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# Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan

Year 4 Action Plan

## Introduction

1. This Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan is a rolling plan which has been developed to complement the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy 2022–2027.
2. While the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy focuses on accommodation based or housing-led solutions to homelessness, this plan focuses on addressing gaps in 'non-accommodation' services beyond the remit of the Housing Executive. These are services that have the potential to positively impact on the lives and life chances of people who are homeless and those who are most at risk of homelessness.
3. IDHAP 4 will support the delivery of the draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework, which went out for consultation in 2021 and is yet to be finalised, and support the delivery of 'New Decade, New Approach'.
4. The Year 4 Action Plan has been equality screened and the actions included reflect feedback from stakeholders. As detailed in the equality screening form for the Action Plan, individual actions will be subject to screening by the responsible lead Departments in line with their respective Equality Scheme.
5. Feedback from the homelessness sector on the Year 3 Action Plan was positive. There was an acknowledgement from the sector that there continued to be a collaborative approach across Government Departments which in turn led to a more coherent Action Plan. The Year 3 Action Plan & Report can be accessed online by accessing:  
  
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/interdepartmental-homelessness-action-plans>

## Development of the Action Plan

6. As with previous years, a co-production approach has been adopted from the outset to develop the Year 4 Action Plan.
7. To facilitate this approach, communication was regular and ongoing between the Department for Communities, a number of Government Departments and the voluntary sector. All stakeholders were tasked with giving feedback on all draft iterations and providing advice and guidance during the development of the Year 4 Action Plan. To ensure that there was appropriate linkage with the Housing Executive's

Homelessness Strategy 2022–2027 representatives from the Housing Executive were also included in discussions.

8. Once agreement was reached between all stakeholders on the draft plan, it was presented to the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG) for approval.


### **Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements**

9. Our focus will be to evaluate how the Action Plan contributes to our overall objective of improving the lives and life chances of those who are homeless and those most at risk of homelessness. The Action Plan will remain a 'living document' throughout the lifetime of the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy so that the Department for Communities, with input from partner organisations, service providers and service users, can keep it up-to-date and responsive.
10. HSSG will have overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan. This group, which meets quarterly, also has responsibility for monitoring the Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy. A policy lead has been allocated for each action within the Action Plan and the HSSG will review quarterly progress


reports on the Action Plan and will also be responsible for signing off an annual progress report and any future iterations of the Action Plan.

11. In order to facilitate ongoing stakeholder engagement, an annual conference/workshop will be convened involving Government Departments, statutory agencies, service providers and service users. The objective for this event will be to review the draft annual progress report, review the impact of the actions to date, assist in the identification of available data to inform the monitoring and evaluation of impacts, agree any actions that should carry forward to the following year including any refinement or further development that is necessary and agree any new actions that should be added to the Action Plan.
12. The annual conference/workshop will be arranged prior to the HSSG's review of the annual progress report to allow stakeholder feedback to be incorporated within the draft annual report.
13. Finally, we will seek to ensure that the wide range of mechanisms which are already in existence are utilised to their full potential to promote the maximum impact in sharing learning and good practice and improving communication among and between all interests.

<b>PRIORITY AREA 1</b> <b>Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance use</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p> <b>DoH</b>                      Department of Health  <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a> </p>	<p><b>1. Mental Health Strategy:</b>                      Implementation of the action plan for promoting mental health through early intervention and prevention which considers groups disproportionately affected by mental ill health (Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031, Action 2).</p>	<p>An Engagement Group to be established in 23/24 to develop, implement and monitor a user engagement and involvement strategy for this work based on co-production and to link with other actions in the strategy. By 31 March 24 - Development of a User Involvement Strategy.                      Co-production of all actions under this plan.</p> <p>A Data and Outcomes group for early intervention and prevention to be established in 23/24 to ensure equal priority with service provision in the MHS Outcomes Framework, to develop datasets specific to early intervention and prevention, to co-ordinate the sharing of outcomes from other relevant areas, and to monitor effectiveness of the plan.</p> <p>Establish a Communication/Public Awareness Raising Group in 23/24 to oversee the development of a cross-sectoral approach to increasing public awareness on mental health and to reducing stigma. This will include identifying priorities and models of good practice, developing a public messaging model (including increasing mental health literacy) and considering capacity in all sectors. Work will cover regional and local, total population plus targeting groups most at risk, consider digital implications and develop a cross-sectoral brand for positive mental health.</p> <p>Public Mental Health Learning Network to be established in 23/24 as a means to collate and expand the evidence base, including building evidence and understanding of how structural inequalities impact on mental health. The Network will support the development of reflective practice across all sectors and develop models peer support. It will enable all participants to share best practice on effectiveness of interventions (including cost effectiveness) and work collaboratively to sustain and scale solutions that work. This work will cover direct programme interventions as well as public awareness raising and will link with the Centre of Excellence for mental health which is to be established.</p>



Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>DoH Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>2. New Drugs and Alcohol Services:</b> Development and Delivery of a new outcomes-focused strategic plan, to replace the Alcohol and Drugs Services Commissioning Framework, across all tiers of service, including alignment with housing and homelessness services as appropriate.</p>	<p>Develop a first iterative draft of the strategic plan by end of April 2023 which will then go through the necessary approval and consultation processes. Take forward the delivery of this strategic plan once agreed.</p>




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 <p>DoH Department of Health <a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>3. Dual Diagnosis Support:</b> Recruitment of a short-term lead for co-occurring Mental Health and Substance use (subject to additional funding) to scope out the services and capacity currently in place, the patient/population profile (which is showing increased co-morbidity), models of service delivery, pathways, and training needs.</p>	<p>A fixed term 8a post to be created for 1 year, commencing within the first quarter of 23/24 to work across Northern Ireland with a wide range of stakeholders including service users, service providers, commissioners and policy makers to scope current and best practice and propose an effective, person-centred, inclusive and integrated model of care that can be implemented across the region. This model will incorporate best practice in the assessment and treatment of Mental Illness and Substance Use/Addictions.</p>






Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>Department of Health www.health-ni.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>4. Belfast Inclusion Hub</b> Belfast Inclusion Health Service – Development and implementation of a three-year service delivery plan with the implementation of specialist leads within the Multi-Disciplinary Team, focusing on specific areas of Health and Social Care needs. Using a trauma-informed approach and taking into account the Future Strategic Direction of homelessness and Health including the NICE Guidelines 2022 for integrated health and social care for people experiencing homelessness and the proposed Complex Lives Whole Systems Approach Model.</p>	<p><b>Priority 1 - Blood Borne Virus Screening:</b> Those who inject drugs will continue to be a priority in 23/24 with a target of 200 service users screened within the Belfast area. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals</li> <li>• Pre and post treatment support</li> <li>• Support with medication</li> <li>• Health education/Harm reduction advice</li> <li>• Hepatitis B x 3 vaccinations offered to all those screened</li> <li>• Joint clinics with secondary care services GUM Hepatology Sexual and Reproductive health</li> <li>• Continue to participate in UAM anonymous national survey of HIV Hepatitis C and T- Lymphotropic targeting sample 50/80 different individual service users per year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Priority 2 - New Regional Inclusion Nurses Blood Borne Virus Screening:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Targets for Year One will be to screen 50 individuals for BBV.</li> </ul> <p><b>Priority 3 - Evaluate the Two Band 5:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support workers role including Treatment support and assisting in primary and secondary care appointments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Priority 4 - Pathway Developments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Department and Infectious Diseases for timely treatment of soft tissue wounds for those who inject drugs to improve treatment concordance and reduce waiting times as this is a barrier for those with addiction who don't wait to complete treatment.</li> <li>• Mental health pathway development with community mental health teams and hospital mental health discharge teams.</li> <li>• Adult Safeguarding Pathway and alternative safeguarding follow-up.</li> </ul> <p><b>Priority 5 - Employment of the GP Local enhanced Service for this population:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is currently being agreed and Expressions of Interest being sent to interested practices within the Belfast area.</li> </ul>




<b>PRIORITY AREA 2</b> <b>Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>Department of Education www.education-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p>Rewarding Learning</p>	<p>5. In the absence of additional funding, CCEA will maintain the resources concerning homelessness, financial capability, and well-being in support of pupils across NI.</p>	<p>In June of each year, CCEA will produce an analysis of website diagnostics based on homelessness, financial awareness and wellbeing resources, and provide an update on the extent to which resources are being used by schools, through the provision of examples of effective practice.</p>




<b>PRIORITY AREA 3</b> <b>Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p><b>Housing</b> Executive</p>	<p><b>6. To review the current systems for accessing accommodation for offenders with service providers:</b>                      Implement ‘A Protocol for the Management of the accommodation and related support needs of people in custody in Northern Ireland’ and review Terms of Reference for the implementation groups to ensure continued effectiveness upon conclusion of the first year of the revised Protocol.</p>	<p>The revised Protocol will seek:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a formal framework for inter-agency co-operation for agencies involved in the delivery of accommodation and support services to people entering or leaving custody.</li> <li>• To prevent homelessness by meeting the accommodation and associated support needs of those entering and leaving custody.</li> </ul> <p>To reduce the likelihood of re-offending by helping to establish stability in lifestyles of those resettling.</p>

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 <p>Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p>Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal Department for Communities www.communities-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p>Housing Executive</p>	<p><b>7. Deliver a range of Early Intervention (EI) support for those exiting custody:</b></p> <p><b>(a) NIHE/NIPS (EI Housing project)</b> – to implement a test and learn pilot for NIHE Housing Advisors to work within the custodial setting to address accommodation issues for those exiting custody. The pilot will align with the current Complex Lives model.</p> <p><b>(b) DfC/NIPS (EI Employability project)</b> – to complete the current test and learn pilot of work coaches based in the prison setting to improve employment on release opportunities.</p> <p><b>(c) DfC/NIPS (Benefit support)</b> – to embed the provision of benefit advice from the “Make the Call” team as part of pre-release planning arrangements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of each Pilot to be undertaken looking at both quantitative (i.e. numbers engaging/completing) and qualitative (outcomes) impact of the interventions.</li> <li>• Securing benefit support, sustainable accommodation and employment positively impacts on a desistance from re-offending.</li> </ul>


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 <p>Department of Justice www.justice-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p>Department for Communities An Roinn Pobal</p>  <p>Department for Communities www.communities-ni.gov.uk</p>  	<p><b>8.1 Improved accommodation support for those on bail or release from court:</b></p> <p>Review the information materials provided by Prisoner Escorting &amp; Court Custody teams to ensure suitable accommodation support is provided to those “Discharge at Court”.</p> <p><b>8.2 Support and assistance for women exiting custody</b></p> <p>NIHE Complex Lives and Housing Solutions to work with women exiting custody to provide appropriate accommodation and link them with the support required to sustain it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved information and support for those on bail or released from court.</li> <li>• Feedback through prisoner/family forums.</li> <li>• Protocol requires implementation of specialist Housing Rights advisors to provide housing information/advice for those who are released from court.</li> <li>• Accommodation and associated support needs of those entering and leaving custody are met.</li> <li>• Work with providers exploring options to increase the provision of female-only accommodation.</li> <li>• Seek to meet the complex and conflicting needs of this service user group including addiction, mental health, risk of violence and exploitation and underlying trauma.</li> </ul>

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 <p><b>DoJ</b> Department of Justice <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Housing Executive</b></p> 	<p><b>CJINI Review of Probation Approved Premises</b></p> <p><b>8.3 Implement the recommendations from the CJINI Review of Approved Premises:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategic framework which clarifies the vision, strategy, oversight arrangements and respective organisations’ roles and expectations for approved premises.</li> <li>• Review the current delivery model to ensure that systems are in place to periodically monitor and respond to demand and supply approved premises places.</li> <li>• Clarify the preferred staffing model to inform future funding requirements.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a strategic plan for joint training and produce and deliver a plan to enhance understanding of the role of approved premises among practitioners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Identify a strategic mechanism to measure and monitor the quality-of-service delivery of resettlement, rehabilitation and public protection outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations and agreed way forward to be discussed at Joint SP Forum (June 2022).</li> <li>• Governance arrangements will be in place to monitor implementation of the recommendations and associated benefits.</li> </ul>


<b>PRIORITY AREA 4</b> <b>Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms</b>		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>                     Department for  <b>Communities</b>                      An Roinn  <b>Pobal</b>                      Department for  <b>Commonities</b>  <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a> </p> <p> <b>UC</b> <i>Universal Credit</i>                      Northern Ireland                 </p>	<p>9. The Department for Communities is fully committed to the Executive's Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland Strategy and the NICS Domestic and Sexual Abuse Policy.</p> <p>'Ask for ANI' which allows domestic abuse victims to receive emergency help is being piloted in four of DfC's Jobs and Benefits offices – Andersonstown, Armagh, Lisnagelvin and Larne along with ten other Jobcentres across the UK. The 'Ask for ANI' codeword scheme provides anyone at risk of abuse with support in accessing help and a safe space in which to do so.</p>	<p>UK SAYS NO MORE is a national campaign focused on raising awareness of and preventing domestic abuse and sexual violence. It developed the Safe Spaces Initiative and working alongside the Home Office Interpersonal Abuse Unit created the Ask for Ani codeword scheme in response to a rise in incidents of domestic abuse during the COVID-19 lockdown. The codeword 'ANI' (Action Needed Immediately), pronounced 'Annie' was launched in January 2021. Use of the codeword lets staff know an individual needs a safe space to confidentially access help from the PSNI, a support service or the National Domestic Abuse helpline. Some local support services include the Family Justice Centre, Foyle Women's Aid, Men's Advisory Project, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline NI and Victim Support NI.</p>

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PRIORITY AREA 5 Employability, financial capability and access to benefits		
Responsible Owner	Actions	Expected Outcomes and Milestones
 <p>                         Department for  <b>Communities</b>                          An Roinn  <b>Pobal</b>                          Department for  <b>Commonities</b>  <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a> </p> <p> <b>UC</b> <i>Universal Credit</i>                          Northern Ireland                     </p>	<p><b>11.</b> DfC Jobs and Benefits staff are continuing to work closely with local homelessness organisations providing support on benefit, employment, and employability related issues.</p> <p>Some examples of engagement activities involve JBO staff regularly facilitating scheduled clinics at the Utility Street Hostel, the People’s Kitchen, First Housing, the Simon Community, Gateway Team for care leavers, Foyle Women’s Aid and the Women’s Centre.</p> <p>DfC’s Work Psychology Service (WPS), have facilitated online Capacity Building Events for Jobs and Benefits Office (JBOs) staff on the topic of ‘Supporting customers affected by homelessness’.</p>	<p>We now have established relationships with these organisations and provide onsite support across a range of locations.</p>

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 <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>UC</b> <i>Universal Credit</i> Northern Ireland</p>	<p><b>12. Cost of living events</b></p> <p>DfC staff from UC operations organised three cost-of-living information events during Jan &amp; Feb 2023. The events held in the Kennedy Centre Belfast, Coleraine Townhall &amp; The Quays Shopping Centre were supported by a range of community organisations and partners.</p> <p>Attendees were able to access free advice and information on a range of cost-of-living issues from organisations such as the National Energy Action NI, Energy Advice NI and a range of local partners.</p> <p>Department for Communities staff from Universal Credit, were on hand to advise people on any additional supports to which they may be entitled.</p> <p>Kircubbin Cost of Living Event took place on 29/03/23. In attendance were Make the Call, Christians Against Poverty, the Warehouse (Social Supermarket) and Ards North Down Council Affordable Warmth Scheme.</p> <p>Those that attended were provided assistance with various benefit enquiries or signposted for further support.</p> <p>UC are planning to facilitate further cost of living events during 2023-24 financial year but locations and dates have not been confirmed.</p>	<p>Attendees were able to access free advice and information on a range of cost-of-living issues.</p>



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 <p>Department for <b>Communities</b> An Roinn <b>Pobal</b> Department for <b>Commonities</b> <a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>UC</b> <i>Universal Credit</i> Northern Ireland</p>	<p><b>13.</b> The JobStart Scheme launched on 2 April 2021 and closed to new participants on 17 June 2022. The last young person completed their JobStart opportunity on 16 March 2023.</p> <p>As of 31 March 2023, JobStart resulted in an impressive, sustained employment rate of 77% (for those who completed the opportunity).</p> <p>DfC has been working with NIO, in partnership with DfE and Invest NI since November 2022 to agree an employability and skills package.</p> <p>£40m from NIO’s New Deal Funding Stream has been announced in the Chancellor’s Spring Budget on 15 March 2023, of which JobStart will receive £15m to roll out JobStart Scheme Phase Two.</p> <p>An OBC is going through internal approval processes, it has been cleared by Casework Committee and has now been issued to DoF for approval. It is hoped that the Scheme will launch immediately on DoF approval.</p> <p>JobStart Phase Two will have a similar design to the previous Scheme, incorporating lessons learnt and feedback received from stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JobStart Phase two will offer quality job opportunities to young people (16-24yrs) in Northern Ireland who are at risk of long-term unemployment.</li> <li>• Specialist Pathways were developed for the Scheme which extend the length of participation from 6 months to 9 months to help address and remove multiple barriers to employment.</li> <li>• Participants in Specialist Pathways opportunities will include those with a disability, care-experienced young people, those in the Criminal Justice System, those at risk of paramilitarism and coercive control and young people who are not in education, employment or training.</li> </ul>

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