

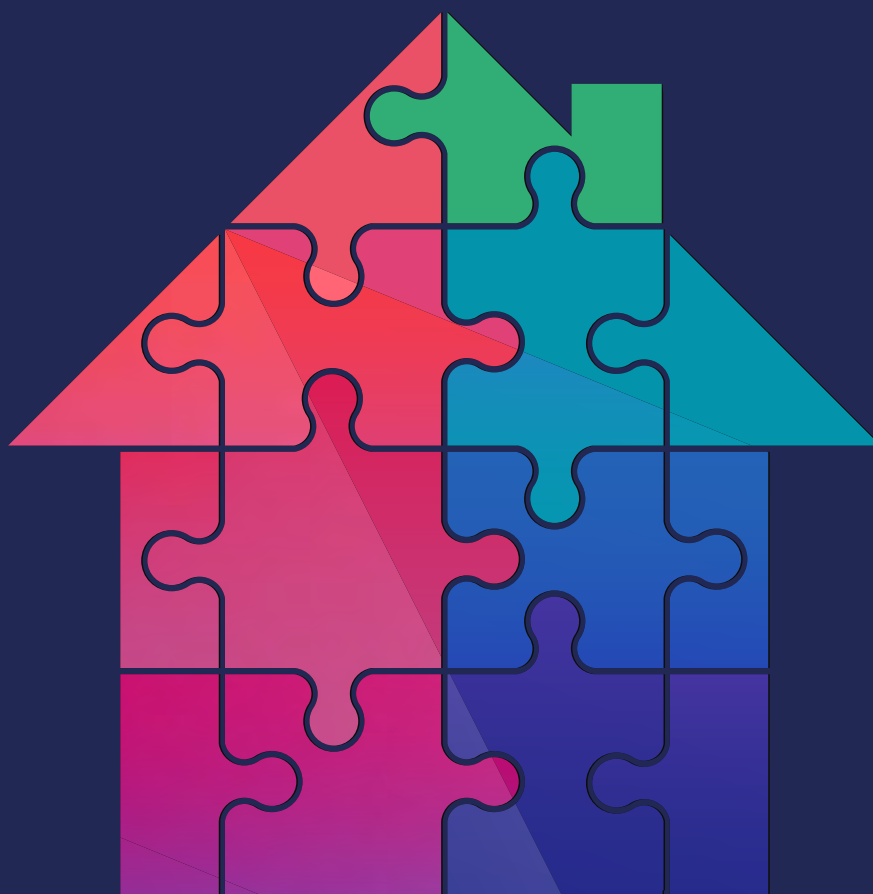


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# Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan

Year 3 Report

This document contains the results for the third year of the Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan.

The Interdepartmental Homelessness Action Plan was developed by the Department for Communities (DfC) to complement the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Homelessness Strategy 2017-22. The Action Plan focuses on addressing gaps in non-accommodation services that have the most impact, or have the potential to more positively impact, on the lives and life chances of people who are experiencing homelessness and those who are most at risk of homelessness.




The Action Plan aims to make a discernible difference to the lives of Service Users by improving departmental support mechanisms across five priority areas:

- 1. Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse;**
- 2. Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers;**
- 3. Support for people leaving care, including institutional care, children's residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities;**

- 4. Support for families including those experiencing domestic violence and community support mechanisms; and**
- 5. Employability, financial capability and access to benefits.**


A total of 14 actions within these priority areas have been identified for lead or joint responsibility for the Department for Communities (DfC), Department of Health (DoH), Department of Justice (DoJ) and Department of Education (DE).


The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (HSSG), which is chaired by the Department for Communities (DfC) and includes representation from the Departments of Health (DoH), Department of Justice (DoJ), Department of Education (DE), statutory agencies and the voluntary sector, has overall responsibility for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Action Plan. The Year 3 Action Plan was published on 6 May 2022.


| <b>PRIORITY AREA 1</b><br><b>Health and wellbeing, including mental health and substance misuse</b>  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Responsible Owner  | Actions   | Expected Outcomes and Milestones  | End Year Result   |
|  <p><b>DoH</b><br/>Department of Health<br/><a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b><br/>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b><br/>Department for<br/><b>Commonities</b><br/><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p><b>DoJ</b><br/>Department of Justice<br/><a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>1. Belfast Inclusion Hub</b> – Continued development and progression of the Belfast inclusion hub within existing budgets and with learning from COVID-19</p> | <p>Ongoing development - Recurrent funding was secured in October 2021 and this will facilitate further recruitment, improve stability within the team and offer enhanced service delivery for service users.</p> | <p>This recurrent funding has enabled us to recruit :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 WTE Band 8b (advertised for recruitment with a closing date of 15/11/2022 for applications)</li> <li>1.0 WTE Band 7 WTE BBV Nurse (In Post September 2021)</li> <li>1.0 WTE BAND 7 Adult Nurse (In Post May 2022)</li> <li>1.0 WTE BAND 7 ED/Hospital In-reach/Outreach Nurse (In Post August 2022)</li> <li>1.0 WTE BAND 7 Mental Health Nurse (In Post May 2022)</li> <li>1.0 WTE BAND 7 Senior Social Work Practitioner (In Post July 2022)</li> </ul> |

| Responsible Owner  | Actions  | Expected Outcomes and Milestones   | End Year Result  |
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|  <p>Department of Health<br/>www.health-ni.gov.uk</p> | <p><b>2. Mental Health Strategy</b><br/>- Development of an action plan for promoting mental health through early intervention and prevention which will consider groups disproportionately affected by mental ill health (Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031, Action 2)</p> | <p>Timescales – commencing 2022/23 and ongoing throughout lifespan of Strategy</p> | <p>Actions 1 and 2 of the Mental Health Strategy will be considered together, with a view to developing an overarching 3 year Action Plan aligned to the 2022 – 25 budget period. Recognising that these Actions largely fall within the remit of the Public Health Agency’s (PHA) statutory functions and responsibilities for improving health and social wellbeing and health protection, the PHA is leading on the development of this Action Plan.</p> <p>A Departmental-led Steering Group will help support the work of the PHA and will play a key role in shaping and directing the development of the Action Plan. The first meeting of the Early Intervention and Prevention Steering Group took place on 21 June 2022 and sat again on 10 August 2022. The Terms of Reference was developed and one of the areas discussed.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a draft Action Plan will be produced by end of 2022. However, implementation of the range of actions contained therein will be subject to the provision of additional funding.</p> |

| Responsible Owner   | Actions   | Expected Outcomes and Milestones | End Year Result  |
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|  <p><b>DoH</b><br/>Department of Health<br/><a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b><br/>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b><br/>Department for<br/><b>Commonities</b><br/><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>3. COVID-19</b> - Continue to seek to support the provision of accommodation for those with no recourse to public funds while the COVID-19 Public Health restrictions remain in place through the existing MOU.</p> | <p>Ongoing through Pandemic</p>  | <p>The MOU was not extended beyond 30 June 2022. The Department was able to obtain agreement with the Department of Health to use any underspent budget from the MOU and formally agreed a Letter of Understanding which allowed the NIHE to manage the remaining individuals for an extra 2 months covering July and August 2022.</p> |


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|  <p>Department of Health<br/>www.health-ni.gov.uk</p> | <p><b>4. Development of a new strategy to prevent and address the harm related to substance use, with appropriate links to the mental health strategy and homelessness.</b></p> | <p>Strategy published Sept 2021 - Ongoing</p> <p>The Department of Health is now setting up implementation structures to support the delivery of the new strategy. The new Substance Use Strategy Programme Board will be chaired by Prof Sir McBride and will involve key stakeholders and a range of departments (including DfC), service users and their families as well as community and voluntary sector representatives.</p> <p>There may be a number of sub-groups established, for example there may be one on research, monitoring and indicators. In addition, the Health and Social Care system are setting up a strategic planning group to take forward the implementation of the non-cross departmental actions and the development of a new strategic plan for alcohol and drug services. Again service users will be involved in this structure. DoH will also develop regular reports on progress that will be formally published.</p> | <p>Chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, the Substance Use Strategy (SUS) Programme Board, established to provide strategic oversight of progress against the outcomes and actions, the Executive's new Substance Use Strategy Preventing Harm, Empowering Recovery, has now met twice (November 2021 and April 2022). One of the first agreed actions was to establish a subgroup to evaluate progress against SUS Outcomes, Indicators &amp; Actions. The Indicators &amp; Monitoring Group met for the first time in March 2022 to take forward work on indicators for measuring progress.</p> <p>The SUS Programme Board is underpinned by the HSC Substance Use Strategic Planning Group, set up to lead on the implementation of the strategy, ensure robust delivery and oversight of HSC actions in the SUS. Co-chaired by PHA &amp; SPPG, this multi-disciplinary implementation group has met in November 2021 and May 2022.</p> <p>Invitations have just been issued by the Strategic Planning Group for the Outcomes Delivery Subgroups including the Reduction in Harm Subgroup (Outcome B). A range of accelerated workstreams are also being taken forward in support of Outcome C (People Have Access to High Quality Treatment &amp; Support Services), including a Rapid Review of OST in Prisons and an Independent Review of Tier 4 Services.</p> <p>Implementation of the range of actions contained within the Strategy will be subject to the provision of additional funding.</p> |

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|  <p>Department of Health<br/>www.health-ni.gov.uk</p> | <p><b>5. Role of Peer Support -</b><br/>Consider exploring options on Peer Support Workers in relation to Health and the Belfast Inclusion Service.</p> | <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Regional Homeless Inclusion Hub with Belfast being the centre which spreads across HSCTS area - (Utilizing the expertise from Belfast Inclusion Hub) this would include a multidisciplinary workforce - Band 7 Public Health Nurse, mental health nurse, GPs sessions, AHPs- Podiatry and, support workers.</li> <li>Increase health support to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness who have moved into supported living accommodation.</li> <li>A flexible alcohol and drugs service that responds to the needs from this client group. This is an ongoing development with a specific focus on Blood Borne Virus at present.</li> </ul> | <p>Two Support Workers band 5 have been through the recruitment process and took up their posts on 22 August 22 with the inclusion health service with an induction period to be completed. These posts will initially be employed to work intensively with:-</p> <p>Those who Inject Drugs and are experiencing homelessness or on the verge of losing their accommodation due to their current chaotic lifestyle. To support concordance with BBV testing and treatments.</p> <p>To assist in &amp; encourage ARVs /HCV medication.<br/>To support GP/ Hospital appointments.</p> <p>To visit when service users are in-patients on the ward and work alongside the team in maintaining appropriate discharge pathways and advocating for suitable accommodation.</p> <p>To ensure, when required, that SPT pathway is set up before discharge and that the service user knows how and where to collect scripts.</p> <p>To support the team in maintaining contact with all those with HIV to improve overall engagement.</p> <p>These posts are being funded through PHA.</p> |


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|  <p>Department of Health<br/>www.health-ni.gov.uk</p> | <p><b>6. Seek funding for an evaluated pilot of a dedicated social work service in a psychiatric hospital</b> to prevent homelessness on discharge. A proposal has been developed to pilot this in Holywell Hospital in the NHSCT. The service would provide relationship based support for a very personalised wrap around care model with the use of personalised/self-directed budgets as appropriate and would also bridge the difficult transition from hospital to community services.</p> | <p><b>Outcome</b><br/>A funding bid was submitted in June 2021 monitoring but was unsuccessful. Further bids will be made as opportunities arise.</p> | <p>No funding has been achieved for this project as yet.</p> |



| <b>PRIORITY AREA 2</b><br><b>Education and awareness raising – children, young people, schools and providers</b>   |   |   |   |
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| Responsible Owner  | Actions   | Expected Outcomes and Milestones  | End Year Result   |
|  <p>Department of Education<br/>www.education-ni.gov.uk</p>  <p>Rewarding Learning</p> | <p>7. Given the continuing pressure on CCEA staff due to COVID-19 and in the absence of additional funding, CCEA will maintain the resources concerning homelessness, financial capability and well-being with schools across NI.</p> <p>Additional budget would be required to deliver the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further collaboration with the homeless sector and schools;</li> <li>• Updating of resources;</li> <li>• Promotion and evaluation of resources; and</li> <li>• Work / preparation for Homelessness Awareness week.</li> </ul> | <p>By June 2022 CCEA will produce an analysis of website diagnostics based on homelessness resources.</p> | <p>CCEA has completed this analysis and provided web analytics to DE.</p> <p>The analytics provided details of the number of “hits” to the Homelessness web pages in two different time periods.</p> <p>The first set of data indicated that there were 4,287 views of the Homelessness web pages between the 20 January 2020 and 17 June 2022. This period includes the initial launch and promotion of the site.</p> <p>The second set of data indicated that there were 1,254 web views from 17 June 2021-17 June 2022.</p> <p>The analytics also provided details of “hits” on specific aspects of the resources and these are available from DE.</p> <p>CCEA will continue to promote the resources for Homelessness during 2022-23.</p> |


| <b>PRIORITY AREA 3</b><br><b>Support for those leaving places of care, including institutional care, children’s residential and foster care, prisons, hospitals, mental health facilities.</b> |  |   |  |
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| Responsible Owner  | Actions  | Expected Outcomes and Milestones  | End Year Result  |
|  <p>Department of Justice<br/>www.justice-ni.gov.uk</p>   | <p><b>8. Release from Custody -</b><br/>Review findings and develop action plan to implement the recommendations of research commissioned to outline the processes involved and challenges faced by individuals released from custody in acquiring and retaining stable accommodation.</p> | <p><b>Outcome</b><br/>To gain a better understanding of the issues faced by individuals released from custody in accessing and retaining accommodation, also to establish the effectiveness of current resettlement and housing interventions and provision.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b><br/>Research to be finalized by the end of 2021 and Action Plan to be developed by Jan 2022.</p> | <p>The research report has now been completed and was considered and agreed by the joint Research Group on 7 July 2022. Richard Tanswell from NIHE attended.</p> <p>At the meeting it was suggested by Fiona Boyle that holding a round table discussion may be fruitful in considering next steps and agreeing actions between Justice, Communities, NIHE etc.</p> <p>The group seemed broadly content with this proposal and discussions will take place to organise this.</p> <p>NB the research report ‘The acquisition and retention of stable accommodation by individuals released from prison’ remains unchanged from the draft that was provided to NIHE in early 2022 for the Supporting People Year 3 draft strategic plan.</p> |

| Responsible Owner   | Actions  | Expected Outcomes and Milestones   | End Year Result  |
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|  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b></p> <p>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b></p> <p>Depairtment fur<br/><b>Commonities</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>9. Homelessness Branch in DfC will gather and analyse data provided by the Youth Justice Agency</b> on its work to help young people stay safely in their communities i.e. the number of interventions and outcomes.</p> | <p>By 31 March 2022 DfC will produce findings on the number of interventions and highlight any lessons learned that could be used to prevent youth homelessness.</p> | <p>Number of interventions:<br/>2018/19: 1,712<br/>2019/20: 1,631<br/>2020/21: 1,279<br/>2021/22: 1,435</p> <p>These figures have been impacted by COVID and reflect direct community interventions with young people but do not reflect our Schools Programme or Youth Engagement Clinics. YJA generally are in contact with around 8,000 young people per year.</p> <p>Homelessness discussions do happen with young persons but statutory responsibility for this lies with the 5 Trusts. If Homelessness difficulty, YJA liaise with Trust staff &amp; participate in case discussion.</p> <p>Lessons learned/areas being strengthened:<br/>DoJ published a Strategic Framework for Youth Justice that contains a number of actions – 2 examples:<br/>1. Establish single points of contact (SPOCs) in NIHE homelessness teams and build relationships between these SPOCs and YJA Area Teams.<br/>2. Work with NIHE and SPPG (DoH) to identify ways in which YJA can contribute to inform appropriate supported and other housing solutions for young people in contact with the justice system.<br/>These actions b/f to Q2-4 2022/23.<br/>DfC &amp; Homelessness value this important and worthwhile work by YJA.</p> |

| <b>PRIORITY AREA 4</b><br><b>Support for families including support for those experiencing domestic violence, and community support mechanisms</b>   |  |  |   |
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| Responsible Owner  | Actions  | Expected Outcomes and Milestones   | End Year Result   |
|  <p> <b>DoJ</b><br/>                     Department of Justice<br/> <a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a> </p> | <p><b>10. To consider the impact of new domestic violence and abuse initiatives</b>, in terms of how these may impact on homelessness levels, and what steps may be taken to address this.</p> | <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Conduct homelessness impact assessments (HIA) using the agreed template, during the development and evaluation of domestic abuse policies and initiatives in 2021/22.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To carry out a HIA on all substantive DVA Policy proposals during 2021/22;</li> <li>To provide bi-annual updates on assessments for the Inter-Departmental Homelessness Action Plan and to the APG on Homelessness on request. DoH and DfC are both represented on the APG.</li> </ul> | <p>The impact that domestic abuse initiatives can have on homelessness levels is considered during the policy development phase and throughout implementation. This is of particular relevance in relation to Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders, which the Department of Justice is working to introduce. These Notices and Orders may result in an individual being made to leave their home. A HIA will be carried out in due course. This will be informed by the results of a Human Rights Impact Assessment, which includes mitigations to ensure that an individual's Article 8 rights are not infringed upon.</p> |

| Responsible Owner   | Actions   | Expected Outcomes  | End Year Result  |
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|  <p><b>DoJ</b><br/>Department of Justice<br/><a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b><br/>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b><br/>Department for<br/><b>Commonities</b><br/><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Housing Executive</b></p> | <p><b>11. To review the current systems for accessing accommodation for offenders with service providers and NIHE to bring forward a revised framework for co-operation by 31 March 2022.</b></p> | <p><b>Outcome</b><br/>To enable the accommodation and associated support needs of those entering and leaving custody to be met.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b><br/>By 31 March 2022, to complete review and bring forward a revised framework for co-operation.</p> | <p>Work on developing a Prisons Protocol has been led by representatives from the Housing Executive, Department of Justice and Housing Rights who have met throughout 2021/22 to coordinate work on delivery of this action. This collaboration has resulted in the completion of the following aspects of a Protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a Data Sharing Agreement;</li> <li>• Development of a Rural Needs Impact Assessment;</li> <li>• Engagement in respect of reviewing comments from each signatory organisation on a revised Protocol;</li> <li>• Review and amendment of all flowcharts associated with the implementation of the Protocol;</li> <li>• Development of an operational procedural framework that will accompany the implementation of the revised Protocol;</li> </ul> <p>While the above actions have been progressed there is still an outstanding action to bring this together as part of a revised Protocol and work on this will be completed during 2022/23.</p> |

| Responsible Owner  | Actions  | Expected Outcomes  | End Year Result   |
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|  <p><b>DoH</b><br/>Department of Health<br/><a href="http://www.health-ni.gov.uk">www.health-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p><b>DoJ</b><br/>Department of Justice<br/><a href="http://www.justice-ni.gov.uk">www.justice-ni.gov.uk</a></p>  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b><br/>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b><br/>Department for<br/><b>Commonities</b><br/><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>12. 24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline</b><br/>– Continued provision to ensure a first point of contact for victims of domestic and sexual abuse</p> | <p><b>Outcome</b><br/>Victims are supported to find emergency accommodation through the NI Housing Executive and other agencies.</p> <p><b>Milestone</b><br/>Completion of end of year report for 2021/22 to detail the number of callers that were supported to find emergency accommodation.</p> | <p>During 2021-22 the helpline supported 274 people into emergency accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 260 to Women’s Aid Refuge</li> <li>• 14 to Northern Ireland Housing Executive</li> </ul> |

| PRIORITY AREA 5<br>Employability, financial capability and access to benefits  |  |  |  |
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| Responsible Owner  | Actions  | Expected Outcomes and Milestones   | End Year Result  |
|  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b></p> <p>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b></p> <p>Department for<br/><b>Commonities</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>13. NIHE to inform relevant tenants of The Condition Management Programme.</b><br/>The programme provides professional support to participants in managing their health conditions, enabling them to progress towards, move into and remain in work. Engagement with the programme will support tenants with health conditions maintain their tenancies.</p> | <p>By March 2022 evaluate NIHE engagement with the Condition Management Programme and consider roll out to Housing Associations.</p> | <p>This action was led by colleagues in Housing Policy &amp; Tenancy Management.</p> <p>NIHE committed to publicising the Condition Management Programme (CMP) amongst their staff and on 22/02/2022 Liz Doherty - Occupational Therapist/CMP Co-ordinator from the Western Trust CMP Team made a presentation to NIHE staff to help raise awareness about the programme. Agenda included background, aims/outcomes, eligibility and how to access.</p> <p>NIHE also circulated flyers following the presentations to all of the Area Offices to make staff aware of the programme.</p> <p>NIHE has no direct referral mechanism to the CMP so uptake is monitored directly by the CMP coordinators by asking applicant tenure rather than NIHE having any monitoring function.</p> <p>The CMP ‘flyer’ that NIHE used to raise awareness internally was also issued to Housing Associations on 2 September 2022 after a positive evaluation. On 30 August 2022, this was also issued to DfC Universal Credit Operations.</p> |

| Responsible Owner   | Actions   | Expected Outcomes and Milestones   | End Year Result  |
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|  <p>Department for<br/><b>Communities</b></p> <p>An Roinn<br/><b>Pobal</b></p> <p>Depairtment fur<br/><b>Commonities</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk">www.communities-ni.gov.uk</a></p> | <p><b>14. To implement 5 further homelessness initiatives across Northern Ireland</b> where local Jobs &amp; Benefits offices will work closely with local homelessness support organisations to support customers experiencing homelessness. COVID-19 restrictions allowing, these will involve services being delivered in partner sites to ensure that homeless individuals can access financial support, are assisted to maintain their claims and receive tailored employability support. The 5 sites to be added are Newry, Enniskillen, Foyle, Antrim and North Belfast.</p> | <p>By 31 Dec 2021 to have the 5 homelessness initiatives implemented.</p> <p>This proposal builds on work carried out by the Falls Rd JBO with the Welcome Organisation prior to the pandemic. This work has been taken forward on an informal ‘test and learn’ basis with the aim of avoiding customers falling out of the system through failure to attend appointments.</p> <p>By expanding the initiative, the aim is to both support customers experiencing homelessness both in terms of financial security (making and maintaining benefit claims) and also employability. Support will be tailored to the needs of individuals and does not preclude into work outcomes where that is appropriate. It may also include participation in relevant provision to build skills and capacity, work experience and/or training again depending on the circumstances of the individual.</p> <p>DfC to work with UC Operations to analyse relevant data.</p> | <p>DfC UC Operations have implemented an additional 5 homelessness initiatives across Northern Ireland local Jobs &amp; Benefits offices (Newry, Enniskillen, Foyle, Antrim and North Belfast).</p> <p>All offices are working closely with local homelessness support organisations such as NIHE, NIARCO, Welcome Centre, Extern, Springwell House, Simon Community, Morning Star, First Housing and Methodist Mission across NI.</p> <p>The ongoing interactions with the Support organisations are being carried out on a regular basis either by Face to Face or virtual contact with Benefit/Employment/Employability related outcome issues being successfully addressed.</p> <p>In order to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of frontline staff in Jobs and Benefits offices (JBOs), during October 2022 DfC’s Work Psychology Service (WPS), facilitated six online Capacity Building Events for Jobs and Benefits Office (JBO’s) staff on the topic of ‘Supporting customers affected by homelessness’.</p> <p>599 Universal Credit (UC) staff members and feedback demonstrated their increased understanding, knowledge, confidence and awareness of the impact and how to engage with and support customers who are affected by homelessness.</p> <p>Homelessness Management Information is not available from the UC computer system. This outcome to be removed.</p> |



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