

Housing
Executive

2022 EDITION

streets ahead

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The magazine for
Housing Executive
tenants



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Housing Executive

Welcome

Dear tenant, Welcome to this edition of Streets Ahead!



You won't be surprised to find that much of our focus is on how we are supporting our tenants and customers through the 'Cost of Living Crisis'. The Housing Executive is an independent source of Energy Advice, and we have a number of ways in which we can help you if you are struggling to stay warm this winter. We always encourage tenants to reach out and seek help, and we will do our best to assist.

The last few months have been busy. We have been committed to getting planned improvements and response maintenance delivered on time. While there have been notable successes, it unfortunately remains the case that many of our contracting partners are struggling due to wider economic challenges, such as the cost of materials and labour. In some cases that has left it impossible for works to be undertaken, leading to some delays. Where this has happened, we have contacted tenants directly, and are working hard to reduce the backlog. Rest assured we will continue to do everything we can to prioritise delivery.

More positively, it has been a busy period for our colleagues working to make environmental improvements. This has included projects where we have introduced landscaping and increased tree planting on our land (read more about this on page 13). We are also delivering our NIHE-ERDF (European Regional Development

Fund) Retrofit Programme, an innovative, upgrading scheme which will increase the energy efficiency of 1,700 homes.

We have been delighted to work alongside colleagues from across the public sector to contribute to the Ukraine Resettlement Programme and to welcome households in need of sanctuary. As ever, I am grateful for the excellent work undertaken by tenants on our Central Housing Forum who work so hard to ensure that the services we provide are designed with the best interests of tenants and customers in mind.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome Nicole Lappin to the organisation as Chair of the Housing Executive. Nicole joined us in early November, following roles in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the Charity Commission and brings a wealth of experience to the post. I am hugely thankful to her predecessor Professor Peter Roberts for his vision and his commitment to the tenants of the Housing Executive, while he was Chair, and I wish him every good wish for the future. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Streets Ahead, and I wish you a happy and peaceful holiday over the festive season.

Grainia Long

Grainia Long
Chief Executive



Chief Executive Grainia Long welcomes Nicole Lappin in her new role as Chair of Northern Ireland Housing Executive

How we're doing

Figures taken from Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey 2021 & Housing Executive Annual Report 2021/22



84,000

homes managed (approx) by the Housing Executive

158,930

tenants – 32,819 younger than 16 years old and 42,736 older than 60 years old



Over **440,000**

phone calls to our offices

93% of you were satisfied with how we managed your repairs

89% of you were satisfied with your neighbourhood as a place to live

£79m

spent on response maintenance

113 MAJOR ADAPTATIONS **3,500** MINOR ADAPTATIONS

carried out so people could continue to live independently in their home

84% of you were satisfied with the overall service provided by us

85% of you were satisfied with the quality of your home

95 community groups received grants

11,245 native trees planted

£470k invested to address community safety issues in our estates

89% of you were satisfied that your rent provides value for money

Tower block update

Our Tower Blocks Action Plan continues to progress with ongoing work in each of the three phases. We have introduced regular updates to make you aware of developments and here we will provide an overview on the progress of the entire scheme.

Due to the complexity and scale of the plan, the decommissioning of our 33 tower blocks is happening in three phases.

Phase One

(Monkscoole, Latharna, Coolmoynes, Rathmoynes, Kilbroney, Clarawood, Abbotscoole, Moylena, Breda, Oisín, Ross, Woodland, Beechwood and Magowan)

These blocks are due to be demolished over a one to five year time period with demolition works to Monkscoole House due to be completed by Spring 2023. A number of other Phase One blocks have now received approval for demolition and we are making progress in rehousing residents to allow the demolition works to begin. These are Latharna, Coolmoynes, Rathmoynes, Kilbroney, Clarawood, Belvoir and Ross House. Two Phase Two blocks - Belvoir House and Mt Vernon House have also been approved for demolition because they were grouped with a Phase One block – Breda and Ross respectively. Business cases for

remaining Phase One blocks, will be progressed in the next year. We are, however, currently reviewing the timescale for Oisín House due to the proposed redevelopment area of Upper Long Streets which is situated close by.

Phase Two

(Finn, Fianna, Riverdale, Parkdale and Ferndale)

These are due to come down over a six to ten year period, with remedial works carried out in the interim. Once the plans for demolition of Phase One blocks have progressed sufficiently, the business cases for these Phase Two blocks 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, Glencoole, Carncoole, Moveen, Willowbrook and Woodstock)

It is proposed that Phase Three blocks will be retained for a

period of more than 10 years with improvement works carried out as needed. A feasibility study is underway to understand the nature, cost and delivery method of these improvement works. Once plans for improvement works are established, business cases for the Phase Three blocks will be undertaken.

What happens next?

Residents within each block will be consulted with 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 communicate with all residents and stakeholders affected by the Tower Blocks Action Plan, to ensure they are kept up to date with our progress. We have recently distributed the Autumn Edition of our Tower Blocks Update to all residents and affected owners.

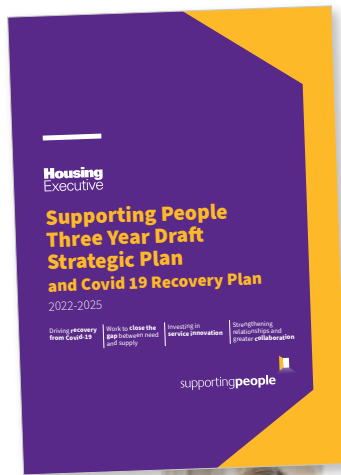
You can find this on our website at www.nihe.gov.uk



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.



In **January**, Department for Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey MLA approved our Supporting People draft strategy 2022-25. The core deliverables in the strategy focus on helping more people, investment in innovation and Covid recovery and rebuild.



Homes in Ballymagroarty in Derry/Londonderry became more energy efficient in **February** with double glazing replaced in 382 homes in the area. We invested £890,000 to increase comfort in the homes of our tenants. Find out how you can be more energy efficient with our advice and tips on page 10.



In **March** we launched our homelessness strategy 2022-2027, Ending Homelessness Together, at Parliament Buildings, Stormont. This sets out our plan to prioritise homelessness prevention with three key objectives underpinning our ongoing work. The strategy was created after extensive consultation with homeless sector organisations.



We were delighted in **May** when our former Chair, Professor Peter Roberts picked up the Lifetime Achievement Award at CIH All Ireland Awards. Peter's tenure as Chair ended in November this year and we wish him all the best for the future.



In **April** we were delighted to announce the winners of our Rural Community Awards. Turn to page 26 and 27 to read about the difference volunteers are making in rural communities.



A rural needs housing test got underway in Kilrea and Garvagh in **June** to help us determine the need for new housing in this area. Find out more about our housing needs test and how we use the information you provide by turning to page 17.

Net Zero Week took place during **July** and we took to social media to explain the steps we are taking to achieve net zero and why it is a priority for us. Turn to page 31 to find out more about our recently launched Sustainable Development strategy 2022 - 2027.



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.



'Welcoming the New Neighbours' project kicked off in **September** at Conway Education Centre in West Belfast, with the help of funding from our Community Cohesion Unit. Turn to pages 40 and 41 to find out more about how this innovative course is helping to build community.



With the cost of living crisis affecting all of us, we launched information pages on our website in **October** with advice to help and support you. Turn to pages 8 to 12 for our advice and support section.

In **November** we welcomed our new Board Chair, Nicole Lappin. Turn to page 3 where our Chief Executive, Grainia Long, welcomes Nicole to the Housing Executive.



Thinking of moving home in the **New Year**? Then turn to page 50 to find out how to sign up for our HomeSwapper service.



The importance of complaints

We are committed to providing an excellent service to all customers. Your needs are at the centre of everything we do. If something has gone wrong, we want to hear from you. Anyone can make a complaint about their experience with us. We are continually looking at ways to improve our services - your feedback and suggestions are always considered.

We want to sort out problems quickly and locally, if we can. If you have a problem, please contact the person dealing with your case first. They will try to help you resolve the issue.

If that's not possible, you can make a formal First Stage complaint. This should be within three months of the event that you want to complain about. This will be investigated by the local office manager.

If you remain unhappy, you can have your complaint fully reviewed and investigated at Final Stage by a Director. In the unlikely event that your complaint remains unresolved, we will sign-post you to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman.

How to complain?

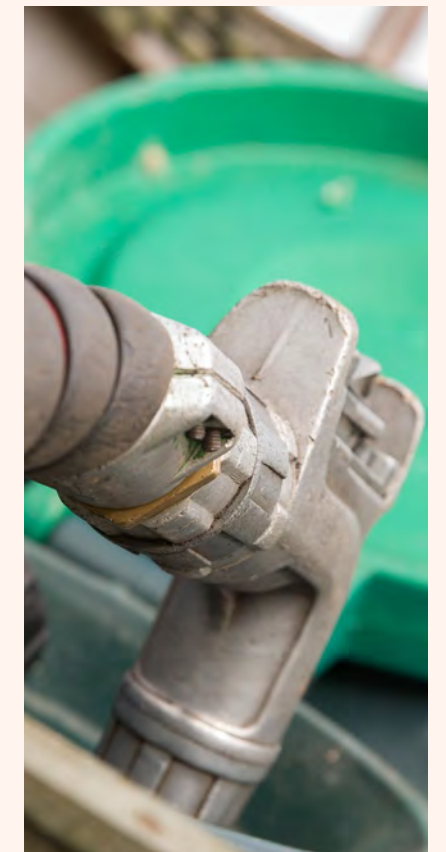
Email centralcomplaints@nihe.gov.uk who will be happy to help. Our tenants can make a complaint by **sending a message** on the Customer Portal. Anyone can also complain by **telephone, letter or using the online form on our website**.

IF WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT IT, WE CAN'T FIX IT.



HELP TO COMBAT THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The cost of living crisis is affecting all of us and we want to help you reduce your bills and make your money go further. Here are some tips and advice that could help.



Oil Buying Network

Joining the Northern Ireland Oil Buying Network (NIOBN*) means you can order your oil each week (or whenever you need a refill) at a negotiated discount.

The Network is based on a simple idea, the more people that buy oil together, the lower the cost and you can buy as little as 200 litres.

Based on the number of estimated weekly order requests, the Network will negotiate the best price.

The scheme is open to all householders across Northern Ireland.

How it works

The Network carries out a daily oil pricing index across all of its registered suppliers to gauge the current market.

The Network sends members details of the discounted cost per litre, a discount code and a deadline order date. Members then place their own order by calling the supplier, using the code. The supplier then provides the quoted discount.

Once you are a member you will receive a weekly request for a 'potential' order by email, text or (in exceptional circumstances) by phone. You will only make an order when you need to.

All members get their oil on their confirmed delivery date. Payment arrangements differ between suppliers.

How to join

You can benefit from this discount if the NIOBN have a registered supplier to cover your postcode. To check with our team, please send your first name and postcode by email to oilbuyingclubs@nihe.gov.uk, text 07823 535 178 or call 0800 111 4455.

You can find out more about joining the Northern Ireland Oil Buying Network at: www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Cost-Of-Living-Support-and-Advice/Housing-Executive-Tenants

*Northern Ireland Oil Buying Network (NIOBN) is managed by the Housing Executive NI Energy Advice Service

Energy efficiency

Being energy efficient will not only help you to reduce your CO² output, it can also help you to save on the pennies and pounds.

The Energy Saving Trust have some useful advice:

Lighting

Consider replacing all the lights in your home with LED bulbs. Look at the energy labelling on new appliances which have a simplified A-G scale, with A being the most efficient. Where possible, choose an A-rated appliance.

Switch it off

Appliances like games consoles and TVs have stand by switches which continue to use electricity even when they are turned off. Unplug them so you're not wasting energy. Also remember to turn off your lights when you don't need them.

Thermostat

Turning up your thermostat won't heat up your home quicker - all that will do is heat your home to a higher temperature at the same rate.

Insulation increases the speed your home heats up and maintains the heat in your home, as less heat is being lost through the building. Turning your central heating thermostat down by 1 degree could save you money on your fuel bills.

Washing and drying

Consider setting your washing machine to wash at 30 degrees rather than higher temperatures to use less electricity.

Line drying clothes instead of using a tumble dryer can also help to save money and reduce CO².

Showers

Reduce time spent under the shower to save on electricity and/or gas.

Washing up

Using a washing up bowl instead of leaving the hot tap running can save a lot of water. Also remember to only fill the kettle with as much water as you need to make savings.

The Energy Saving Trust is an independent organisation dedicated to promoting energy efficiency, low carbon transport and sustainable energy use. For energy saving tips please visit: energysavingtrust.org.uk/northern-ireland

Get more advice

To get more advice on energy efficiency you can also call our NI Energy Advice Service on **0800 111 4455**.



energy
saving
trust

Boost your Budget

We are all looking for ways to stretch our finances and a budget can help your money go further.

Follow our five tips to create a budget that works for you.

1 Set goals

First decide who the budget is for. It could be just for you, or it could be for your partner and family as well. If you have a joint or combined income, sit down with everyone and make the budget together.

2 Work out your income

If your wages or the amount you receive in benefits fluctuates, you need to work out what your average income is.

This is really important as it allows you to see if you're spending more than you're bringing in.

3 Create a list of expenses

Write down everything you need to pay every month. This includes household bills, any debt you have, and any money you might set aside to pay for things like eating out.

4 Include 'one-off' spends

We all have one-off spends like a holiday, Christmas presents or buying a new car. These however have an impact on your budget so if you can, plan ahead and work out what the monthly cost of these will be during the year.

5 Be realistic

Take simple steps to reduce your spending where you can in line with your lifestyle and means.

MONEY MATTERS

If you'd like help making a budget, speak to your Patch Manager by dropping them a message on our tenant portal or calling 03448 920 900. You can also use the Budgeting and Benefits Calculator on our website to work out your income. You can access the calculator at www.nihe.gov.uk/My-Housing-Executive/Advice-for-Housing-Executive-Tenants/Making-Your-Money-Work



Make the Call

The 'Make the Call' service helps you to get all the Benefits you are entitled to.

Even if you are already receiving benefits you may be entitled to extra money.

Checking if you are entitled to benefits is really straightforward, just make the call

- **Freephone 0800 232 1271**
- To receive a call back, **text 'ADVICE'** from your mobile phone to 67300; or
- **Complete your details online** at www.nidirect.gov.uk/forms/contact-make-call-team and the Make the Call team will contact you directly

For more information and advice on help and support

www.nidirect.gov.uk/forms/contact-make-call-team

A million reasons to seek financial support

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, the Housing Executive's financial inclusion officers have managed to secure almost £1.5m in additional finances for local tenants.

With four experts currently working across Northern Ireland, even more staff members are being recruited to ensure good financial health for our tenants, helping them to cope with the cost of living crisis.

Already, over 5,000 tenants have accessed support from the financial inclusion officers and, on average, 210 households are supported every month.

With new staff in position, our services will be expanded and the team is urging those who may be facing financial difficulty to come forward for advice and guidance.

Various methods are used to ensure good financial well-being, including:

- Providing benefits checks to make sure tenants are receiving everything they are entitled to;
- 'Better off' calculations to help tenants make informed decisions about their finances;
- Helping resolve complex benefits issues;
- Providing money and budgeting advice;
- Signposting to other specialist sources of debt advice;
- Assisting with access to other sources of financial support (e.g. charitable organisations).

One tenant, who has already benefited from support, said: "We were referred to the financial inclusion manager after making an enquiry about benefits to our patch manager.

"We weren't expecting much as we believed we weren't entitled to any.

"After a chat and help with the application process, we found out we were entitled to over £800 a month in Universal Credit.

"They also helped us to apply for disability assistance for our daughter.

"Without the initial referral, we would still be struggling and unaware of what we are entitled to."

Another tenant said she would "be lost" without support and that the involvement of the financial inclusion officer has left her in a "better place mentally".



Pics from top:-

Sinead covers the greater Belfast region, including Lisburn and Castlereagh.

Niamh looks after our South region, encompassing counties Armagh, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone.

Michael takes care of our North region, covering counties Antrim and Derry-Londonderry and the Strabane area.

Donna has recently joined the team and will be supporting tenants across Northern Ireland alongside Niamh, Michael and Sinead.

Find out more

If you feel assistance from our financial inclusion officers could benefit you, **contact your local patch manager** for a referral.

Trees and woodlands have a significant, therapeutic and rejuvenating effect on us and contribute hugely to the natural environment, providing habitats, sustaining biodiversity and reducing carbon dioxide in the air around us.

That's why we believe it's important to protect and create woodland in the countryside and to increase the number of trees in cities and towns as part of our corporate tree planting programme.

In 2021/2022, we planted more than 11,000 trees on our land, exceeding our target by 4,000.

In one project, our Belfast grounds maintenance team linked up with the charity Earth Watch, Black Mountain Primary School and the local community to plant a tiny forest of 600 trees in the Highfield estate area to celebrate the late Queen's jubilee.

We've also replaced dead trees and hard surface areas with grass and saplings to help absorb excess water and aid drainage.

"A total of 3,000 trees were planted in our region last year. We've also created four new woodlands over the last two years and have plans for three more in the coming year.

"Not only are the trees attractive to look at but they give us cleaner air, nurture wildlife and are sustainable."

In 2021/2022, we planted more than 11,000 trees on our land

Last year, the South Region planted 5,000 trees and saplings. Most trees were planted on our grass areas and the saplings formed hedging and small areas of woodland. Recently we have been experimenting with planting small groves and woodland coppices and these have done extremely well.

In the North Region, 3,600 were planted in 2021/22 and another 8,000 are being planted in the current season from November to March. In Antrim, a new wood is being created at Ballycraigie estate, and woodland in the Stiles estate is being expanded. All over Northern Ireland, ash trees devastated by the Ash Dieback disease are being replaced with different species.

Branching out with more trees

Trees and woodlands have a significant, therapeutic and rejuvenating effect on us and contribute hugely to the natural environment, providing habitats, sustaining biodiversity and reducing carbon dioxide in the air around us.



Malachy Brennan, Head of Grounds Maintenance for Belfast Region, takes pride in enhancing our estates with more greenery

Would you like a tree?

If you are interested in planting trees in your neighbourhood contact your **good relations officer**. You can drop them a message on our tenant portal or call **03448 920 900**.

There for you every step of the way

If you, or someone you know, is living with dementia, we can provide you with practical items to support independent living.

Your patch manager can give you a 'Dementia Friendly Pack' which includes:

- A specially designed landline telephone with large number keys and picture buttons
- Colour contrasting key fobs with labels
- A 2-in-1 calendar clock that displays the month, day, date and time prominently
- Alzheimer's Society documents and guides
- A dry-wipe reminder board and pen
- An easy to read bookmark with all of our contact details

We have trained over 40 members of staff, based in our local offices across Northern Ireland, as Dementia Champions. They can provide you and your family with bespoke support. Chat to your patch manager to learn more.

Herbert Protocol

If you or a family member has dementia you may want to consider using the Herbert Protocol. This national initiative is a safeguarding tool that is being rolled out across Northern Ireland by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), in partnership with Dementia NI, Health and Social Care NI, and local Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs).

The aim of the scheme is to assist in locating individuals with dementia who have gone missing from their homes quicker, safely and more efficiently and was introduced as a pilot in Northern Ireland in October 2021. It was

initially trialled in Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh, however, in September 2022, the scheme was rolled out across Northern Ireland.

How does it work?

This consists of a pre-completed form. An individual or family member may complete a form on behalf of the vulnerable individual which will hold personal information and key details such as a recent photograph, contact details, medication, daily routines, details and significant places that they may visit. If the person goes missing this information can then be provided, at the earliest opportunity, to the PSNI to assist them in their search.

The form is available to download from the PSNI website at www.psni.police.uk



Good Morning Newtownabbey's listening ear and telephone calls are helping to keep local residents connected.

The Good Morning Network operates across Northern Ireland and provides a daily telephone contact service for older and vulnerable residents to help them stay connected to real people.

Supported with the Housing Executive's Community Safety funding, the service from Good Morning Newtownabbey is helping people in the local area to feel less isolated and safer in their own home.

Led by Monkstown Community Association, Good Morning Newtownabbey work with local statutory organisations to create a safer community. Volunteers make up to 300 daily telephone calls to residents from Ballyduff, Glengormley, Monkstown, Mossley, Rathcoole and Rathfern.

They provide a listening ear and support for vulnerable and elderly residents. Often a daily phone call is all that's needed to allow residents to continue living safely in the knowledge that help is there if required.

During the conversation support is offered by way of prescription reminders, emergency shopping and signposting to various statutory agencies, as and when required. The daily call also acts as an alert service - if a resident does not answer when called, an alert is made to the nominated contact, who will check on them and advise of their condition. A protocol is in place with the Police Service of Northern Ireland who may be asked to check on the resident.

Jeanette Comins, Sandra Graham, Clare Patterson and Naomi Judson from Good Morning Newtownabbey



Helping households stay safe

The network has been running successfully for 15 years and local Housing Executive staff regularly refer tenants who may benefit from a daily confidential call.

Community Safety Funding

Our Community Safety Funding is available for constituted groups to apply for money to help address community safety related issues

in our estates. The aim of our Community Safety Team is to support neighbourhoods to create safer communities, lessen the fear of crime and build community confidence. Some of the services we have supported through our funding streams include: education in schools, warden schemes, detached youth work programmes, anti-social behaviour and intergenerational workshops, diversionary activities for young people and assistance with home security.

Find out more

You can find out more about Community Safety Funding at www.nihe.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety/Community-Safety-Team. You can also contact the Community Safety Team by emailing them communitysafety@nihe.gov.uk or telephoning **03448 920 900**.

With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, it's never been more important to look after your mental health.

There are many things in life that cause us to feel stressed, anxious and under pressure. Money worries, illness and relationships are just some of the factors that can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed.

AWARE NI, Action Mental Health and PIPS are three local charities that offer support when you're going through a difficult period in your life.

To assist their vital work, our staff have raised an amazing £13k for them since April 2021 through a range of quizzes, raffles, coffee mornings, sponsored walks and a golf day.

If you need someone to talk to, these charities are on hand to help.

AWARE NI is the depression charity for Northern Ireland and has 23 local peer support groups, run by trained volunteers. These groups welcome people with depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, as well as their carers.

Nigel Fyffe, from the charity, said: "Our groups offer a safe space to talk openly, share experiences and discuss coping strategies."

"We have a support phone line and email service for anyone seeking further information about mental health, and we also deliver mental health and wellbeing programmes to community groups, schools, universities and workplaces."

"Depression doesn't discriminate and can affect any one of us at any time in our lives."

"We want to see mental health given as much attention as physical health. Our mind and body are not separate but two sides of the same coin, and when we prioritise mental

health within society we invest in physical health too.

"I would urge anyone who is experiencing low mood, depression, or feelings of anxiety to reach out to us and make use of one of our services."

Action Mental Health (AMH) actively promotes the mental health and wellbeing of local people and over the years has helped reduce the stigma of mental ill health.

Their new Mindful Carers service empowers caregivers to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing through coping skills and healthy lifestyles.

The service is aimed at young carers, aged 14 to 17 years old, and adult caregivers. Information and support is provided on a one to one and/or group basis.

Karen Hillis, from AMH, said: "As many as one in five adults in Northern Ireland will show signs of a mental illness. When we surveyed



Karen Hillis, Action Mental Health, Nigel Fyffe, AWARE, and Renee Quinn, PIPS, and their colleagues are on hand to help you with mental health issues

These groups welcome people with depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder, as well as their carers.

Mental health matters

carers after the COVID pandemic, only one in four rated their mental health as good or above.

"Our new service aims to redress that by offering free one-to-one support, drop in support sessions, providing a six week emotional wellbeing and resilience programme, and more."

"We would love to hear from caregivers and anyone else who feels they need support."

PIPS, the suicide prevention charity, provides support to people who are considering, or who have at some point considered, ending their own lives and anyone who has been touched by suicide.

Renee Quinn, from PIPS, said: "We offer a 'no appointment needed' service to ensure there is always someone you can contact if you need our assistance."

"PIPS is your light in the dark. When a person comes to PIPS for help, they will be spoken to encourage anyone in need of a support plan will be put in place."

"We have a crisis open door policy, where you will be seen or spoken to by a counsellor immediately."

"We provide a wrap-around service so that nobody feels alone."

Help is at hand

Aware NI
T: Belfast 028 9035 7820 or Derry/Londonderry 028 7126 0602
E: info@aware-ni.org

Action Mental Health
T: 028 9182 8494
E: menssana@amh.org.uk

PIPS
T: 028 9080 5850 or 0800 088 6042
E: info@pipscharity.com
Or drop in at PIPS, 281 Antrim Road Office, Belfast

Rural Housing Needs Tests

You may have heard of our rural housing needs tests. This is when we try to find out if there is a hidden demand for more social and affordable housing in a particular area - and we ask you for your views.

The main aim of the test is to encourage anyone in need of a home to come forward and register their interest, so that we can collate numbers and determine if there's demand for new housing.

We make contact with your community and political representatives, and advertise the tests through local papers and social media, to ensure the information reaches those who need it so that their interest can be noted.

We can also hold a public information event in the area, so that you can drop in and get advice and information about housing.

Our acting rural and regeneration manager Tim Gilpin said: "Our Rural Housing Needs Tests give people an opportunity to be consulted about their housing needs and to get advice on housing options."

"If we find there is demand for new homes, then we can engage with a housing association to examine the potential for a new-build scheme."

"Quite often, especially when we have very few social homes in an area, people don't see the value of coming forward to put their name on the waiting list."

"But we use the local waiting list to determine housing need and to support housing associations in developing new homes, so it's vitally important that people tell us there is a demand."

"Since 2000 we have carried out over 200 tests, which have resulted in over 400 new homes for rural residents to stay and to thrive in rural communities."

For more information email rural.housing@nihe.gov.uk





Linda Watson, manager of Caw Nelson Drive Action Group and independent member of our Tenant and Customer Services Committee

A Committee for all Customers

Linda Watson is committed to improving services and support for tenants. Becoming a member of the new tenant and customer services committee has given her the opportunity to be at the heart of decision making.

Linda is a Housing Executive tenant, living in Derry City, and has worked on tenant issues for more than 25 years.

When she was given the chance to become part of the Housing Executive Board's newly formed tenant and customer service committee, she jumped at the opportunity.

"Tenants want to be heard, and want to be at the table collaborating with the strategic thinkers", Linda explained. "This committee is an opportunity for tenants, community groups and the Board to listen to all stakeholders, work to design and produce better services together, and improve on practices already in place.

"We will be looking at how repairs are handled by staff and contractors, how planned maintenance schemes are managed and if there is a better way to schedule these. Housing allocations will also be scrutinised, and making things as straightforward as possible will be high on our list of priorities.

"We've already agreed that a separate working group will be set up to deal with disabled adaptations. This is a complex issue that needs quality time and attention to ensure improvements in homes benefit everyone going forward, including homeowners.

"We've only met four or five times, but I'm excited to be involved in this new committee."

The committee was established by the Housing Executive Board to help them carry out their challenge and oversight function.

The committee will provide



From L-R independent committee member John Thompson, board member Jim McCall, independent committee member Linda Watson and board vice chair John McMullan

a listening ear for tenants and community groups, and feed their comments through to the Board. They will also be involved in decision making and will spend time looking at tenant issues and engagement, with the aim of making working practices more easily understood by everyone.

Last month the tenant and customer services committee went out and about to see what's happening in local communities.

They were warmly welcomed at Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group, Waterside, and witnessed the impact a good community group can have in local communities with dedicated volunteers and staff.

Chair of the committee, Jim McCall, was impressed with what he saw.

He said: "It's difficult to comprehend what some groups are trying to do until you see and hear about their efforts with your own eyes.

"I feel privileged to be chairing this committee and will do all I can to help improve services for all customers of the Housing Executive."

Get involved

If you have views or feedback that you would like to raise with the tenant and customer service committee, you can do so through your local community group.

Eddie named community champion

Good Relations Officers (GROs) work in your area to help tenants feel safe, connected and involved.

One of our GROs, Eddie Breslin, has been working with the Housing Executive for more than 40 years and is a well-known community worker in the Derry City and Strabane District Council area. He began his career as an assistant caretaker in the, now demolished, Rossville Flats in Derry City. He then moved on to a caretaker and grounds person role in the City before becoming a neighbourhood warden in 2000.

In 2010, after helping tenants and looking after estate areas, he took on the role of good relations officer with our community cohesion unit.

Eddie began working with community groups to improve local services and create neighbourhood facilities. He has been making a positive difference ever since.

The GRO was recently recognised for his work in the local community and North West area. He and his family enjoyed an afternoon with the local Mayor in the Guildhall, during May, where he was thanked for his work throughout the city and district.

Eddie was also the proud recipient of the Community Champion of the Year Award, at the Advancing Race Equality Awards during October. We asked him a few questions following his award success.

What has been your most memorable project?

Many years ago I worked with Fox Park Residents Association, a small housing estate with around 35 houses outside Omagh. The group wanted to create a play area for the children. Fox Park itself had very little public amenities, so through the Housing

Executive we helped them secure grounds for a proper football pitch and play park with the local council contributing as well.

What about closer to home?

The Christmas Interface Market in Derry City was a brilliant success and has helped pave the way for other interface work that is generating mutual respect in our ever growing diverse city.

The Roaring Meg bike shows have been very successful too for family days out and bike enthusiasts, as well as raising much needed funds for local charities.

I've found re-imaging projects very successful too, especially when the whole community is involved in the planning process. The recent peace mural at the Ebrington Centre was a great success, as was the Leafair



Eddie Breslin, award winning Good Relations Officer for Derry City and Strabane

sporting heroes murals. Community projects like that inspire everyone that sees them.

How would you suggest people can help their community?

Community groups are a great way to meet people in your area and keep in touch with neighbours.

If people want to be more involved, they should get involved by talking to their local community group or speaking to their good relations officer.

If the global pandemic has proved anything, it's that we can help ourselves if the will is there.

Housing Executive cohesion projects can also provide assistance if a community is just starting out or wants to revive their community spirit.

We know the importance of building vibrant communities, and that a difference can be made when local people are supported to work with others in the spirit of neighbourliness.

Our good relations officers (GROs) work specifically to help residents and community groups help themselves – youth clubs, good morning call services, summer schemes, men's sheds, lunch clubs, community events, crafting groups, cafes, drop in centres and not forgetting hen's sheds, to name a few. All these projects continue to help our neighbourhoods become stronger, safer and united.

Dozens of community groups and residents associations already work with our GROs for assistance with access to funding, rolling out local good relations projects and helping their 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.

“Community projects inspire everyone.”

Could you be a community champion or represent your street?

Do you help neighbours and friends anyway? Why not see if there's more going on in your neighbourhood? If there are no groups, consider starting one. It could be the best thing you ever do!



Mayte Segura and her Mexican Dance Group add a splash of colour to the Festival of the River

Bringing people together

Celebrating culture on Lagan Walkway

Promoting good relations is at the heart of our ethos here in the Housing Executive and we were delighted to support the splendid Festival of the River in Belfast in August.

Organised by local community group LORAG, with the support of Belfast City Council and Féile an Phobail, Festival of the River on Lagan walkway included sights, sounds and flavours from across the globe.

We took the opportunity to provide a £5k Community Cohesion grant so

that thousands of visitors were able to enjoy an array of multicultural treats in the festival's arts and music zone.

Amanda Ashe, our Good Relations Officer for south and east Belfast, said: "Community Cohesion involves developing strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

"This fiesta was a tremendous success and we were delighted to fund various activities to improve multiculturalism in our city.

"With so much to see and do, it was a real feast for the senses, bringing together art and music from many different and exotic parts of the world," she added.

"There were drummers from China and Mexico, music from across Africa, food from Sudan, henna art, Chinese and Polish arts and crafts, Brazilian, Arabic and Indian dance - something for everyone to enjoy, young and old.

"It was wonderful to see so many nationalities from all corners of the earth having fun, sharing laughter and joining together in harmony."

Summer scheme smiles

Bann Valley Summer Youth Inclusion Scheme brought together over 100 children of all ages and backgrounds for three packed weeks of fun activities in Portglenone.

Youth leader Ciara was delighted with the success of the scheme which was supported with a grant from our Community Cohesion team.

Having attended similar schemes as a child Ciara recognises the importance of building friendships through play.

"It can be challenging trying to entertain 50-60 kids all at once but with various activities on in different areas around our local hall, it was a huge success," she said.

"The dancing was the most popular, closely followed by the large inflatables and cage football.

"I used to attend this summer scheme myself when I was younger and I love that I'm now able to help the children living in our rural community.



Enjoying the bouncy castle at Clady Youth Summer Inclusion scheme in Portglenone, August 2022

"I love that I am now able to help the children living in our rural community."

"It's great that children resettling from different countries came along, we learned so much from them.

"Interacting through play is one of the easiest ways to build friendships, which helps families settle into neighbourhoods."

Our Race Relations Officer Sylwia McAvoy went along to the summer scheme to see how the children were getting on.

She said: "For such a rural location there was an excellent turnout, with over 50 kids there most days.

"It is really encouraging to see children from different countries easily mixing with local children and enjoying activities. The joy on their faces says it all."

Find out more about our Community Cohesion grants

You can discuss Community Cohesion funding with your Good Relations Officer, the local office representative for your area, or call our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900**.

To contact our Race Relations Officer call **07825 073 492**.

Local enterprise for local people

Millburn Community Association lies at the heart of Millburn Estate in Coleraine and provides a community hub for more than 500 homes.



Billy Ellis, Project Manager, with one of the drivers delivering food to residents and businesses around the North Coast



The aspiration of the association has always been to improve local services for residents. They learnt how social enterprise can contribute to service provision after travelling to other communities to see what this looked like in practice.

This inspired them to develop their own social enterprise and the award winning Calf Lane Kitchen opened in 2017. It was the beginning of a social enterprise journey that has served the community and paved the way for several more social enterprise businesses, all designed to help and serve local people.

The driving force behind Millburn Community Association, and the success of their social enterprise, is project manager Billy Ellis. He said:

“When I first approached the Housing Executive for social enterprise funding we received £1,000. They worked with us to provide the Calf Lane Kitchen and our salon and we were successful with further funding of £35,000 over a few years.

“We started with one person working for us and now we have 15 employees, all from the local area. The café is a huge success, and we’ve been able to expand it to have an ice-cream dessert bar too.

“We deliver quality food at affordable prices seven days a week and our Sunday dinners are very popular, bringing in customers from all over the borough.

“The cafe is producing a good turnover every week, but we ensure we keep our prices down so that residents can afford quality food that’s freshly made locally. The profits are used to help deliver a number of clubs and activities locally, giving us an element of financial control on how we spend our funds.

“Further social enterprise funding helped deliver the BITES outside catering service, providing affordable hot and cold food services to local businesses and factories around the North Coast. This service allowed us to work with local charities, Focus on Family and Can Can Ltd, to provide an employability project for 22 local people. The project creates opportunities for work experience and placements within



Connor Smith, Housing Executive Social Investment Manager, with Billy Ellis in the poly-tunnel at the Cornfield Project, Coleraine

our social enterprises.

“Another project we developed is our Cornfield Project, a seven acre site between Millburn and Ballysally, linking people together through nature.

“The area is the flagship site in Northern Ireland for Grow Wild, a Kew Gardens initiative. With a polytunnel and allotments, fresh produce is grown all year round to use in the café. The nature trails are used by local children, the eco warriors group and schools, who learn about the ecosystem in their own outdoor space.

“The men’s shed is very popular, enabling men to try new skills within our community.

“And another very successful group is the Coleraine Veterans Club which supports veterans around the Causeway Coast and Glens council

.....
 “We can all empower our communities and it doesn’t take that much. Through social enterprise you can offer good services and encourage local buying!”

area. The club recently won a silver award in the health and wellbeing category of the NI Veterans Awards.

“They have a gardening group, bee hives for budding beekeepers and a chicken run. The area is a great space to learn and connect with nature - there’s even a beach club for members who go body boarding.

“Working in partnership with local charity Focus on Family, the Cornfield Project has won several awards, most recently the Green Flag Community Award for its community open space.”

Billy Ellis is delighted with how things have turned out, and encourages any community, big or small, to make a change and go for it. Over 25 community groups have come to Millburn estate for ‘best practice’ visits to see how they can help their own area.



Volunteers Patrick Frew and Mandy McElreavey relax in the Cloughmills community garden

A Growing Concern

Green-fingered volunteers have been busy over the summer and autumn supplying their neighbours with delicious fresh fruit and vegetables and growing flowers for street displays. Our annual Rural Community Awards 2021 showcased the difference that these volunteers make at grassroots level in rural communities and the work they do to keep their areas attractive and vibrant.

In Derriaghy, the community garden had been neglected and was in bad shape but the local community banded together to give it a new lease of life.

Andrew Malcolm, from Derriaghy Village Community Association, said: "It was a lot of hard work but we

.....
 "To me that's what community development is all about."

restored the garden and have turned it into a community hub. The number of people who have become involved is impressive, whether it's looking after the chick run, planting, weeding or working in the polytunnel.

"We grow a whole range of plants including carrots, cabbages,



Tenant Sarah Kerr and volunteer Andrew Malcolm check out the healthy vegetables at the Milltown estate polytunnel in Derriaghy



Sammy Wilson and volunteers Angela Mullan and Sheila Donaghy prepare the land for next year's planting at Donaghmore allotments

cauliflower, potatoes, courgettes and cucumbers. We also have apple and damson trees.

"During lockdown some people found it difficult to get out for food so we delivered produce to the elderly and vulnerable as soon as it was harvested - you don't get much fresher than that. We are still giving it away.

"Everyone really enjoys the garden - we all need somewhere to go to talk and socialise. We also use it for events like Halloween parties or summer fun days. We're very proud of what we have achieved."

Patrick Frew, from Cloughmills Community Action Team, said: "We wanted to create a community garden with a bit of a difference. Our's is about 10 years old now. We

grow everything seasonal and some specialist produce too, a local chef asked us to grow some salsify for him.

"Locals come and dig up whatever they want and we use a 'pay as you feel' system. If you can't afford it, you don't have to put anything in the jar. The money we get goes towards tools, seeds and other things we need for the garden.

"Our food is also used for cookery classes or for lunches for courses held here. There's a lot of jam making. People come and share their skills. We run social and therapeutic horticulture sessions using the garden as a type of therapy.

"We also encourage families to plant wild flowers, show them how to grow their own salads and give them fruit trees to grow in their gardens. To me that's what community development is all about."

Donaghmore Horticultural Community has created a wonderful community garden, where they grow multitudes of flowers for their award-winning street planters. They've also created an impressive allotment area, chock full of vegetables.

Chair Sammy Wilson said: "Any surplus we give to our own friends and neighbours and to senior citizens around the village, especially people who weren't going out to the shops during the lockdowns.

"We grow all kinds of the usual staples. We've our onions potted up and the Brussels sprouts will be ready soon for Christmas.

"Every summer we hold an open day when everyone is invited to come, see and sample our produce. Young school kids come along and learn about all the plants we grow and we hope we are encouraging the next generation of gardeners. The allotments are a fantastic addition to our lives."

How to get started

If you'd like to start a community group visit the community involvement section of our website at www.nihe.gov.uk or speak to your good relations officer.

Bolstering community and building hope

We met with Jacinta Linden and the Bolster Community staff in October when we paid a visit to Star Bites 57, in the heart of Newry City.



Star Bites 57 is a twice-weekly community based facility where people registered with the project can access advice, resources and signposting in a warm and friendly environment.

In reality it is like a small café with newspapers to read, tea and coffee and light bites to enjoy and games and activities for small children.

Funded through our Sustaining Tenancies Programme, Bolster's family support workers are there to welcome their Star Bites guests on a Monday and Thursday from 10am to 1pm.

Based at Bolster's premises on Marcus Street, the 'café' has a relaxed atmosphere where people can come to simply spend time, chat to others and get support and advice when needed.

Bolster CEO, Jacinta Linden, speaks passionately about the service and the whole Bolster Community as young children play at her feet and regular visitors seek her out for a chat.

"It is the family support workers here who are creating a real sense of community and developing trusted relationships with people who may need a bit of support or help," explained Jacinta. "These relationships make it easy for people to talk and access other services that can make their day to day life a little

better. The café provides a safer route to be able to ask for help sometimes.

"It also provides an opportunity to meet other people, to develop a real sense of belonging and there is heat, light, food and good company. It has become a real community hub."

The idea for Star Bites 57 came about through Newry and Mourne Family Support Hub. The Hub takes referrals from schools, GPs, parents and statutory groups to help ordinary families facing extraordinary challenges.

"It is the family support workers here who are creating a real sense of community and developing trusted relationships."

Jacinta continued: "Through the Family Support Hub we found that if people got practical help earlier on there was less chance of them falling into difficulty across many aspects of their lives including sustaining their tenancy and avoiding homelessness. We have learnt that intervening early, and avoiding crisis is only possible through the strong partnership links with our local Housing Executive



Jacinta Linden, Bolster CEO, pictured with the Bolster Community Team at their premises in Marcus Street, Newry

"Social enterprise allows us to do good business while doing good."

Office staff. It's partnership work that ensures we can keep children, families and individuals out of hostels, and reduce the risk of homelessness".

"A café seemed like a natural environment to allow people to get to know our support workers, talk with them and create relationships and friendships where advice is welcome and help can be given freely."

The café is just one strand of Bolster Community's outreach work. The charity also runs an award winning social enterprise, Acorn, initially funded through the Housing Executive's Social Enterprise Fund.

"Acorn was created with social enterprise funding from the Housing Executive," said Jacinta. "The Enterprise Team really were our cheerleaders and we would have got nowhere without them."

"The funding allowed us to develop the business where young people with disabilities or mental health issues work together to produce



Award winning social enterprise Acorn products

Acorn candles, room diffusers and soaps. The young people come in and each of them has their own responsibility. That could be working the wax machine, adding the oils, making room diffusers or making soap. They are a team, a wee tribe.

"They have built a thriving business and the money we make from that helps us to provide more services and fund various activities and services, it's a win win really."

"Social enterprise allows us to do good business while doing good."

Find out more

Star Bites 57 is a referral based service. Anyone being referred must be a current Housing Executive tenant or be on the Housing Executive waiting list. You can self-refer or request referral through Housing Executive staff for one-to-one support or to attend the café. For further information you can contact Joanne Caraher on **028 3083 5764** or email joannec@bolstercommunity.org

Acorn candles, diffusers and soaps can be purchased through Bolster's website at www.bolstercommunity.org



RULET - a revolution in home heating

Tenant Raymond McAleer is the proud owner of a new heat pump, which keeps his home warmer

As the largest landlord in Northern Ireland, we at the Housing Executive recognise our important role in trying to reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty in our homes.

Our recent pilot project RULET (Rural Led Energy Transition), a partnership with Ulster University, has led to improvements in the quality of life of some of our tenants as well as improving energy efficiency in our homes.

The RULET pilot involved installing low carbon heating systems and improved energy efficiency in 10 homes in Omagh last winter. The programme looked at capital costs, householder energy savings and carbon savings.

“The house is definitely warmer and I have warm water all the time.”

Tenant Raymond McAleer, a pioneer of our RULET project, who switched from oil heating, said: “I am very pleased with the new heat pump system and have definitely made savings, which is so important now in this cost of living crisis.

“It has great advantages if you use it the right way. As well as the air pump I got new windows, doors and insulation - together they have made a big difference.

“The house is definitely warmer and I have warm water all the time, which I never had before. I can control the heating using my phone so I can switch it on or off if I’m not in the house.

“I can also top up what I spend on an app on my phone which is very handy. And I have an easy to use app to turn on my dishwasher or washing machine.

“The heat pump is also environmentally friendly and cleaner, which is very important.”

RULET is just one of a number of innovative projects, aimed at changing tenants’ behaviours and the amount of CO2 we produce, which will be taken forward as part of our



Raymond controls his heating using an app on his mobile phone

recently launched Sustainable Development Strategy 2022 -2027. The strategy will guide us as we aim to reach net zero by 2050.

Due to the success of recent pathfinder retrofit pilots, including RULET, the Housing Executive will shortly launch a programme to provide energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades to another 300 homes across Northern Ireland over the next three years.



Zeroing-in to eliminate carbon

We recently launched our new five year Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan as we move towards our target of producing net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

This will include:

- ✓ Improving energy and water efficiency in buildings
- ✓ Switching to low-carbon heating
- ✓ Replacing our fossil fuel vehicles with low or zero emission alternatives
- ✓ Enhancing nature and carbon removal on our estate
- ✓ Educating and informing to encourage everyone to be more sustainable

Find out more

You can learn more about our Sustainable Development Strategy by visiting our website at www.nihe.gov.uk

Why we may need to enter your home

Our staff and contractors may occasionally need access to your home to help keep it safe and 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.

GIVE FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

We will give advice on the safe storage and charging of mobility scooters.

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.

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

Protect what matters

Your home contains your most valuable possessions, so it is important to protect them by getting contents insurance.

This means that you can replace them, should something unexpected happen like a fire or flood.

Home contents insurance covers you against loss, theft, or damage to your personal possessions. Before you take out a policy, you need to work out how much cover you need. This is based on the cost of replacing all your possessions and 'high risk items' such as jewellery, smartphones, laptops and games consoles.

The average yearly cost of contents insurance is £56.80 (based on cover up to £50K with a policy excess of £100) so it isn't expensive and can save you a lot of money in the long run. The easiest way to find a policy that is affordable for you and your family is to do a quick search on a price comparison site.



Why do I need contents insurance?

As your landlord, we are responsible for protecting the structure of your home as well as any permanent fixtures and fittings in it.

Contents insurance covers your belongings. This means that if there is a burglary, flood, or fire in your home, you can claim on it and replace what matters to you.

Sensible about scams

With the rising cost of living none of us can afford to lose money and that is why now, more than ever, we need to be scam aware.

Scammers are indiscriminate and target people of all ages, backgrounds and income levels. Scams can happen over the phone, through a cold call to your door, online or by post. Some of you may have been targeted earlier this year by fraudsters who called our customers pretending to be working on our behalf. They asked tenants to make a payment of £10 towards their rent so that repairs could be carried out on their homes. Fortunately the scam was reported to us straight away.

We will NEVER contact you out of the blue to ask for your personal information or bank details.

If you receive a suspicious phone call or email from someone claiming to work for or represent the Housing Executive report it to us by calling 03448 920 900.

The best way to avoid being scammed is to be vigilant, be aware and feel free to question or check things out. Remember, if something feels too good to be true it usually is.



Dealing with damp

Using an extractor fan when cooking can help to prevent condensation

Damp can be a problem in any home or flat.

There are three main types of damp which can affect your home:

- Rising damp
- Penetrating damp
- Condensation

Each type needs to be investigated. It is important that you report any damp problems to us immediately so that we can determine the cause, and arrange for any remedial repairs to be undertaken.

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

Rising damp and penetrating damp are caused by the breakdown of elements such as gutters, seals around windows or doors, or the failure of a damp proof course. These will have to be repaired by our contractors.

Condensation is caused by moist air within the home condensing on cold surfaces such as walls, tiles and windows and occurs mainly in rooms where a lot of air moisture is generated, such as kitchens and bathrooms.

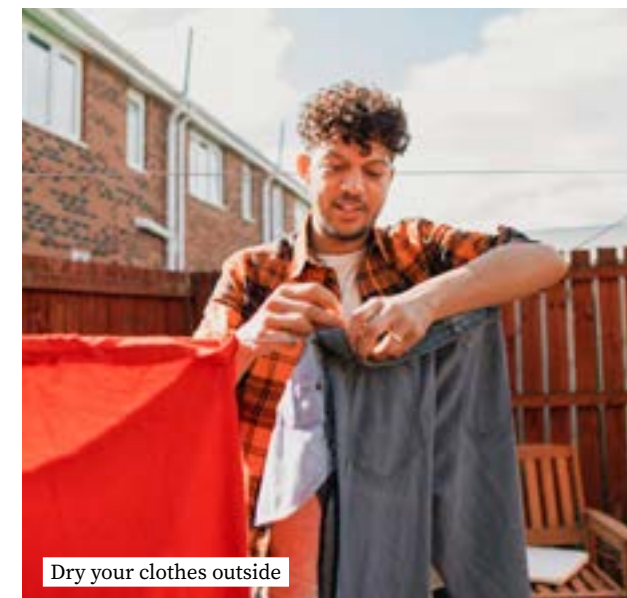
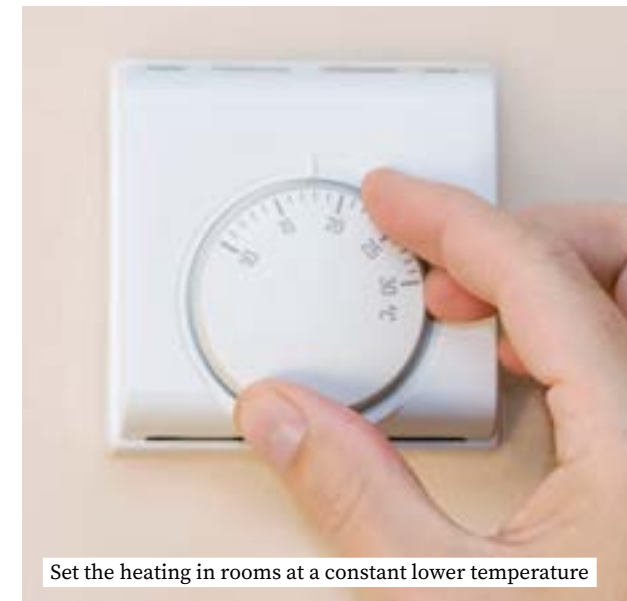
Condensation is the most common form of dampness in the home and, if left untreated for too long, can result in mould growth, which has potentially harmful implications for your health.

There are a few simple steps you can follow which will 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 and opening windows in your home throughout the day.
- Wipe up any condensation on and around windows.
- If possible dry clothes outside.
- If you are drying clothes inside, keep the door to the room closed but make sure you use the extractor fan in a kitchen or bathroom or leave a small window ajar.
- If you have a non-condensing washer/dryer or tumble-dryer, make sure it is properly vented to the outside.
- When you are cooking keep the kitchen door shut as much as possible and cover boiling pots. Use the extractor fan if you have one and/or leave the window open and continue to do so until the 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.

If you follow the advice provided and problems with damp and mould persist you should contact us immediately to get these resolved.

Request a repair through My Housing Executive (our online tenant portal) or by phoning 03448 920 901.



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.

For more information

For fire safety advice and tips visit our website at www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Repairs-and-maintenance/Fire-safety

Don't freeze up this winter

If a pipe freezes in your home, follow these 5 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.

Make your career with the Housing Executive

Are you interested in making a real difference to people's lives and following an exciting and varied career pathway? Then working for the Housing Executive could be exactly what you're looking for.

As an employer we offer a wide variety of job roles with flexibility, competitive salaries, generous annual leave, an enhanced pension scheme and family friendly working policies.

We also provide the opportunity for staff to develop through training while in their role with a range of educational opportunities at every level, funded by the Housing Executive.

We have a number of different entry level schemes and development programmes within the organisation. Emmy Tate, one of our Housing Services Graduate trainees told us about her experience so far.

Emmy joined the Housing Executive's Housing Graduate Trainee programme in 2021 and was placed within the Causeway region with

Area Manager Mark Alexander.

"I had just graduated from university with a degree in sociology and criminology and was working in a local retail outlet. I needed a change and wanted a better work/life balance and to be able to make plans for the future, so I was considering going back to university or getting a different job," Emmy explained.

"I was keeping an eye out on job sites and saw the graduate programme advertised online. It caught my eye and was just perfect timing for me to apply. I went through the recruitment process which included the application form and an interview and was accepted."

Emmy started the graduate programme, which includes a rotational work experience programme with study for relevant qualifications and development

opportunities, in October 2021.

Her journey to becoming a patch manager had begun.

"The graduate programme lasts for two years and gives me the opportunity to work within various roles," said Emmy. "I began working as a patch manager and then I moved to a housing advisor role. I am currently on a six month placement with Radius Housing working within the Community Investment Team, learning the importance of engaging with tenants and of housing within our communities.

"My favourite role so far has been patch manager because you are helping people at grassroots level, getting to meet various tenants who are at different stages in their housing journey and talking with them whilst getting to know their lives. You get a real sense of achievement when you know that you have been able to really help someone and make a difference.

"Another benefit is that I have been able to keep studying with the support of the Housing Executive. I have gained a level 5 CMI qualification in leadership and management and I'm currently studying for a CIH Level 5 qualification in Housing.

Asked if she would recommend a career in the Housing Executive, Emmy said: "I would tell anyone interested in joining the Housing Executive to 'just do it!'"

"Over the past year I have overcome some challenges and with them, I have learnt and experienced so much. It is eye opening! It is a stable job, with career progression and opportunities to explore different career options and I know there will be so much more to learn.

"I was blinkered when I started and thought that I knew what the Housing Executive was about but when you are in it you see that they are much more than just housing.

"I know that my career can keep progressing here with a greater introduction of flexible working across various areas of the organisation and Northern Ireland. This will give me greater opportunities to reach the higher level roles whilst still being able to stay close to home."



Emmy Tate, Housing Services Graduate Trainee

You can apply for any of our vacant roles through the careers section on our website and there are also a variety of different entry options. Some of them include:

Apprenticeships

We run apprenticeship programmes in various departments across the Housing Executive, providing a chance to earn while you learn! This includes opportunities at a variety of levels, aimed at both school leavers as well as higher level apprenticeships for graduates.

These roles typically consist of a period of two to four years part-time training in a local college or university (funded by the Housing Executive) alongside employment with the Housing Executive, with support from senior staff and in-house mentors.

Graduate Trainee Programme

There are a number of graduate programmes available within the Housing Executive across different disciplines in our directorates including Housing, Asset Management, Human Resources (HR) and Finance.

As an example, the Housing Graduate Trainee programme is a two year programme where trainees complete two academic qualifications; CMI Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management and CIH Level 5 Diploma in Housing. Trainees also embark on rotational placements giving them the opportunity to learn unique and relevant skills and knowledge that will better equip them to become housing professionals.

For more information

If you are interested in a career with us check out our latest job vacancies at www.nihe.gov.uk/careers



(L-R) Sylwia McAvoy, Housing Executive Race Relations Officer, Pauline Kersten, Conway Education Centre Manager and Danielle Shields, Housing Executive Good Relations Officer for West Belfast and Shankill

Curriculum for community

Conway Education Centre is a unique, community-based education centre located in Conway Mill on the interface between the Falls Road and Shankill Road in west Belfast. The centre helps individuals to build better lives for themselves and their families through the provision of community education.

With the help of funding from our Community Cohesion Unit, the

.....
 “Interaction within the classroom is helping the local community to reach out and support their new neighbours.”

centre has launched the ‘Welcoming the New Neighbours’ project. It focuses on improving integration and communication, and building relationships of trust between refugees and local communities. Beginning in September of this year, the course is an English language skills and integration project. It runs over 26 weeks, with two sessions per week, and participants include 15 refugees/asylum seekers and

five local volunteers who work as language buddies.

Led by an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher, the class has a warm and welcoming feel with pupils from countries such as Iran, Sudan, Syria, Poland and Portugal.

Brimming with enthusiasm, the teacher stands in front of the class and encourages willing pupils to practice their new language skills and compare the education system here to what they experienced in their homelands.

“This course is so much more than a language skills course,” they explained. “Developing their use of English is a large element but we are also helping them to develop cultural knowledge.

“Our curriculum is broken down into different topics which include education, housing, employability,

support services and recreational activities amongst others. We help them to navigate their way through these services with information from guest speakers and outings to useful places in the community like the local library.

“We hope that by the end of the

.....
 “This course is so much more than a language skills course.”

course they will all be comfortable and confident in navigating their new local community and culture.”

Centre Manager, Pauline Kersten, added: “Of course we also want to increase support and mutual understanding with local residents and our volunteer language buddies play a vital role.

“They encourage and help our students with their language skills but they are also improving their own awareness of the background of refugees/asylum seekers and different cultures and religions. The interaction within the classroom is helping the local community to reach out and support their new neighbours.”

The students in the class work diligently in small groups with their language buddy.

When asked if they are enjoying their lessons, one man enthused: “The class is very good and people are very kind in Belfast. I don’t like online so this is very good for meeting people.”

Another woman added: “This is the best class with the best teacher. I am learning about culture, getting information about school for my children and learning about everything here.”

There is no doubt that the ‘Welcoming the New Neighbours’ project is helping to empower and educate people in the local community to embrace multiculturalism and build stronger communities.

For more information

If you have a project that could benefit from Community Cohesion funding, contact your Good Relations Officer through our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900**.

You can also contact our Race Relations Officer by phoning **07825 073 492**.



Good Relations Officer Gus Moore (left) digs in with Loughries Men's Shed members Billy Tate and Bobby Magreechan

Loughries Men's Shed is blooming

During the Covid 19 lockdowns, many people were feeling isolated and lonely which was having a negative impact on their mental health.

Good Relations Officers

Good Relations Officers will tell you about the grants you can apply for. You can contact your local Good Relations Officer by phoning our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900**.

Part of the Housing Executive's role is supporting tenants and we're keen to help improve the health and well-being of people in our communities.

With this in mind, we awarded a grant of £4,650 to start up Loughries Men's Shed in Newtownards where local men meet, talk, share their skills, build friendships and reduce isolation.

The group formed when a lockdown zoom group realised that loneliness was becoming a big problem and that the general wellbeing of friends, family and members of their community were deteriorating.

Loughries Men's Shed founding member Mark Anderson said: "We decided to set up an allotment and the Housing Executive grant meant that we could install a shed to get the project started.

"In a very short space of time this project began playing a significant and positive role in everyday life here by bringing people together," he said.

"It has definitely helped with levels of depression and anxiety. The men have a renewed sense of pride and confidence in themselves and the wider community has a brilliant new facility to enjoy."

Up to 20 members come along once a week and up to 15 more drop in occasionally. They socialise, share ideas, have a cup of tea and a laugh, learn new skills and chat about the things that matter to them.

"We've worked hard and everyone has chipped in with things like putting up fences, laying the foundation for the shed, planting and so on," Mark said.

"The grant meant we could build a disability pathway as a lot of our members have bad knees and arthritis. We have raised beds, too, which are more suitable for people with physical restrictions. This project has been really successful in reducing levels of loneliness and social isolation, especially for men who live alone."

Working with the Housing Executive, the shedders are planning further outreach, particularly with residents in the five main social housing areas in the town as well as day centres, youth groups and schools.

Start packing for a new home



Moving into a new home can ordinarily be a daunting task, but when the person moving is exiting homelessness, stress levels can be even more acute.

It's all very well accepting a set of keys to a new property, but what happens next?

Literally, how do you make a house a home? What do you need to start your new life?

We recently invested more than £150,000 in the Homeless Connect charity to extend the Home Starter Pack initiative, delivering a raft of essential household goods to formerly homeless tenants.

Providing items like small electrical goods and bedding helps relieve some of the initial stress of beginning a tenancy.

Other goods, such as crockery, cutlery and items to keep a new home clean and comfortable are also included.

Since September, around 150 packs have been provided to new tenants and we've made a commitment to continue the project in the months ahead.

Claire Crainey, Head of Housing Policy and Tenancy Management at the Housing Executive, explained: "Much of our work revolves around sustaining tenancies to prevent homelessness.

"Providing Home Starter Packs can help a new tenant build the best possible foundation as they begin a new housing journey.

"If you've never been homeless, items like kettles and toasters may be taken for granted.

"But for someone who has experienced homelessness, these things are small little building blocks in creating a new life.

"Through our Tenancy Sustainment Action Plan we've outlined a range of practical steps we'll take to help our tenants become more resilient.

"In a cost of living crisis, we're doing everything we can to help new tenants, particularly those who have experienced homelessness, thrive in their homes."

Items available in the Home Starter Pack

Small electrical goods

- ✓ Microwave oven
- ✓ Slow cooker
- ✓ Kettle
- ✓ Toaster
- ✓ Iron

Crockery and Cutlery

- ✓ Set of saucepans
- ✓ 16 piece cutlery set
- ✓ Dinner set, including mugs
- ✓ Set of glasses

Bedding

- ✓ Duvet
- ✓ Duvet Cover
- ✓ Mattress protector
- ✓ Double bed sheet
- ✓ Pillows

Cleaning and essentials

- ✓ Ironing board
- ✓ Mop and bucket
- ✓ Set of hangers
- ✓ Long life bulbs
- ✓ Dustpan and brush
- ✓ Pack of tea towels
- ✓ Bath towel
- ✓ Hand towel
- ✓ Pack of dish cloths

For more information

If you, or someone you know, is exiting homelessness, speak to your housing advisor about how to access a Home Starter Pack.

Respect for all

With funding from the Housing Executive's Community Safety budget, the Children's Safety Education Foundation (CSEF) is delivering the "Respect" programme to teenagers in schools across Northern Ireland.

The Respect Programme teaches young people about the consequences anti-social behaviour and crime can have on communities, as well as focusing on their health, safety and well-being.

Around four hundred students from Glengormley High School and Edmund Rice College, aged between 11 and 16, participated in the programme during the last school year.

Michael Fitzgerald from the CSEF, who works alongside schools to roll out the programme, said: "As part of the Respect Programme we encourage young people to challenge stereotypes, consider opposing

"The Respect Programme is rich with information needed to help live healthy, safe and positive lives."

Gary Coey, Glengormley High School teacher



Students from Glengormley High School who took part in the Respect Programme, with teacher Gary Coey

viewpoints and examine citizenship issues.

"We were delighted to receive this support from the Housing Executive which enabled us to continue our vital work in the community."

The Housing Executive's Community Safety fund provided £2500 for new textbooks, e-books, worksheets and student surveys, which were adapted to allow teaching to continue during the pandemic.

Housing Executive Community Safety Manager Laura McConville added:

"We want to encourage and empower young people to make constructive choices and to participate positively in their community.

"This is the sixth year the Housing Executive has funded this community safety project. It utilises real-life

Michael Fitzgerald (Children's Safety Education Foundation), Pastoral Care teacher Geraldine Davey with a student from Edmund Rice College



"The Respect magazine encouraged our young people to reflect on their lives and gave them the tools to make informed decisions, which will help to support their mental health and well-being, now and in the future."

Geraldine Davey, Head of Pastoral Care from Edmund Rice College

scenarios to determine how everyone in our society deserves to be respected.

"This year Glengormley High School and Edmund Rice College have employed the Respect Programme to help their pupils discuss and examine subjects connected to anti-social behaviour and community safety in a constructive and engaging manner."

The Housing Executive supports the Respect programme in different areas of Northern Ireland each year. In the last six years, 12 schools have taken part - that's thousands of students across Northern Ireland.

Domestic abuse is not just physical



Domestic abuse can take many forms and new legislation means that coercive control is now a criminal offence. The Police Service of Northern Ireland explains what coercive control is and how to seek help and support.

"Coercive control is behaviour and actions that include psychological abuse and non-violent intimidation," Detective Superintendent Lindsay Fisher from the Police Service's Public Protection Branch said.

"New legislation was introduced in February of this year to make coercive control a criminal offence so abusers are now being punished in Northern Ireland for subjecting a partner or family member to controlling behaviour such as isolating them, exploiting them financially, depriving them of basic needs, humiliating, frightening or threatening them.

"We know that this type of behaviour can often escalate so it is important that people understand that this is domestic abuse.

"Not all abuse is physical and just because a person is not covered in bruises doesn't mean they're not being abused. If you feel like you're walking on eggshells, or have no control over your own life, this is also abuse and we can help you," Detective Superintendent Fisher added.

If you are experiencing, or feel at risk from, domestic abuse you

can report it to Police by calling 101, or in an emergency 999. If calling 999 for help, but you are too afraid to speak, dial 55 on your phone and the operator will know that you need the police.

If you have concerns about domestic or sexual abuse, now or in the past, the 24-hour domestic and sexual abuse helpline is also available by calling 0808 802 1414.

You can also call the Housing Executive in confidence on 03448 920 900 and ask to speak to your patch manager. We will provide you with relevant information to enable you to make informed choices about your housing options. We can help you by:

- Investigating options for keeping you safe in your home
- Signposting you to specialist organisations to provide relevant support
- Providing safe, temporary emergency accommodation and transport to get there, if required
- Discussing your permanent housing options with you
- Ensuring that your location is not disclosed to family or friends, if required

You can find further information, including details about the warning signs of domestic abuse, at: <https://www.psnl.police.uk/crime/domestic-abuse/>

Support organisations

ASSISTNI is a domestic and sexual abuse advocacy service, providing immediate advocacy support to all victims of domestic or sexually motivated abuse. You can find out more about their service at www.assistni.org.uk

Women's Aid: 028 9024 9041

Men's Advisory Project: 028 9024 1929 or 028 7116 0001

Men's Action Network: 028 7137 7777

Members of the LGBTQ+ community can contact **The Rainbow Project:** 028 9031 9030 or 028 7128 3030

Carafriend/HereNI: 078 4991 2877

Hourglass (for older people who experience domestic abuse): 0808 8088141 or free text service: 078 6005 2906

If you are worried about a child please call the **NSPCC** on 0808 800 5000

A helping hand when you need it

Your patch manager is the person in your local area who is there to support you, answer questions or respond to any concerns about your tenancy with us.

They are responsible for homes in a dedicated 'patch' and can help or support you in a number of ways.

They can:

- Provide advice to help you maintain your tenancy
- Connect you to support and well-being services and other projects in your area
- Liaise with our contractors when you are getting planned maintenance work done to your home
- Try to resolve issues you may have with your neighbours

“It can be challenging but it’s rewarding too when I help someone who’s in need.”

- Assist with helping your money go further by carrying out benefit and budgeting checks and, if needed, organise a referral for specialist advice on money and debt. This can include our in-house Financial Inclusion Service.
- Assist you with your rent account queries.

They are also out and about on our estates, meeting with community groups to discuss local issues and help them deliver projects that benefit everyone living in the neighbourhood. This means that they can easily meet you in your home, if you prefer, to discuss your housing needs face-to-face.

If you haven’t had a chance to meet your patch manager, get in touch with them to find out how they can help you.

An inside view of patch managing

Niall McGurgan, Dungannon Patch Manager

“The nature of the job means that you are out and about meeting tenants more or less every day seeing any problems they might have at first-hand. It was difficult at times during Covid because of lockdowns and social distancing but we are back to normal.

“My area is the town of Dungannon and the surrounding towns and villages, so I cover both rural and urban households. The problems that arise are pretty much the same whether you live in the country or in a built-up area.

“I look after close to 450 properties, which would be the same for all patch managers, and I deal with any queries our tenants have. They vary widely from rent arrears to anti-social behaviour, moving house, repairs, schemes, physical and mental health.

“For example, if tenants in rent arrears report that they are feeling the pressure of the cost of living crisis we might be able to review their account and use the benefit and budgeting calculator to help them manage their money better.

“It can be challenging but it’s rewarding too when I help someone



Nisha Kelly, Patch Manager for Harpur's Hill, Coleraine

who’s in need. It’s always a good day when someone appreciates what you’ve done for them.”

Nisha Kelly, Harpur's Hill, Coleraine Patch Manager

“What I love about the job is that it’s different every day, I like the diversity, you can’t predict what will happen which makes it interesting.

“I can deal with many of the problems that crop up but there is a lot of networking too. You often have to call in other services to help such as the police, social services or animal welfare, depending on the situation.

“Rent accounting is one of my most important roles, making sure people are paying the right amount and on time, and assist them if they get into arrears. That’s a regular task every week.

“My patch has quite a few bungalows with elderly tenants. Sometimes people want to move house, maybe to downsize or they might need to move out of a house if they can’t manage stairs any more. My role would be to assess

their need and help them as much as I can.

“I work closely with a maintenance officer to make sure the properties are kept up to standard and I liaise between residents and contractors when we have an improvement scheme.

“Some homes recently got new double glazing.

“I love the interaction with the public and being able to help people, it’s a very fulfilling job.”

It’s easy to get in touch

You can contact your patch manager by sending them a message on our tenant portal, **My Housing Executive**, or calling our General Enquiries Line on **03448 920 900**



Niall McGurgan, Dungannon Patch Manager

Adapting your home

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

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

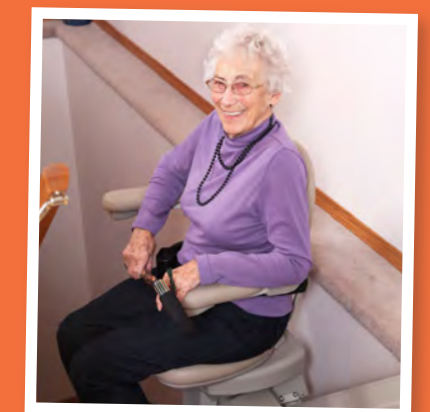
However, some minor adaptations require an OT recommendation such as a level access shower.

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.



Making Glenravel great



Hard-working volunteer Marian Maguire glows with contentment to see her community thriving

Big-hearted Marian Maguire has been chair of the Glenravel and District Community and Residents Association since it started 12 years ago.

We catch up with her to hear how her industrious band of volunteers are making a huge contribution to their community. Listening to Marian chat about her area, you immediately pick up on her enthusiasm and love for the place she calls home. Located in the lush hills on the edge of the Antrim Plateau, Marian and her team are generous with their time and are kept busy improving community spirit, keeping villages vibrant by involving young people, and caring for their already beautiful surroundings.

“We do a lot of cross community work which has brought our local villages closer together”

The group works closely with Supporting Communities (SC), an independent charity funded by the Housing Executive, to support community groups with development through tailored advice, information and training.

“The first project in Glenravel that was funded through SC was a road safety competition with schools in the area,” Marian revealed. “Schoolchildren designed road signs and the group put them up on the roadsides. They are still there eight years later and we are planning another competition to replace the signs with new ones.

“We’ve received funding through Supporting Communities for environmental schemes. We also do a lot of cross-community work, which has definitely brought our local villages closer together.”

Juggling tasks is second nature to Marian, so it’s no surprise that she has a finger in many other pies. “We’ve just finished a programme to improve relations and build trust between the PSNI and children and young people. The 12 to 16-year-olds looked at various topics including bullying and how to behave.

We also worked with teenagers through the North Eastern Education and Library Board, teaching them to be leaders of the future, which again was funded by the Housing Executive,” she said.

We provide funding to Supporting Communities so they can offer a wide range of advice and support.

If your group would like to find out more, please speak to one of our Good Relations Officers or your local Community Development Officer at Supporting Communities.

“Supporting Communities organised funding for a polytunnel for our gardening club and we have asked the Housing Executive for permission to use a green area to plant out allotments, which would be exciting. It would mean we could grow our own vegetables to distribute through our foodbank.”

Marian revealed that she used to be a hairdresser and had no idea about writing letters or applying for funding. “Supporting Communities taught me all that.

“Our association couldn’t exist without Supporting Communities. They help with absolutely everything from how to get funding, administration and providing all sorts of advice and support.”

The Glenravel group piloted the first oil club in Northern Ireland about 10 years ago and SC set up the necessary databases.

Marian is also a member of the Housing Community Network (run by SC), which is a forum to resolve tenants’ concerns on topics such as anti-social behaviour, repair work and benefit entitlement, and to sort out any other issues they have. As if that wasn’t enough, she is a member of the Network’s Disability Forum, looking out for the needs of people with disabilities.

“Supporting Communities has had a hugely positive impact on our small rural community, they are fantastic.”



Marian and Roy McClean, Mid and East Antrim Assistant Area Manager (Acting), catching up with tenant Anne McKeown

You can also find more information at www.supportingcommunities.org

Make the move with HomeSwapper

Would you like to downsize, are you looking for a bigger house or do you want to move to a new area?

Registering with the free online HomeSwapper.co.uk service could help you find a new home that's the right fit for you.

With HomeSwapper you can exchange homes with a Housing Executive tenant in Northern Ireland or a housing association tenant in any part of the UK.

You can also find potential home swaps by word of mouth, advertising in newspapers or online, or by putting up postcards in shop windows.

Once you have registered on HomeSwapper, our housing team will confirm if you are entitled to swap.

When you post your advert on HomeSwapper, you'll need photos of your own home, and a few lines on what you're looking for and where you'd like to live. You can also search for homes and send messages to other tenants.

Your patch manager can give you advice on things to consider when looking for a new home.

Get moving

To register for HomeSwapper download the app from the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store.

You can also create an account on www.homeswapper.co.uk

House hunting checklist

When you are searching for a new home draw up a wish list to include:

- The type of property you would like
- How many bedrooms are needed
- The area you would like to live in
- Whether you need outdoor space

Orlaith's story

Orlaith swapped a two-bedroom house for a two-bedroom bungalow in Coalisland.

"I wanted a bungalow because I have mobility issues, and the family I swapped with have two children

and needed more space.

"The bedrooms and kitchen in my new home are a lot smaller but I don't mind, it suits me better, and I love the area too.

"I'd already agreed privately with the other family to make the swap. Once we had decided to go ahead we notified our landlords and they took it from there. I moved from being a Housing Association tenant to a Housing Executive tenant.

"It was all done pretty quickly and was very straightforward. It has worked out well for both of us and I'm over the moon with my little bungalow."



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

كفت غل يه فيزييل جنال الة غلل نكت مل اذا يف تدع اسمل اىل ع لوص حل اجات حشو م ال عيطت ستف ، فيطخل او فيفتش ل ا قمرتلا هذه ريفوت فيذي فنل انكس ال ا قمدخ ل ن م ي جري ، بل طلا دن ع فين ا جمل ا تامدخلا نم لي صفتل اب م ال ا ذه لوح راسفتس ال ا يل حل ا 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 jūsus 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语，并且你需要帮助来进行口译和文字翻译，那么 Housing Executive 可以根据请求而提供免费的服務，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, požiadať svoju miestnu kanceláriu o viac informácií.

SOMALI

Haddii af Ingiriisigu uusan ahayn luqaddaada hooyo oo aad u baahan tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumaadda oraaahda 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

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

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.

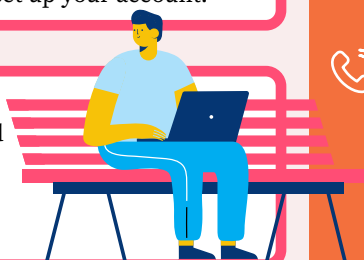


Can I pay my rent?

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.



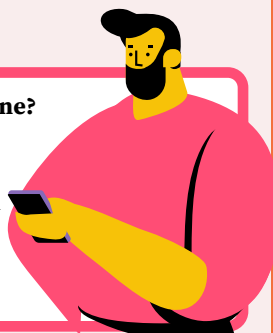
Is it secure?

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 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



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).






EMAIL

For general enquiries email 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 to find your nearest office and opening hours.