DfC
Department
for Communities
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Shared Housing Programme

Brief for the Delievery of Shared Housing

Version 4.0 / October 2019

"A united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance."

Contents

Background

1.1 The Shared Housing Programme (the Programme) has its origins in the Northern Ireland (NI) Executive Together: Building a United Community (T:buc) Strategy. TBUC reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and continuing the journey towards a more united and shared society, and it represents a major change in the way that good relations will be delivered across government. The strategy outlines a vision of:

> **"A united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance."**

Underpinning Principles

1.2 T:buc is underpinned by principles that will drive forward implementation through actions at both a central and local Government levels:
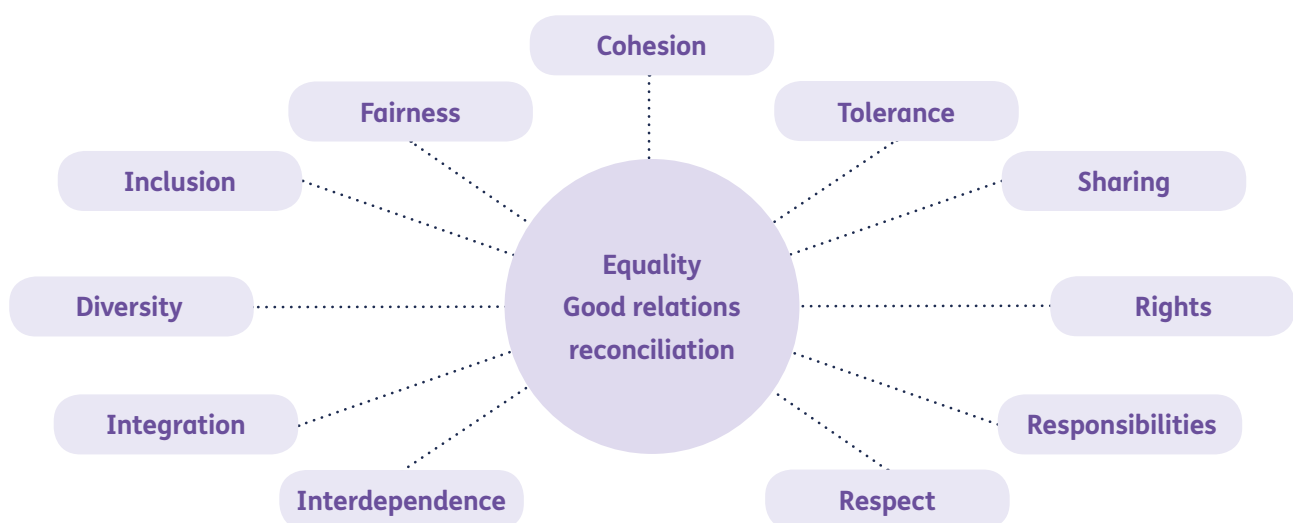
Key Priorities

1.3 The Strategy outlines how Government, community and individuals will work together to build a united community and achieve change against four key priorities:

- Our children and young people;

- Our shared community;

- Our safe community; and

- Our cultural expression.

1.4 The Department for Communities (DfC / the Department) committed to delivering the T:buc Headline Action: To create 10 new shared neighbourhood developments. The shared neighbourhoods were delivered under the T:buc key priorities 2 and 3, and these priorities will continue to drive the delivery of the Shared Housing Programme (**'Housing for All'**) throughout the 2016–2021 Programme for Government (PfG).

Key Priority 2 – Our Shared Community

1.5 Shared Aim: to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.

1.6 The NI Executive is committed to addressing all barriers that prevent or interfere with shared space, and ensuring that all individuals can live, learn, work and play wherever they choose. The maintenance and protection of shared space is now a cross-cutting responsibility for the Executive, other public bodies and civic society.

1.7 Shared space need not be neutral space; it is not about pursuing some sense of sanitised territory that denies the ability of people to celebrate their culture. The challenge is to ensure that shared space remains open on the basis of equality of opportunity, to ensure that all sections of society can have access to, and treatment of it, without denying the ability of others to do likewise.

1.8 Shirlow and Murtagh[1] estimated that the majority of NI's population resides in areas that are, at minimum, 80% either Catholic or Protestant (67% of Catholics and 73% of Protestants live in such areas). In moving from contested spaces to shared spaces we aim to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone.

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[1] Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City (2008)

1.9 It is important that we do not view the development of shared space solely within the context of our towns and cities, we must take a much wider view and embrace opportunities to develop and enhance the concept of shared spaces in terms of schools, workplaces, leisure facilities and neighbourhoods. Furthermore, we must strive to create shared spaces where people can come together to socialise and interact.

1.10 The concept of interfaces and contested spaces is by no means confined to housing estates, working class areas or rural locations. Over time some town centres have become divided or contested, and this remains a significant challenge; therefore, there is an imperative on all of us to ensure that our towns and villages are truly open and shared spaces where everyone is comfortable, safe and welcomed.

Key Priority 3 – Our Safe Community

1.11 Shared Aim: to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.

1.12 Perceptions around safety and division have had a significant impact on the physical geography of our towns and cities, and the existing physical barriers and structures of division and separation provide reminders that our society needs to progress further in order to achieve government's vision of a truly open, shared and united community. These barriers and structures maintain division in many aspects of life; people live apart, they socialise apart and their children are educated apart.

1.13 Segregation is not unique to the urban environment; many of our rural towns and villages are divided, not by walls or fences but by an invisible line in the road or by a local landmark. Division in rural settings can also be played out through patterns of avoidance, for example, where people choose not to go to certain areas of a town to avail of services.

1.14 Separation is also a state of mind; it does not always equate to tension and violence, and does not always involve physical interface structures. Therefore, to achieve our shared vision (based on shared values of inclusion, integration, interdependence, cohesion and sharing) we must continue to work to change the traditional mind-set that maintains division in our society.

1.15 As noted by Connelly and Keenan[2] and Shuttleworth and Lloyd[3], NI is evolving to become a more diverse society; **'one that needs to consider the experiences of its black and minority ethnic residents and immigrants.'** Research indicates that although it is difficult to argue that the arrival of immigrants to NI has led to less Protestant/Catholic (binary) segregation, there are stronger grounds to argue that their arrival has led to greater social and cultural diversity, and this will ultimately promote a more mixed and tolerant society if given the right support.

[2] Opportunities for All. Minority people's experiences of education, training and employment in Northern Ireland (2000).

[3] Moving Apart or Moving Together? A Snapshot of Residential Segregation from the 2011 Census (2011).

Housing Delivery

1.16 Housing should be openly accessible to all, and those making decisions on where to live should be able to do so free from the risk of intimidation or threat. In practice however, segregation through fear represents a significant barrier to creating more cohesive communities and achieving our vision of a society where people can live, learn, work and socialise together.

1.17 The NI Life and Times Surveys consistently show significant preferences for mixed religion neighbourhoods, but the majority of social housing estates remain segregated in terms of religion. Evidence suggests that when people are given the choice, the vast majority will choose to go on a housing waiting list in a 'single-identity' area (in keeping with their own perceived identity).

1.18 Housing alone cannot address the division that exists in our society, therefore, we need to work in partnership with other government departments and statutory agencies to improve the training, employment and educational opportunities for people in segregated areas. Diverse communities are more sustainable and are the type of communities that will attract people to live side by side. In this way, we can change the dynamics of communities and generate the conditions for greater sharing and integration.

1.19 A key factor of the Programme's delivery has been the use of voluntary 'Good Neighbour' charters; the Housing Executive and Housing Associations ask their tenants to sign up to a voluntary 'Good Neighbour' charter, thereby encouraging support for good relations programmes in their estates and housing schemes. This approach aims to produce communities of good neighbours while offering greater choice to those who wish to live in a shared neighbourhood.

1.20 The concept of choice is an important one and we must acknowledge that a person's choice(s) may depend on familial links and/or community connections. Therefore, the shared housing strategy is not about forcing people to live in a certain way or in a certain area, but rather to improve the choices that are available by tackling the barriers that prevent individuals from opting to live in shared neighbourhoods.

1.21 We recognise that public housing provision is not the only lever for encouraging greater sharing; we need to consider mixed housing in its widest context as single tenure estates of social housing can often lead to further segregation. Therefore, we want to develop schemes that include both social and affordable housing, so that people have greater choice and flexibility on where they live.

The Fresh Start Agreement

1.22 In November 2015, the NI Executive published the Fresh Start Agreement (the implementation plan for the Stormont House Agreement), which outlines Government's commitment to the delivery of confidence and relationship building measures within and between communities; **'contributing to the conditions that will allow the removal of peace walls and the creation of a shared future'**. Fresh Start commits all Executive parties to:

- Serving the people of NI equally, and to act in accordance with the obligations on government to promote equality and respect and to prevent discrimination;

- Promoting a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and mutual understanding at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage shared and integrated education and housing, social inclusion, and in particular community development and the advancement of women in public life; and

- Promoting the interests of the whole community towards the goals of reconciliation and economic renewal.

Programme for Government 2016–2021

1.23 The delivery of shared housing is now a commitment in the 2016–2021 PfG, and DfC is committed to delivering approx. 200 shared social housing units each year as part of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP); 800 units across the PfG. Effectively, this is the second phase of the Shared Housing Programme, and it is badged **'Housing for All'**.

Roles of and Responsibilities

Department for Communities

1.24 The Department has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Programme – the Department will:

- Identify and provide the funding for the Programme;

- Develop and maintain policy, and ensure compliance of policy;

- Work with the Housing Executive and Housing Associations to manage the Programme;

- Drafting and issue of the GRS Contract for Funding to Housing Associations;

- Co-ordinate the Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub-Group (see section 1.30); and

- Monitor the implementation of the GRPs.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

1.25 The Housing Executive will support the management of the Programme through its Community Cohesion Unit (CCU) and Development Programme Group (DPG) – the Housing Executive will:

- Support the Oversight Group (see section 1.31) in the analysis and assessment of Schemes for inclusion to the Programme;

- Issue a formal letter to the Chief Executive/Chairperson of the relevant Housing Association, notifying them that the scheme has been accepted onto the Programme;

- Process the GRS payments to Housing Associations, in line with the Programme Criteria and the GRS Contract for Funding;

- Provide support and guidance to Housing Associations on the development and delivery of GRPs, including programme/project design;

- Provide support to ensure joined up delivery at local community and Housing Executive Area Office levels;

- Support Housing Associations to work with adjoining Housing Executive estates and communities to develop 'bridging' events/programmes/projects and opportunities, in order to develop relationships and support community capacity and cohesion; and

- Chair the Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub-Group.

Housing Associations

1.26 Housing Associations will develop the Schemes in accordance with the principles of the T:buc strategy and the Programme criteria (see section 1.33). This Brief should be read in conjunction with the Good Relations Support Funding Terms of Reference – Housing Associations will be responsible for:

- Liaising with the Housing Executive on site identification;

- Promotion of the Schemes as shared housing, including:
  – Submission of Scheme branding for approval;
  – Liaising with the Housing Executive's Local Office and Area Cohesion Officer;
  – Consultations with local stakeholders, i.e. community, political, etc.; and
  – Pre-tenancy meetings/events;

- Establishment of Scheme Advisory Groups (see section 1.27);

- Establishment and Chair of Operational Groups, including minute taking (see section 1.29);

- Submission of the (draft) costed Year 1 GRP (for approval);

- Delivery of the Year 1 GRP;

- Submission of the five-year costed GRP (for approval);

- Delivery of the five-year GRP;

- Maintaining transparent financial management of all GRS funding received, including identification of other sources of funding secured for programmes/projects within the GRP (see section 1.43);

- Upon request by the Department, furnish the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland with all such financial accounting and other information relating directly or indirectly to the GRS funding provided; and

- Active monitoring of a Scheme's GRP, including the submission of six-monthly monitoring returns throughout the period of the GRP; to include detail of spend within the reporting period and cumulative spend to date (see section 1.39).

Delivery Support

Advisory Groups

1.27 The establishment of an Advisory Group (for each Scheme, or for a cluster of Schemes) is a criterion for the release of the second GRS payment (see section 1.35). Advisory Groups should reflect a Schemes (geographical) local Council boundary, for example, a Belfast Advisory Group could support several Schemes within its boundary. Where required, an Advisory Group can be established to support one Scheme.

1.28 The Advisory Groups are key to informing and supporting the development and delivery of the GRPs, e.g. identification of 'bridging' and 'bonding' opportunities / events/programmes/projects. Advisory Groups membership should include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Local political representatives;

- Community and Safety Policing Partnerships;

- Local Council GR Officers;

- Local Community and Voluntary Sector organisations;

- Local Forums or local residents/ tenants groups; and

- The Housing Executive's Local Area Officer and Good Relations Officer.

Operational Group

1.29 Operational Groups should draw representation from the Housing Associations staff delivering the Schemes and GRPs, and they should be used as forums to impart best practice and lessons learned. Where possible, Housing Associations should create / identify linkages to project delivery across Schemes, including opportunities to jointly procure (programme/project) services.

Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub-group

1.30 The Department established the Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub-group (the Sub-group) to support the delivery of shared housing by:

- Offering advice and guidance to the DfC Shared Housing team; sharing experience in the delivery of shared housing and building positive good relations outcomes; and

- Acting as a critical friend to the DfC Shared Housing team; examining proposed actions and providing a challenge function to ensure that robust, workable policy and processes are implemented.

The Oversight Group

1.31 The Oversight Group includes officials from the Department's Housing Group and the Housing Executive's CCU and DPG, and its role is to assess sites for suitability to the Programme. It should be noted that all Schemes must be selected from the SHDP, and all proposed Schemes should not be additional to, or a substitute for the SHDP.

Good Relations Support

1.32 The GRS funding is paid to the Housing Association that receives the Housing Association Grant payment for developing the Scheme. As such, the Housing Association is required to provide detail of the monies required to undertake the actions necessary to achieve and sustain the shared nature of a Scheme; costs should include staff resources to deliver the GRP and the associated good relations programme/project costs.

Criteria for Scheme Selection, and Approval Stages of Good Relations Support Payments

1.33 GRS is set at 10% of a Scheme's Total Costs Indicator (TCI) – Housing Associations will be able to access **up to** 10% of a Schemes TCI.

Part 1 Payment – Selection and approval of a Scheme to the Programme

1.34 **Part 1 Payment (20% GRS):**

I. The relevant Housing Association has agreed to develop and promote the Scheme as shared.

II. The Scheme is included on the SHDP, and has received Chief Executive Business Case approval.

III. An in-depth community consultation process has been undertaken on the shared nature of the proposed Scheme.

IV. Local politicians have been consulted in relation to the proposed scheme being taken forward as shared Scheme.

V. Formal contact has been made between the relevant Housing Association and the local Housing Executive Area manager and the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion Team.

VI. The Scheme has received formal approval to proceed.

Part 2 Payment – Branding, Good Relations and Scheme Support

1.35 **Part 2 Payment (30% GRS):**

I. The Scheme has secured planning approval and is on site.

II. Advertising/marketing for the Scheme has been approved, procured and erected.

III. The Year 1 (costed) Good Relations Plan has been submitted and approved by the Oversight Group.

IV. The Scheme's Advisory Group has been established and its membership details have been submitted to the Department and the Housing Executive.

Part 3 Payment – Shared Status Achieved and Good Relations Delivery

1.36 Part 3 Payment (50% GRS):

I.   Allocations to the Scheme have resulted in one community not being in the dominance of more than 70%.

II. A welcome event for new tenants has been held to discuss and set out the principles of the new shared scheme.

III. All new tenants have signed up to the voluntary Good Neighbour Agreement.

IV. The Scheme's (costed) 5 year GRP has been submitted and approved by the Oversight Group.

Requirement for a New Common Landlord Area

1.37 In some circumstances, the existing Common Landlord Area (CLA) may not be suitable for a Scheme, owing to the CLA having a single-identity waiting list. If this is the case, the relevant Housing Association should contact the Housing Executive (in advance of any allocations) to arrange for a separate CLA to be established. If required, Housing Associations can also request a separate General Housing Area to be established.

1.38 If a new CLA is required, letters will be issued (by the Housing Executive) to all neighbouring waiting list applicants, informing them of the new CLA and the shared nature of the Scheme; inviting them to apply for the new CLA if they wish to be considered for the scheme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1.39   The Department has established a formal reporting process to monitor GRP delivery, and Housing Associations delivering Schemes will be required to submit six-monthly monitoring returns that detail Good Relations delivery and impact; reviewing progress and reporting against outputs/outcomes.

1.40   It is important that the learning from delivering the Schemes is recorded and shared to enable the development of best practice. Housing Associations should record and share lessons learned/best practice via the Operational Group(s), the Ministerial Panel Housing Thematic Sub-group and through the formal monitoring and evaluation processes.

Monitoring Good Relations Spend

1.41   When submitting (six-monthly) monitoring returns, Housing Associations should include full detail of the GRS spend within the reporting period, and the cumulative spend to date (an Excel spread sheet is embedded in the requisite monitoring proforma).

1.42   Housing Associations must identify any other funding sources secured to deliver Good Relations programmes/projects within the GRP. Other sources of funding must also be reported through the formal monitoring process.

Financial Controls

1.43   To ensure efficacy and probity, Housing Associations shall establish and maintain effective financial control systems in relation to its operations generally but specifically in relation to GRS funding, for example, maintain proper and effective accounting records which identify individual financial transactions relating to the GRP, including original invoices and receipts.

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