathmoyne, Kilbroney, Clarawood, Belvoir, Breda, Ross and Mount Vernon House will all be demolished at some point in the next few years.

Business cases for Abbotscoole, Beechwood, Woodland and Magowan House will be progressed in the next year.

The business case for Abbotscoole House is already significantly advanced following consultation with

residents and local stakeholders in the summer.

We continue to review the timescale for Oisín House, Belfast due to the proposed redevelopment area of the nearby Upper Long Streets.

## Phase Two

(Finn, Fianna, Riverdale, Parkdale and Ferndale)

These tower blocks are due to be decommissioned over a six to ten year period. Remedial works have now been completed to Finn and Fianna House, alongside Oisín House (Phase One), given the impact of the nearby Upper Long Streets redevelopment.

A number of properties in the 'Dales' blocks have received similar works and it is hoped to complete the remaining properties within the next 12 months.

Once plans for demolition of Phase One blocks have progressed sufficiently, the business cases for blocks in this phase will be undertaken. In the meantime, we will continue to undertake necessary repair and health and safety works to the blocks.

## Phase Three

(Divis, Cuchulainn, Grainne, Maeve, Eithne, Carnet, Whincroft, Glencole, Carncoole, Moveen, Willowbrook and Woodstock)

Our Phase Three blocks are being retained for a period of more than 10 years with improvement works carried out as needed. Work is now well advanced on our feasibility study to understand the nature, cost and delivery method of proposed improvement works.

Once plans for improvement works are established, business cases for the Phase Three blocks will be undertaken.

## What happens now?

**We will continue to consult with the residents of each block during the preparation of our plans. Where blocks are scheduled for demolition, we will work with our tenants towards rehousing in line with their preferences.**

**We will continue to regularly communicate with all residents and stakeholders affected by the Tower Blocks Action Plan, to ensure they are kept up to date with developments.**



Graphics from the winning entry

# Future housing ideas competition

As part of advancing our plans for Coolmoyne and Rathmoyne House in Dunmurry, we held a future housing ideas competition for architecture students from both Queen's and Ulster University. Students were invited to develop design ideas for the future redevelopment of the 9.5 acre site once the blocks are demolished, investigating what the future of social housing may look like.

With participation from a wide range of students, 14 exciting and innovative proposals were shortlisted, demonstrating varying approaches to carbon neutral, energy efficient homes designed around tenants' changing needs and lifestyles.

Ahead of final judging, local residents and the wider public were able to view the designs and meet the students at a well-attended public exhibition in the local community, with voting on the day to determine the Community Choice design award winner.

Final judging by our international panel and awards ceremony took place at The MAC, Belfast in June, where we were delighted to present Shannon Burnside of Ulster University as our overall Winner. Ayat-al-Wazzan, also of Ulster University, was voted the Community Choice winner. Both winners received bursaries in recognition of their achievements, alongside a framed commemorative certificate with all of the shortlisted entrants.



Shannon Burnside (centre), competition winner, with Housing Executive Chair, Nicole Lappin (left) and Chief Executive, Grainia Long (right) at the award ceremony with the winning design concept.



Members of the Central Housing Forum met in November for the monthly meeting in Housing Centre, Belfast.

# Your voice matters to us - we want to hear from you!

Do you ever wonder how we take residents' views and opinions on board?

Did you know that we need your feedback so that we can continually improve our services?

We do, and we always want to hear from you!

For over 40 years we have found one of the best ways to involve residents and make sure your local community associations are at the heart of our decision-making process, is through the Housing Community Network (HCN). More than 400 community groups across Northern Ireland form the foundation of the Housing Community Network. It is a really effective way for us to involve communities and residents in all our estates and neighbourhoods. Being part of the HCN gives your community access to £2.5 million community grant funding every year. The Housing Community Network is made up of four levels, with forums taking place at a Local, Area, Regional, and Central level. Local and Area forums raise local issues and provide feedback on the

overall quality of housing services in the area. Meetings with other agencies such as councils, Department for Infrastructure and the Police also take place at a Local level. Estate inspections are a key step in the interagency process - it brings representatives from relevant agencies together, in person, to walk around an estate and speak with local people to identify and discuss any issues. This allows us to monitor the appearance and upkeep of our estates, and gives you the opportunity to make a real difference in your neighbourhood. We recognise the importance of helping to build vibrant communities. We have seen the difference that can be made when people are supported to create positive change in their local area. Our staff, particularly our Good

## Working in partnership

The Housing Executive works closely with Supporting Communities, who oversee the Housing Community Network and monitor activity. Communities are also supported to develop the skills needed for effective participation, and can benefit from a number of accredited and non-accredited courses. We provide funding to Supporting Communities so they can offer qualifications free of charge for members of our Housing Community Network. Courses can be taken online, so if you're interested in studying please speak to your local Community Development Worker at Supporting Communities or one of our Good Relations Officers. You can also find more information at [www.supportingcommunities.org](http://www.supportingcommunities.org)

**TOP TIP:** These courses may allow you to gain direct access to Ulster University to complete further training within Community Development, even if you do not have any previous GCSEs or A-Levels!

Relations Officers, work to support community groups to run different types of projects - youth clubs, summer schemes, men's/hen sheds, lunch clubs, crafting groups, to name a few. These projects help our neighbourhoods become stronger and safer. They help create increased respect for diversity and support conversations within and between communities.

Read more about the Housing Community Network on our website: [www.nihe.gov.uk/community](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/community)

Is there a community group in your area? If not, you can help to start one, or represent your local community as a community voice - it could be the best thing you ever do! Meetings can be held in person or virtually, and we will pay for out of pocket expenses.

## Get involved

If you are interested in joining the Housing Community Network you can contact the Community Involvement team via email at [Comm\\_involvementcohesion@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:Comm_involvementcohesion@nihe.gov.uk) or you can speak with your Good Relations Officer would be happy to help you, or call our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900**.



Chelsea Milligan, Housing Advisor

# We are here to help

It is important to us that we meet customer needs as best we can, and customers know what to expect from us.

Our staff and contractors will occasionally need access to your home for safety reasons - go to page 50 to learn more about the essential inspections we carry out in homes.

Should you need to get in touch, you can call us on 03448 920 900. Our telephony staff will be happy to direct you to the best person to speak with.

If you need to report a repair, you can call our Repairs Line on 03448 920 901. This number is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

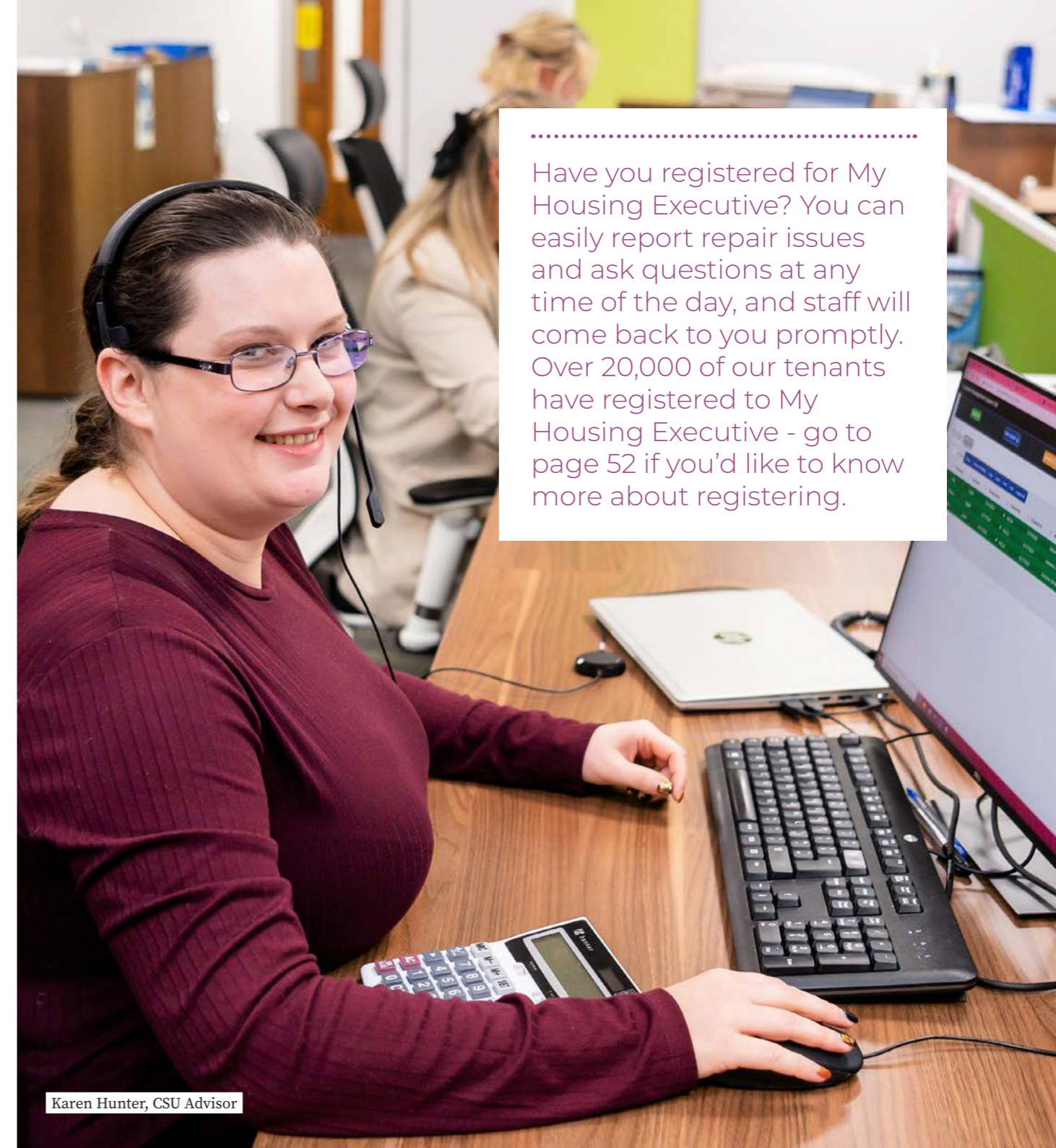
Our telephony and Customer Service Unit (CSU) advisors are happy to help or provide advice and assistance, and they can refer you to other staff if needed.

**Chelsea** is a Housing Advisor in our Belfast office in May Street, where over 100 people a day can visit us for

housing advice and assistance.

She said: "We meet a variety of customers with varying housing needs and requests, from advice on social housing, private renting and assistance with other services."

"Some customers who come into our office can be at a low point in their lives, particularly if they are in the process of losing their home or have had to move unexpectedly. We are all specially trained to help and provide the best housing advice possible. It is very rewarding helping people get housing - home is where the heart is!"



Karen Hunter, CSU Advisor

.....  
Have you registered for My Housing Executive? You can easily report repair issues and ask questions at any time of the day, and staff will come back to you promptly. Over 20,000 of our tenants have registered to My Housing Executive - go to page 52 if you'd like to know more about registering.

**Karen** is one of our advisors in Belfast, and has been working with us for seven years. Karen said: "Answering customer calls is really different each day, and never gets old. Knowing that I can help people get the services they need makes my job worthwhile."

Last year our CSU staff handled almost half a million phone calls, with over 90% being answered within 20 seconds.

In an average month staff would answer and record over 9,000 repair jobs from an average 36,700 total

calls. Winter months are our busiest, we answered and recorded more than 44,000 calls in January 2023 alone.

We understand some people may prefer to speak to someone in person. Our public reception areas are open to the public following the Covid-19 pandemic, and tenants can check the individual office opening hours on our website: [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you can telephone to make an appointment at your local office or arrange for someone to call out to your home.

# Good Relations in the heart of the community

We know the importance of building vibrant communities. Our 13 Good Relations Officers (GROs) work across Northern Ireland to help tenants feel safe, connected and involved.

Dozens of community groups and residents associations already work with our GROs who provide assistance with access to funding, rolling out local projects and helping neighbourhoods develop cohesion and shared spaces. Our varied work aims to create and build community confidence, increase awareness of and respect for diversity, and increase dialogue within and between communities.

Working in our South area office covering Downpatrick and Newry, Edel Curran joined us in April 2023. Edel has long been involved in local sports clubs, and she regularly meets people she knows on her travels in the local towns and villages.

“My son suggested applying for this job, and it’s been a great decision to move into the public sector,” she says.

“It’s funny, people keep asking me if I’m not working as they see me driving and walking everywhere, but that’s just the nature of this job and I love it.

“I instinctively want to help people and communities support themselves in whatever way they can. My voluntary work outside of the Housing Executive has helped me connect with other groups and communities to build more relationships, which is useful.

“There are almost 40 community groups across the Downpatrick and

Newry area. We recently held a joint Housing Community Network day to enable all the groups to come together and share learning, which was a great success.

“It has been challenging learning all about social housing and how the Housing Executive’s community cohesion efforts impact locally. My job is connecting with local groups and enabling them to grow and progress, benefitting all residents.

“I know I have more to learn but I’m

really enjoying the role and want to continue making a difference here.”

Life Change Changes Lives (LCCL) is a charity in Downpatrick supporting people with mental ill health and addiction issues.

Husband and wife, Manus and Ailish Teague, have been running the charity for more than a decade and have a social enterprise café and shop in the heart of the town. They provide free counselling and a safe place for people to rebuild their



Participant Pat O’Farrell with Ailish Teague from LCCL and Edel Curran, Good Relations Officer



“I love meeting people in our estates and neighbourhoods as part of my job.”

Edel Curran  
Good Relations Officer

L-R Stevie Harris, Edel Curran, Sean Clarke (back row), John Graham and Peter Murphy at Downpatrick community garden allotment.

lives through creative therapy and building self-esteem.

Ailish says, “The creative therapy is really successful, donated pieces of furniture are rejuvenated and transformed into items of furniture that are regularly sold in the shop.

“Every piece has a story to tell, and the therapy process can be reflected in their own lives. When people first begin their journey they paint using dark colours, reflecting their general mood. As they continue their therapy with us you see brighter colours getting introduced into their designs as they feel better themselves.

“Housing Executive community grant funding for materials and paint has helped us continue our creative therapy five days a week.

“A smile is success to us, we love helping people through art and talking.”

## Downpatrick community garden allotment

**Situated on the edge of the Model Farm estate, Downpatrick Community garden allotments have been operating for over 12 years.**

The plot on Housing Executive land is managed by local volunteers. Several crops of fruit and vegetables have been harvested for residents, and they have many requests for hanging baskets and planters to be made up.

Initially created as a space for people to meet up to do some gardening and get outside, the allotment has gone from strength to strength. They’ve added poly tunnels and recently created a wildflower strip alongside the raised beds.

Volunteer Sean Clarke told us: “We are very proud of the Green Flag award we received this year, it reflects the hard work and commitment we’ve made to our allotments, and gives us a real sense of pride that we’re helping the town in some way.

“We hope to continue to improve the site and provide more opportunities for residents to get involved.

“The Housing Executive provided cohesion funding to allow us to repair and replace the planter beds and remove some trees to allow more light into the allotment.

“Repairs and a tidy up over the winter will set us up for next year. We will, of course, replace the trees when our work is complete, and welcome anyone to come along and enjoy the craic.”



Pupils from nearby St Mary's Primary School, with members of the local community at the Bawnmore Through Time mural at Mill Road, Newtownabbey.

### Bawnmore Mural

A colourful new mural is proudly displayed at Mill Road, Newtownabbey, with funding from the Housing Executive and Clanmil Housing.

Working with Bawnmore and District Residents' Association and students from St Mary's Primary School, we asked what they would like

to see on the wall that would reflect the history, diversity and culture of the area and the local community.

Community worker, Colin Denvir told us: "It was very much a community-led project encapsulating lots of local stories, places and people.

Several moments of history are captured, such as the rescued elephants from Belfast Zoo during the Belfast blitz; Molly Seaton, born

nearby in 1905, who became captain of the Ireland Women's football team; the popular Cockletown fishing spot, and the train from when Bawnmore had its own station.

Colin went on: "The young people also included a rainbow heart - they wanted people to see their community as open and diverse."

# Always more to do in the community

Stephen Gamble is our Good Relations Officer in the South Antrim area, and has worked with us for over five years.

"I love my job, it's really rewarding. It is a pleasure to work with people in the community who are motivated to see their work being supported and successful."

"There are no typical days; I can be attending inter-agency meetings or Police and Community Safety Partnership meetings, then travelling to meet a community group interested in providing a local service or getting together to help improve the area they call home.

"The people I work with are inspirational, they are motivated to see their ideas being supported and successful. Working on projects that complete and make a difference is a great feeling.

"Encouraging progress has been made in many neighbourhoods and



The mural was funded by the Housing Executive and Clanmil Housing Association via the Housing For All initiative, and is part of the Felden Good Relations Plan.

estates, but there is always more to do. The challenging aspect can be waiting for answers. A project may take years to come to fruition, with a lot of our work driven by local solutions or a community led process. Some aspects of our work require a lot of trust, building relationships with lots of talking and conversations.

"My hope is that more young people in Housing Executive communities

come forward and work with us - they will shape the future of our communities and become new leaders in their own right."

### Rathcoole Funky Kids

Funky kids is a community group working with children who have autism and additional needs. Funding from the Housing Executive enabled them to create and develop a new garden, transforming a former disused, unsightly space into a blossoming educational garden at Glenbane Avenue, Rathcoole.

Lynn Nicholson, Chairperson of Funky Kids, said: "We are very appreciative of the Housing Executive's support for this inter-generational project which will teach young people about biodiversity, the natural world and how to grow food.



Children and staff from Funky Kids with (left to right), Stephen Gamble and Jonathan Strain, Housing Executive, Lynn Nicholson, Chairperson of Funky Kids and Lesley Cuthbert, Housing Executive.

"It also brings the community together in a safe and welcoming space where they feel they truly belong. During this cost of living crisis we hope it will provide sustainable food to families, and

we are confident it will provide education and training to young people, creating a sense of community and improving the appearance of the area."

## Do you want to speak for your local community?

Community groups are a great way to meet people in your area and keep in touch with neighbours. Why not get involved?

If you are interested reach out to your local community group or speak to your **Good Relations Officer** by calling **03448 920 900**. It could be just the thing for you and your community!

# Patch managers providing local support

Your patch manager is our representative in your local area. They are there to support you and answer your questions or help with any issues about your tenancy.

## Patch managers can support you in a number of ways

- They can:
- Give advice to help you maintain your tenancy
  - Link you with support and wellbeing services and other projects in your area
  - Liaise with our contractors when you are getting maintenance work done to your home
  - Try to resolve issues you may have with your neighbours
  - Assist with your rent account queries
  - Carry out benefit and budget checks to help you make your money go further and, if needed, make a referral for specialist advice on debt and money. This can include our in-house Financial Inclusion Service.
- They are also out and about in your community meeting groups to discuss local issues and helping to deliver community projects.
- If you prefer, they can meet you in your home or arrange for you to come to your local office.



Daisy-Jo Gilliland,  
Patch Manager, Donaghadee

“It’s a challenging and rewarding job and I enjoy that every day is different.”

“I love meeting new people and helping them get vital financial and other support.”

Daisy-Jo Gilliland, Patch Manager, Donaghadee



Thomas Heaney,  
Patch Manager, North Belfast

“The best part is seeing how happy tenants are when they get the keys to their new home.”

“When I help a vulnerable tenant resolve issues it’s very rewarding.”

Thomas Heaney, Patch Manager, North Belfast

Thomas Heaney, Patch Manager, North Belfast

## Sabrina works her magic in Ballymena

Sabrina Mark has been a patch manager in Ballykeel 2 estate in Ballymena for the last five years and also looks after the Adair Demesne estate.

One of our first Housing Executive patch managers, Sabrina liaises with tenants in around 400 homes.

She said: “I worked for the Housing Executive first in administration, next in customer services and then I became a housing officer with the accounts department.

“I was interested in the patch manager role because I wanted to have a more face to face interaction with tenants and get out and about around the estates. Helping people was the main attraction.

“We have a great team in Ballymena and it’s a good area to be in. I love visiting and chatting with tenants and the work is so varied, there are so many elements to it.

“I work with a whole mix of clients, from single parent families and older

people to large families and single people.

“I get the most satisfaction when I get people rehoused, they are so delighted, or get them signed up to a support service that they really need.

“I meet a lot of vulnerable people and feel privileged to be able to sort out some of their problems, such as referring them to our financial inclusion officer to help them with issues like rent arrears, or to food banks or local church groups who can offer support.

“Customers come back to me time and again for help, we are the face of the Housing Executive and not just a voice on a phone.

“It can be challenging, of course. At the moment the level of arrears has risen because of the cost of living crisis.

“There are so many things we can offer people, but it can be a bit of a juggle to get the time to go through the options and make sure clients

understand them all.

“Ballykeel has had issues in the past with anti-social behavior but in the three years, since the local community group has formed, the change in the estate has been something else. The group’s work is invaluable. Community involvement makes a huge difference and it’s absolutely vital to have a good relationship with them.

“We work together with neighbourhood policing and statutory and non-statutory agencies to make Ballymena estates better places to live.

“It is fantastic to feel that you have made a difference to someone’s life in a very practical way and I think that our patch managers provide a massively valuable service.”



Sabrina Mark (left) with local tenant Sasha Rainnie

## A tenant’s view

Sasha Rainnie has been one of our tenants for 34 years and still lives next door to the house where she grew up. She is also a keen member of the Ballykeel 2 and District

Community Group.

She said: “I have been involved with the community group for a couple of years and have known Sabrina since she started working in Ballykeel. We’ve built up an excellent working relationship.

“We couldn’t do without a patch manager like Sabrina. We work very closely together and bounce off each other. If she thinks someone needs a listening ear or some shopping done, she’ll tell me, and if I’m concerned, perhaps about an elderly resident, I’d ask her to keep an eye on them.

“One example of when Sabrina came to the rescue was when I became ill and was on sick pay. As a single parent I was struggling to make ends meet.

“Sabrina put me in contact with the right people who helped me access universal credit to get me over a very bumpy period.

“Our community group organises a litter pick every month and the estate is being kept a lot cleaner. Sabrina and the area manager recently came along on their day off and got their hands dirty too. It isn’t just a 9 to 5 job for the Housing Executive team. They are very encouraging, work hard for us and are definitely hands on.

“Sabrina is also great at getting projects up to keep children and young people occupied to tackle anti-social behavior, which is working very well. She’s very clued in and has her finger on the pulse.

“Sabrina inspires everybody in the group. Although she doesn’t live here, she would like to make it somewhere she could live.

“Together, the community group, neighbourhood police, and Sabrina and her colleagues, are a very effective force working to make this a better community for everyone.”

# Sustaining Tenancies offers £3 million in funding

In September this year, we launched our latest Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme. Over the next three years, we will invest over £3 million in the voluntary community and charitable sector.

Emma Geddis, our Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme Manager explains: “The Programme was first introduced in 2021. It was developed to do two things: help our customers maintain their tenancies in the short, medium and long term, and also to help our more vulnerable customers at greater risk of tenancy breakdown.

“To date, we have invested approximately £1.5 million, supporting 36 projects across Northern Ireland. These projects have provided valuable support to our tenants on a wide range of issues that could lead to a tenancy breaking down.

“By the deadline for the first of three rounds of funding, we were delighted to receive over 100 expressions of interest from organisations in the voluntary, community and charitable sector.

“They have applied for grants between £5,000 and £100,000 to help address a number of important issues, including:

- Helping to tenants struggling with the Cost of Living crisis
- Supporting the mental Health and Wellbeing of tenants/their households
- Providing practical support/resources for managing and maintaining a Housing Executive tenancy
- Projects that support Housing Executive tenants to manage their tenancies or engage with their community and reduce their carbon footprint.

“We are currently evaluating applications and will be awarding the first round of funding early in the New Year. We will also highlight those organisations and the projects that have been awarded funding in the press and on our social media channels - so watch out for updates.”

The second round of funding is expected to be launched in late spring/early summer and will be open to constituted groups within the community, voluntary and charitable sector operating in Northern Ireland. This includes Housing Community Network groups/Residents’ groups, and Social Enterprises that have registered charitable status and CICs (Community Interest Companies) that are limited by guarantee.

## More information

More information on the programme and the application process is available online at [www.nihe.gov.uk/community](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/community)

## Putting North Belfast tenants on a firm footing

A north Belfast charity which received almost £25,000 from the Sustaining Tenancies funding programme for a family support worker, continues to go from strength to strength.

Grace Women’s Development, based at Alliance Avenue, is a family hub at the heart of the community which aims to provide the best possible start for people in terms of their health, wellbeing and life chances.

The grant is being used to employ a family support worker which means the charity can expand and enhance services for more families in the Ardoyne and surrounding areas of north and west Belfast.



Grace Family Centre Director Sally Smyth (centre) goes over some project plans with service user Rosemary Stephenson (left) and Paula Ryan from the Housing Executive.



## Supporting young tenants in Lisburn

Young people in the greater Lisburn area are receiving much-needed support thanks to a grant of almost £50,000 from the Sustaining Tenancies Grant Funding Programme. The support is providing Lisburn YMCA with two staff members to help vulnerable young tenants.

Up to 60 tenants, aged 18 to 30, will be supported over two years on issues such as mental health, isolation and loneliness, practical skills, financial debt, rent arrears and difficult relationships.

Looking over projects in the current scheme are (left to right) Amie McCormack and Kelsey McKibben, service users, Des Marley, Housing Executive, and Anna Kissick, Nikki McTaggart and Pauline McMullan, Lisburn YMCA.



# Supporting social enterprises

## The Housing Executive has a long history of supporting social enterprises and community investment

Since 2015, our social enterprise programme has invested over £2 million into social enterprises in communities across Northern Ireland.

Run by and for local communities, these social enterprises provide much needed services and products, together with employment and

training opportunities for our tenants. Enterprises providing childcare, home maintenance services, cafes and community gyms are just some examples of the groups we have been able to support.

In an independent evaluation report on the wider social enterprise sector in Northern Ireland, we know that it is worth approximately £625 million to the local economy and employs almost 25,000 people.

In the most recent Social Enterprise Plus strategy 2020- 2024 we have invested £566,360 to date in social enterprises within our communities, which have delivered:

- 67 New part-time employment opportunities

- 38 New full-time employment opportunities
- 245 work experience opportunities
- 446 training opportunities
- 14 new social enterprises established

In early 2024, we will announce details of new funding opportunities.

Our social enterprise team also provides those working in social enterprises;

- Access to free qualification in OCN Level 2 and 3 in social enterprise
- Best practice visits to other social enterprise through NI
- Ensuring social enterprises are ready to avail of social value opportunities through our own and wider government contracts.



(L-R) Connor Smith Housing Executive Social Enterprise Manager, Ellie Live-Life service user, Des Marley Housing Executive Lisburn and Castlereagh Area Manager, Live-Life service users Anita, Ryan Paddy and Alicia, Philip Reain-Adair Live-Life Director of Services and Live-Life service user Ken.

## Live-Life

Lisburn based Live-Life Well-Being Centre and Social Enterprises recently received funding which has helped purchase a new mini-bus.

Live-Life Director of Services Philip Reain-Adair said: “We provide high quality day opportunities for young adults with severe learning

difficulties. Our participants run a number of social enterprise mini economies including pottery and ceramics, hat and jam making and other seasonal crafts.

“Thanks to the success and increased demand for the services we provide, we needed to increase the capacity of our door-to-door Social Enterprise transport service.

“Without access to subsidised community transport, many of our participants simply would not be able to attend Live Life without this service. The funding of our new minibus is not only helping our participants, but also their families.”



(L-R) Vikki Singer Empower Social Media Manager, Alan McDowell Empower Director, Mark Ingham Housing Executive South Area Manager, Jordan Purcell Edgarrstown Residents Association and Connor Smith Housing Executive Social Enterprise Manager.

## Empowering the Portadown area

The Portadown Wellness Centre is another Social Enterprise we have been able to support.

Centre Director Alan McDowell said: “We founded Empower Garden Centre and Educational Centre, in 2021 to support communities in the Portadown area.

“In addition to offering a full range of good value and quality products, our garden centre gives us the opportunity to teach volunteers how to start and run their own small business. With the new skills being taught, we are providing an opportunity for residents and participants to gain experience that we hope will help them follow careers with greater earning capacity.

“All profits from the Garden Centre are reinvested in our Wellness Centre, which supports those in the community who might currently be struggling with mental health issues, the recovery from physical illness, loneliness and isolation.

“Our Wellness Centre provides a wide range of services from specialist counselling through to practical therapeutic activities including classes in Arts & Crafts, Woodwork, Cookery, Baking, Pottery & Ceramics, Yoga, Gardening & Horticulture, Sewing & Fashion.

“We also manage a food distribution programme to provide free food and supplies for those in the community who are struggling both financially and emotionally.”

## More information

Our social enterprise team are always happy to hear new ideas of how social enterprise could bring real change.

Please email our team at [socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:socialinvestments@nihe.gov.uk) if you have a new idea, want to grow your existing social enterprise or just need some advice.

# Communities power ahead with Social Value

Social value clauses are now included in government contracts that meet a certain value. This means Housing Executive contractors must partner with voluntary, community and social groups to fulfill these clauses.



David Hunter, Hillside Men's Shed, works on a clock face. Looking on are (L-R) Jennifer Clements, from Newry Unite Community Centre, Kevin McGarry from M&M/Mascott and Niall Fitzpatrick, Housing Executive.

Depending on the value of the contract, this can have a huge positive impact on communities.

Housing Executive Director of Asset Management Paul Isherwood said: "From June 2022, all government contracts of a certain value must include and score social value clauses.

"However, the Housing Executive has had social value clauses in some of its contracts since 2016 as part of our work to improve communities.

Earlier this year, building firm M&M Contractors/Mascott presented brand new power tools to Newry Street Unite community group in Kilkeel as part of a planned maintenance scheme.

"We are delighted to see M&M Contractors/Mascott connecting with the Hillside Men's Shed and other groups in the area to give back to the local community."

Mr Isherwood added: "With support from our staff, communities can benefit when maintenance contractors are working locally. Contractors can help local enterprises in a number of ways such as providing training courses, facilitating learning and apprenticeships, and supplying tools and equipment.

"It's an excellent opportunity for local groups to build a working

relationship with our contractors while they are in an area. It also enables groups to build up technical skills and upgrade small projects."

The company has been carrying out a wide range of improvement works to South Down homes for the Housing Executive's stock investment programme. In addition, they have been carrying out important work in the local community as part of a social value condition in their contract.

To fulfil their social value clauses, the company donated the power tools to support the Hillside Men's Shed in Kilkeel.

M&M Contractors/Mascott have also been doing commendable work with four other community groups in the south Down area - Carnagat Community Association in Newry, Moneydarragh Community Association in Annalong, Burrendale Residents Association in Newcastle and the Sir Hans Sloane Centre in Killyleagh - under the same initiative.

Kevin McGarry, from M&M Contractors/Mascott, said: "We are very pleased to continue to deliver significant projects for the Housing Executive along with developing strong local community relationships as part of its sustainable social strategy.

"To be able to share our expertise

and provide targeted financial assistance with communities is very rewarding. Our staff can see first-hand how we are helping the communities they are working in and are making a positive impact on the area.

"Hopefully we are enabling people to improve their homes and communities by offering our support."

David Hunter, from Hillside Men's Shed, said: "Men's Sheds are community spaces for men to connect, talk and create.

"Our group helps reduce loneliness and isolation, and it's fun.

"It's fantastic to receive tools of this quality which we need for our projects. They are much appreciated and will be put to good use."

## Find out more

If you would like to know more about social value clauses in government contracts and how your community can benefit, visit [www.socialvalueni.org](http://www.socialvalueni.org)



Some of the 14 new social homes developed by Ark Housing Association. We were able to support the development of the homes in Derrytrasna, Co. Armagh following a housing needs test.

## Find out more

For more information email [rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk)

# Rural Needs Testing

We're helping to deliver new social homes in rural areas through our Rural Housing Need Tests.

Sometimes our waiting lists do not accurately reflect the need for social homes in rural areas. If there is clearly no available housing, very often people do not come forward to register their interest in living at a rural location.

Without names on the local waiting list, we cannot determine if new social housing is required. This means that new housing schemes will not be planned.

Rural Housing Need Tests allow us to identify hidden housing need. They provide an opportunity for people in a particular area to come forward and speak to our housing advisors about their housing requirements and if necessary, submit a housing application with us.

Each test is tailored to suit the designated area, and can involve community meetings, engagement with the local primary school, and a public information event.

We promote details of the test in local papers and on social media. We also speak with community representatives and politicians, to help ensure the information reaches people who are in need of a home. Each test lasts for four weeks.

Once the test is finished, we will add new completed housing applications to the waiting list. If we find that many people want to live in that area and if there is sufficient housing need, we will work with a housing association to identify a suitable site to build new homes.

As part of our 2022/23 test programme, we looked at the need for social and affordable housing in 11 areas across Northern Ireland. So far, during the latest 2023-24 programme, we have carried out four tests, with more planned.



# Dealing with damp

Wipe up condensation

**Most homes will be affected by some form of damp, particularly during the winter months**

There are three main types of damp:

- Condensation
- Rising damp
- Penetrating damp

Condensation is the most common form of dampness. It appears as water droplets on surfaces like walls, tiles or windows when moist air condenses on a cold surface. Most commonly you will see condensation in rooms where there is a lot of air moisture, such as bathrooms and kitchens.

You can treat condensation easily when it first appears with anti-fungicidal treatment/spray. However, if condensation is left untreated for too long, it can result in mould growth, which has potentially harmful implications for your health.

There are simple steps you can follow to help prevent condensation occurring:

- Make sure your home is well ventilated so that air can circulate. This means keeping the trickle vents in your windows open. You should open windows in your home throughout the day if it is safe to do so.

- If you notice condensation on any of the surfaces in your house, wipe it up.
- If possible dry clothes outside. If you need to dry clothes inside, keep the door to the room closed and make sure you use the extractor fan if you have one or leave a small window open.
- If you have a non-condensing washer/dryer or tumble dryer, make sure it is properly vented to the outside.
- When cooking, keep the kitchen door closed and cover boiling pots. Use the extractor fan if you have one and/or leave the window open and continue to do so until any steam has cleared.
- Leave a small gap between your furniture and walls to allow the air to circulate freely.
- When having a bath or shower, keep the door to the room closed, use the extractor fan if you have one and/or leave the window open until the steam has cleared.
- When the weather is cold, try to maintain a constant temperature in your home. Setting the heating in all rooms at a constant lower temperature can be effective at preventing condensation, and it also costs less on energy bills. Rising damp and penetrating damp are caused by the breakdown of elements such as roof leaks, blocked gutters or drains or the failure of a damp proof course. Both rising damp and penetrating damp need to be repaired by our contractors.



Set the heating in rooms at a constant lower temperature



Cover boiling pans



Dry your clothes outside if possible

## Find out more

If you have problems with persistent damp, contact us straight away.

**You can request a repair through My Housing Executive (our online tenant portal) or by phoning 03448 920 901.**



# DID YOU KNOW?

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is not just a landlord, but is also the housing authority for Northern Ireland with a number of other roles and duties.

## How we invest your rent

**63%**

on home maintenance and improvements



**32%** neighbourhood investment, ASB, community work and staff costs

**5%**

loan charges

**£1.2b**

We have an annual budget of approximately £1.2billion, and provide a range of public services.

We estimate that our services impact on the lives of one in every three people across Northern Ireland.

We have two distinct parts to our business: our **landlord role** and our **housing authority role**.

The services we provide for you, is as your landlord and are delivered through our housing and asset management teams. These teams provide a full range of services including housing management, collecting rents, dealing with anti-social behaviour, repairing and improving our homes, and engaging with our customers and tenants at a community based level.



We also manage **400 commercial properties** and **6,100 leasehold properties** - these are typically flats which residents have bought from us.



### Housing Selection Scheme

We also manage the waiting list for social housing in Northern Ireland. This is the called the Housing Selection Scheme and it is used to allocate social housing to our homes and housing association homes.

We are also responsible for assisting those households who are homeless and we have a duty to provide temporary accommodation when it is needed.

In order to get on the waiting list for social housing, we carry out assessments for all new applicants to determine if they are eligible for social housing and we will award points based on their housing need.

Applicants will be asked to pick one first preference area of choice, followed by an unlimited number of areas with no order preference relating to where they would like to live. When a suitable home becomes available, it is allocated to the person on the waiting list with the most points at that time.

### New Builds

We oversee the programme for building new social houses across Northern Ireland. These are built by housing associations. Allocations to these new homes are from the single waiting list which is outlined above. Over the last five years, work has started on 8,619 new build homes by housing associations.

### Home Energy Conservation Authority

In our role as the Home Energy Conservation Authority, we support improvements in home energy efficiency across housing Northern Ireland. This includes carrying out and/or supporting research to promote innovation and help track the progress of energy efficiency programmes and projects. Delivered 5,591 Affordable Warmth measures to 3,308 homes with 3,617 onward referrals to the existing available energy efficiency schemes - overall, this work resulted in reduced fuel costs for householders and £16.3m invested into the local economy;



**£500m**

### Housing Benefit

As the Strategic Housing Authority for Northern Ireland we are responsible for many other services and programmes. One of the main service is Housing Benefit, we provide this to Housing Executive tenants, but also housing association and those renting privately. The budget for Housing Benefit is around £500m each year.



### Supporting People

We administer the Supporting People

Programme in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department for Communities.

**Approved 822 Disabled Facilities Grants with a value of approximately £12.8m**



### Grant schemes

We offer a limited number of grants to people and landlords who own their own homes. Applications are open to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) scheme and Mandatory Repair Grants scheme.



Kyle Hunter, Higher Level Apprentice

# A career like no other - come work with us

Apprenticeships are just one entry level path into a career with the Housing Executive.

The organisation has a proud history of providing entry level programmes for people to take their first step onto the career ladder.

Over the last ten years we have recruited 280 apprentices and graduates in disciplines such as housing services, plumbing, joinery, electrics, IT, project management and quantity surveying.

Kyle Hunter has been working with us since August 2022. He's one of ten apprentices within our Asset Management side of the business and works in the Derry City and Strabane area.

and have so much expertise about construction.

"I've gained so much experience working in the Housing Executive and never realised how much work is involved managing social homes. In a few years I hope to complete my degree and become a Project Manager, overseeing improvement schemes and possibly new build schemes too.

"My apprenticeship with the Housing Executive has helped me so much, and set me on an exciting career path."

Kyle Hunter  
Higher Level Apprentice

"I have no regrets coming to work for the Housing Executive - to anyone looking to get into the construction industry and learn about the processes in building and design I would highly recommend them as an employer. I can see myself happily working here for many years."



**In 2023 we have recruited:**  
**59** entry-level roles  
**25** supply chain contractors apprentices

As an apprentice Kyle attends university one day a week, and is studying for a degree in Construction Engineering and Management. The other four days are spent shadowing project managers and quantity surveyors, learning about building design and environment, programme delivery, heating systems and disabled adaptations.

Kyle says: "I really enjoy working in the Housing Executive, it's given me a great work life balance so I can study whilst also working and learning on the job. The staff here are brilliant

and graduate entry schemes provide opportunities for people to explore new careers, they also help us to fill specialist roles and attract, retain and develop talent.

Sophie Irwin, Head of Learning and Organisational Development, said: "We have an ambitious target to provide 120 apprenticeships/ traineeships over the next three years across Northern Ireland.

"We hope that these opportunities attract applicants from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds. We also hope that people who previously may not have considered starting a career with the Housing Executive will now apply.

"When you join the Housing Executive, you join an organisation that offers numerous career paths with support and training to reach your full potential.

"In 2023 we have successfully recruited 59 entry-level roles across the organisation, with a further 25 apprentices employed by our supply chain contractors working on Housing Executive projects."

It is never too early to start thinking about a career with us.

Sophie continued: "In June 2023 we launched a new Work Inspiration Programme with local schools, to raise young people's awareness of the wide range of career opportunities we can offer.

"We had 17 students from eight different schools taking part in the new programme, with enthusiastic and positive feedback. They particularly enjoyed hearing from our senior leaders about how the Housing Executive is making a difference in our local communities. They also took part in a 'speed careers' session with colleagues from a range of different roles across the organisation.

"We hope to run another programme next year with opportunities for more local schools to take part.

"We are also delighted to see an increase in people applying for our entry-level roles. Some of the more popular entry level opportunities have attracted a four-fold increase in applications, so we are looking at expanding the number of entry level opportunities we can offer as we move into 2024.

## For more information

Keep an eye on the careers section of our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) and our social media platforms for more information.

[nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)    



# Community Safety

Our Community Safety Team works with our locally based staff to provide a range of services to deal with community safety issues and anti-social behaviour.

## Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We work hard with our neighbourhoods to embed good relations, inclusivity and trust. However, there are times when anti-social behaviour occurs.

It is important that you know what to do if you're worried about ASB in your area.

The easiest way to report ASB is to ring our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900** and ask to speak to your Patch Manager.

You can also send them a message online on our **'My Housing Executive Tenant Portal'**. If you prefer, a relative, friend or representative can make a complaint on your behalf.

It may also be necessary for you to report anti-social behaviour to the Police or your local council.

## Find out more

For more details visit [www.nihe.gov.uk/community](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/community) or contact your local Housing Executive office.

## Mediation - it's good to talk

We understand that disputes can happen from time to time and that it may not always be easy to agree or find resolution.

Our community safety team can provide help with referral to mediation.

Many disagreements can be sorted out through informal discussions or negotiation but when that's unsuccessful, mediation can be an effective alternative.

When mediation is used at an early stage, it can help prevent a dispute from escalating to the point where significant action is necessary.

Mediation may not be appropriate in all instances and victims' wellbeing and safety is always a top priority for us.

Mediation helps people to reach their own solutions. The professional mediator, as an independent third party, aims to help both sides find an acceptable resolution.

This service is confidential and any discussions cannot be used in court or any other legal proceedings at a later date.

# Self Help Repairs Scheme

Did you know that under our self-help scheme, you don't have to wait for us to carry out your repairs?

By contacting our Customer Services Unit on 03448 920 901, you can arrange a visit from your local maintenance officer to inspect the works you would like to carry out as a self-help repair. It is important to do this before any work commences or else you may not be eligible!

Following their inspection, the maintenance officer will tell you how much you will get paid for the work to get done. Remember- everyone's home is different, so the type of repair and amount we can pay will be different for each property.

## What repairs does this cover?

You can do minor repairs up to a maximum value of £200. This could include things like:

- Replacing a defective door
- Retiling a floor
- Renewing a gate or front door

If you want to complete works over the value of £200, you can still carry them out, provided you pay the difference!

It is important to remember that if, after you start work, you discover that additional work is needed you must stop work and contact your local office straight away. The local office will either authorise you to carry out

the additional work or arrange for the work to be carried out by someone else.

After the repair is carried out, the Housing Executive may inspect the work and have the right to withhold making any payments until the work is completed to our satisfaction. If you are in arrears the money may be credited to your account instead.

Self-help repairs do not cover emergency or urgent works and you must use a qualified contractor for minor plumbing or electrical work.

## Find out more

You can find out more on our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) and searching 'self-help repairs'.



# Contents Insurance

**Have you insured your house contents? Remember that the Housing Executive are responsible for the structure of your home, but you are responsible for the contents!**

Many of us think that serious incidents such as a fire, burglary or water damage only happen to other people. This is one reason why many people choose not to insure the contents of their home. But, at any time, through no fault of your own, your personal belongings may be stolen or damaged by fire, storms, flood or burst pipes.

Minor accidents such as accidental breakages can also happen.

Remember if you are not properly insured you will almost certainly have to pay the cost of replacing your household goods and possessions! This could be very difficult, especially if valuable items such as furniture, TVs or other electrical equipment need to be replaced.

Even a small flood in your home caused by a faulty washing machine or a burst pipe could cause a lot of damage.

We strongly recommend that you take out contents insurance so that you will be protected against accidental damage, loss or theft.

You can arrange house contents insurance through any online comparison website, local insurance broker, or by dealing directly with an insurance company.

## For more information

You might also be able to get home contents insurance through a **Supporting Communities Northern Ireland** scheme - you can call them on **028 2564 5676** to find out more.

# Be Gas Safe

## Annual gas safety checks

By law, we must carry out an annual service and safety check of all gas appliances that we have installed in your home. This is to ensure that your heating system is running efficiently and safely. It is important that you allow our Gas Safe registered contractor to access your home to carry out this important work. If you don't allow access, your gas supply will be disconnected, as we can't ensure that your gas is safe to use.

## Carbon monoxide

Whenever our Gas Safe registered contractors install a new or replacement heating system in your home, we will provide you with a carbon monoxide detector or alarm. This will be placed in the room where your boiler

is located. Carbon monoxide is a silent killer that you can't see, taste, or smell. However, there are signs that you need to look out for including:

- Staining, soot, or discolouration around a gas fire or around the top of a water heater or central heating boiler.
- A yellow or orange flame in a gas appliance.
- Onset of symptoms such as tiredness, headache, nausea, giddiness, pains in the chest and stomach (these can often be mistaken for symptoms of a cold or flu).

**If you suspect an appliance is unsafe, turn it off, leave it alone, and call our 24 hour Repair Line on 03448 920 901. We will have it checked by a Gas Safe Registered engineer as soon as possible.**



# Fire safety advice and tips

Test your smoke detector every week

We want to help you keep your home safe from fire so that you can protect your family and your possessions

There are straightforward steps you can take to help reduce the likelihood of fire in your home:

- A smoke detector should be installed on every level of your home. We check these every year, as part of the annual safety check of our heating systems, to make sure that they are working properly. You should also test your smoke detector every week. If you are having issues with any of them, you should contact us straight away. This is really important as smoke detectors identify smoke at the earliest stages of a fire, giving you extra crucial time to get out of your home.
- Kitchen fires can start when cooking is left unattended. You should remain in the kitchen while cooking your meals to reduce the risk.
- If you live in a block of flats, it is important to keep communal areas clear. Blocked escape routes can create serious risk, especially in our high rise tower blocks.
- Do not overload electric sockets and get faulty electrical appliances and wiring checked straight away.
- Chargers should not be left on for too long as they can result in devices overheating and causing a fire
- Candles and tea lights should always be in proper holders and positioned away from curtains and clothes. Never leave candles unattended.
- A lit cigarette left unattended in a home can pose a real fire risk! Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully and keep ashtrays away from furniture.
- A fire escape plan can help to save lives. Make an escape plan and share it with everyone in your home. Keep exits clear so people can get out safely and make sure keys to windows and doors are easy to find.
- If a fire should occur, keep calm and act quickly. Close the door, make sure everyone leaves the property and call 999 straight away.

## Electric bikes, scooters, balance boards and personal mobility scooters

As more people use e-bikes, e-scooters, balance boards and personal mobility scooters, we want to remind residents how to charge and store them safely.

Each of these devices are normally powered by powerful lithium-ion batteries.

This is the same type of battery found in electric cars, mobile phones, laptops, handheld games devices and power tools.

If this type of battery is damaged, they can overheat and catch fire.

Some fires in other parts of the UK which have involved e-bikes, e-scooters and balance boards have been caused by faulty charging equipment, improper charging practices like overloaded sockets, or by aftermarket kits used to modify bicycles into e-bikes. So:

- Once any device has been charged - unplug it
- Never use charging equipment that was not supplied with your device
- **STOP** charging the device if any parts are damaged
- **NEVER** store or charge any of these devices in escape routes.

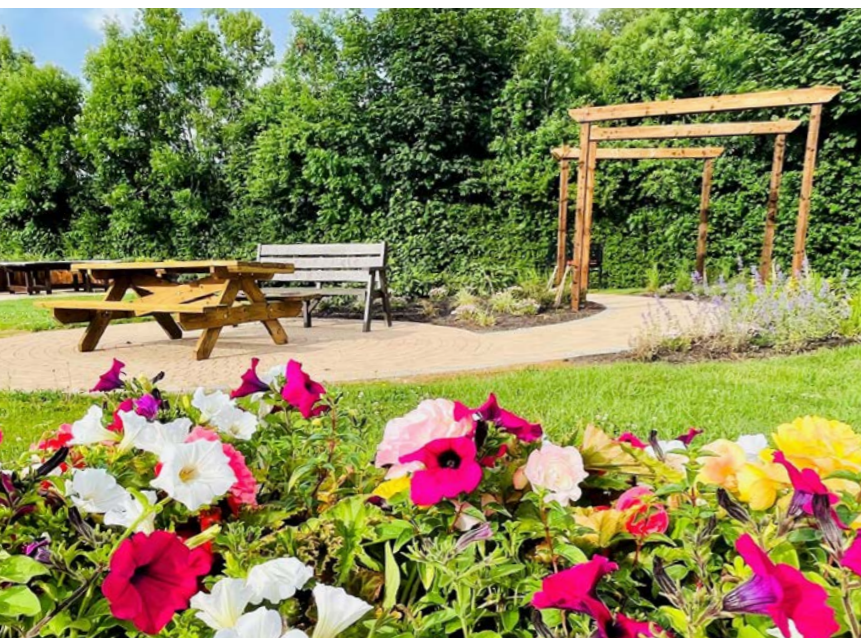


## For more information

For fire safety advice and tips visit our website at [www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Repairs-and-maintenance/Fire-safety](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Repairs-and-maintenance/Fire-safety)



# Living and working with nature



Community garden area created in Moneydig, April 2023

In addition to being a landlord to thousands of homes, the Housing Executive is responsible for the maintenance of 3,500 acres of 'soft' open space.

This includes over 2,900 acres of grass, 331 acres of planted areas, 108km of hedges, around 130,000 trees and over 300 acres of 'hard' areas (including tarmac, concrete, pavior and cobbles).

We have a team of 20 grounds staff who work with specialist companies across Northern Ireland to maintain our land. This involves hedge trimming, shrub and tree pruning, landscaping, grass cutting and maintaining or creating bedding displays.

Our staff carry out regular checks with arborists to ensure trees are not diseased or become dangerous. In order to keep our open spaces safe and enjoyable we regularly consult with local residents, letting people know what we propose to do and altering our plans if required.

We are committed to improving the aesthetics of the areas we look after. Our aim is to provide our tenants with access to quality green spaces which everyone can use and enjoy, while also helping to generate cleaner air.



Tree groves in the Moyraverty estate, Craigavon were we under planted some Dogwood to create wildlife habitats.

11,490 native trees and whips were planted during 2022/23 planting season, doubling our initial target of 5,500.

# Are you winter ready?

Do you know what to do if a pipe freezes in your home? Follow these five simple steps to prevent a leak or flood:



1

Cut off your water supply at the stopcock or stop valve, by turning it clockwise.

If your home has a stopcock, you should be able to find it under the kitchen sink. It can also be in an airing cupboard or under the floorboards by your front door. If your home has a stop valve, it should be on a wall in your kitchen.



2

Find the frozen pipe if you can, and move your belongings away from it so they don't become damaged if it bursts.



3

If you find it, open the tap nearest to the pipe that is frozen (so the water can flow through once it's melted) then try to thaw the pipe out by holding a hot water bottle or a hairdryer at its lowest setting to it. This will melt the ice and help get things flowing again.



4

If the pipes are frozen in the roof space, open your trap door slightly to allow warm air into the roof space - if this can be done safely. Leave it slightly open until the pipe thaws and remember to close it afterwards.



5

Call our 24 hour Repair Line on 03448 920 901 and let us know that you have a frozen pipe in your home.





# Housing Community Network Members go online with Member Forums



## Housing Community Network (HCN) members from Dungannon, Cookstown, and Magherafelt are leading the way in using the new HCN Members Forum with digital skills training from Supporting Communities.

The online 'collaboration portal', now known as the HCN Members Forums, is currently being rolled out to the Area Level of the Housing Community Network, the key forum for tenant and community engagement in Northern Ireland. The HCN Members Forums are an online environment for HCN members to share files, have discussions, manage meetings and associated papers, and assign tasks or 'to-do' lists.

HCN Digital Inclusion Officer at Supporting Communities, Carla Mulholland, is working with HCN groups across Northern Ireland, to ensure members can access the forums online. She said: "The online forums will improve the network's ability to collaborate by removing the need to email papers, minutes, and meeting invitations, which can be misplaced.

Phyllis Clarke from Fivemiletown Estates Group said: "It's good because if you miss a meeting, you can go on the platform to read the minutes and keep up with what's going on. The session with Carla was excellent. She helped me get my emails sorted out on my tablet, so I am ready to go paperless!" she added.

Ursula Marshall from the Disability Forum was also happy with the

training. Despite some difficulties with the Wi-Fi at the training venue, Ursula appreciated Carla's relaxed approach to digital skills. "She was so, so good! So patient and able to help everyone with different devices.

"I think the HCN Members Forum will be useful for me to have materials in one place. I can let the disability forum know what is available there. I can also see how the chat function would be useful for groups to reach out to others. You could contact someone you don't have a phone number or email for," Ursula said.

Carla has been working with Supporting Communities' Community Development Officers, the Central Housing Forum's Digital Inclusion Working Group, and the Community Involvement team at the Housing Executive to ensure that the online forums are accessible to all members.

"One of the best things about these initial training sessions was that Lucia (Supporting Communities' Community Development Officer for the Mid-Ulster Area) got the Housing Executive staff members to train alongside the group members. I think this helped everyone imagine how we can use the online forums to communicate and share things more easily," she said.

"I teach people to initially think of the Forums as a big online filing

"It's good because if you miss a meeting, you can go on the platform to read the minutes and keep up with what's going on."

Phyllis Clarke,  
Fivemiletown Estates Group

cabinet, but there is potential to use it for more as we all get used to it," said Carla. "These sessions with multiple groups and staff together got that conversation going."

As with any new way of doing things, it may take users a little time to get used to it. Deidre Bradley from Granaghan & District Women's Group attended the Magherafelt training session. She said, "Carla showed us how to log on to the Forum, guided us around it and provided detailed notes on how to do so. The best way to maximise the use of the Forums is, unsurprisingly, practice".

That sounds like good advice! Practice makes perfect, and we encourage each Area Forum to make it their own by sharing information and keeping in touch online.

### For more information

Supporting Communities is an independent charity that champions tenant and community participation by developing groups, supporting active citizenship, and building cohesive communities.

To find out more call  
028 2564 5676.



# Why we may need to access your home

We will always contact you beforehand and show photographic ID before we enter your home.

## As a landlord it is important to us that we meet our tenants' needs as best we can, and they know what to expect from us.

Our staff and contractors will occasionally need access to your home to make sure it complies with safety regulations. We will always contact you beforehand and show photographic ID before we enter your home. We may need access to:

### Service your heating appliance

It's a legal requirement for us to carry out an annual service and safety check of all the gas appliances that we have installed in your home. This is to make sure your heating system is operating safely and efficiently. It's important that you allow our Gas Safe registered contractor into your home to carry out this necessary work. If you don't allow access your gas supply will be disconnected as we can't ensure that your gas is safe to use. Our contractors must also service your oil, solid fuel and wood pellet appliances once a year.

### Carry out an asbestos survey

We are legally required to survey your home before we carry out any work to check where asbestos may be present. Asbestos does not pose a risk to health when managed properly, so we will periodically arrange visits to monitor its condition.

### Monitor the hygiene and quality of your water storage tank and pipework

Our contractor carries out Legionella surveys in domestic, commercial and community lets, to identify if any work is needed.

### Replace your smoke alarm

We replace smoke alarms in our properties every 10 years and you should test yours every week. Check carbon monoxide detectors We also check your carbon monoxide detectors as part of the annual servicing of your heating appliance. You should test your carbon monoxide detectors every week. The detector will be fixed to the wall or ceiling close to your heating appliance.

### Audit completed maintenance work

This is to ensure that the work done is of the required quality and standard.

### Inspect electrical wiring

We aim to check your home's fixed electrical wiring every 5 years.

### For tenants living in flats within our tower blocks we may need access to:

### Check window restrictors

We check window restrictors every year to ensure that adequate controls are in place to prevent accidental falls from height.

## Further information

If you are not at home when we call, please contact the number on the card that we leave to arrange a suitable time.

If you need advice or guidance on the information above please contact our **repair line on 03448 920 901**.

**If you think you have had a bogus caller, you can call us on 03448 920 900 to check the caller's details if they claim to be from the Housing Executive.**

# Embracing all our neighbours



If English is not your first language and you need help with interpreting & translation the Housing Executive can provide free services on request, please ask for further details at your local office.

### ARABIC

كنت غل يه ةييزيل جنالال ةغللال نكفت مل اذا يف ةدع اسملال ىلع لوصحلل اجاتحتو مل ال عيطتستغف ، ةيطلخل او ةيشفشلل اقم جرتللا هذه ريفوت ةيذيفنتللا نكسالا اقم دخ كنم ىجري ، بلطللا دن ع ةيناجمللا تامدخلا نم ليصفتللاب رملال اذه لوح راسفتسالا ىل حملال كعبتكم

### CANTONESE

如果英語不是你的母語，並且你需要幫助來進行口譯和文字翻譯，那麼 Housing Executive 可以根據請求而提供免費的服務，請在你當地的辦公室詢問進一步的詳情。

### LITHUANIAN

Jeį anglų kalba nėra jūsų gimtoji kalba ir jums reikia pagalbos dėl vertimo žodžiu ir raštu, jums pageidaujant Housing Executive gali suteikti nemokamas vertimo paslaugas; dėl išsamesnės informacijos prašome kreiptis į vietinį skyrių.

### MANDARIN

如果英语不是你的母語，並且你需要幫助來進行口譯和文字翻譯，那麼 Housing Executive 可以根據請求而提供免費的服務，請在你當地的辦公室詢問進一步的詳情。

### POLISH

Jeśli język angielski nie jest Państwa językiem ojczystym i potrzebują Państwo pomocy w zakresie tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych, Housing Executive oferuje bezpłatne usługi tłumaczeniowe na życzenie. O szczegóły prosimy pytać biuro lokalne.

### PORTUGUESE

Se o Inglês não for a sua língua materna e precisar de ajuda com tradução e interpretação, o Executivo de Habitação pode providenciar serviços gratuitos mediante solicitação, pode obter mais informações no seu escritório local.

### ROMANIAN

Dacă nu sunteți vorbitor nativ de limba engleză și aveți nevoie de sprijin în interpretare sau traducere, Autoritatea Irlandeză pentru Locuințe [Northern Ireland Housing Executive] vă poate oferi aceste servicii gratuite la cerere; vă rugăm solicitați detalii suplimentare la biroul local.

### SLOVAK

Ak angličtina nie je váš materský jazyk a vyžadujete si pomoc s prekladom a tlmočením, kancelária úradu pre otázky bývania (Housing Executive) vám ochotne poskytne tieto služby bezplatne. Prosím, požiadajte svoju miestnu kanceláriu o viac informácií.

### SOMALI

Haddii af Ingiriisigu uusan ahayn luqaddaada hooyo oo aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumaadda oraahda ah iyo midda qoran Agaasinka Guryeynta (Housing Executive) ayaa adeegyo bilaash ah bixin kara marka laga codsado, fadlan faahfaahin dheeraad ah weydii xafiiska xaafaddaada.

**For customers with sensory disabilities, information can be provided in alternative formats such as large print, braille or audio. Sign language interpreters can also be provided, but please give as much notice as possible to allow us to meet your request.**

## Interpretation services for our deaf or hard of hearing customers

You can get in touch with us online, by text, or face to face.

### GO ONLINE

If you're a British (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) user you can use our online Video Relay Service (VRS) to access advice and support on everything to do with your tenancy with us.

The service works by connecting you with a BSL or ISL interpreter who will relay the conversation between you and a member of our staff.

To find out how to use VRS visit our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

### DROP US A TEXT

You can communicate with us via text, if you have a textphone, or the Relay UK app installed on your smartphone, using the below numbers:

### GENERAL ENQUIRIES:

18001 03448 920 900

### REPAIRS:

18001 03448 920 901

### HOUSING BENEFIT:

18001 03448 920 902

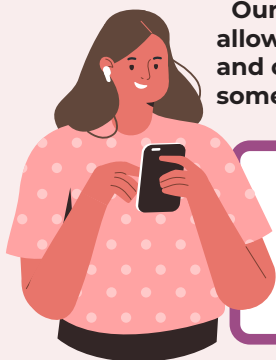
### VISIT OUR OFFICE

If you've been asked to come into one of our offices by a member of our staff to discuss your housing situation, we can arrange for a BSL or ISL interpreter to provide you with communication support during your visit.

# Making life easier with **MY** Housing Executive



Our online tenant portal - My Housing Executive - allows you to access information about your tenancy and contact us securely 24 hours a day. Here are some of the ways it can help to make your life easier.



## Can I pay my rent?

Yes, you can make a rent payment, order a new payment card, and check your rent balance and account statement via the portal. All you have to do is register online to set up your account.

## Can I request a repair?

You can request a repair through the portal and track our response. You can also request other services like a transfer, an adaptation to your property or a self-help repair.



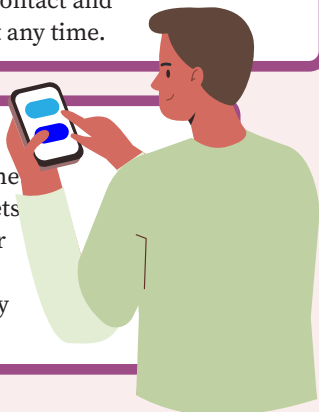
## Is it secure?

Yes, when you register online you will be asked to provide a personal email address. We will store your details securely and send you secure notifications and alerts. You can also update your contact and personal details at any time.



## Can I use the portal on my phone?

You can access the portal from most internet connected devices including phones, tablets and laptops, so we can be reached whether you are at home, at work or on the go. The portal also allows you to contact us directly through web messages.



## Register now

Visit our website [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) and click on the 'Sign In' icon on the top right hand corner of the homepage to get started. This will take you to the My Housing Executive homepage.

If you require assistance registering with My Housing Executive, please call our dedicated helpline on 03448 920 910 to chat to a member of our staff.

# Get in touch

You can contact your patch manager and other members of our housing team in the following ways:



## TENANT PORTAL

Send us a message on our tenant portal My Housing Executive at a time that suits you.

Register at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)



## PHONE

General enquiries

**03448 920 900**

(lines are open 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Report a repair

**03448 920 901**

(lines are open 8.30am to 5pm for normal repairs and 24 hours for emergencies).

You can also report a repair by texting **07507 301 011** (starting your message with the word 'REPAIR' and remembering to include your address).



## EMAIL

For general enquiries email [information@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:information@nihe.gov.uk)



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great way to keep up to date with everything happening in your area and you can also report anything you need help with.

HousingExecutive

@nihecommunity

nihecommunity



## FACE-TO-FACE

We understand that you may prefer to speak to someone in person. You can call into any of our offices to talk to our staff or even arrange for someone to call out to your home. Visit [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) to find your nearest office and opening hours.

**Housing Executive**

[nihe.gov.uk](http://nihe.gov.uk)