



Minutes of the 465th Meeting
of the Northern Ireland Housing Council
held in the Craigavon Civic Centre
Thursday, 14th November 2019 at 10.30 am

The Officers joined the Meeting at 10.45 am

Present:

Ald Tommy Nicholl	Mid & East Antrim Borough (Chair)
Cllr Anne-Marie Fitzgerald	Fermanagh & Omagh District (Vice Chair)
Cllr Michelle Kelly	Belfast City
Ald John Finlay	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough
Ald Amanda Grehan	Lisburn & Castlereagh City
Cllr Catherine Elattar	Mid Ulster Borough
Cllr Michael Ruane	Newry, Mourne & Down District

In Attendance:

Clark Bailie	Chief Executive (NIHE)
David Moore	Director of Corporate Services (NIHE)
Paul Price	(Department for Communities)
David Polley	(Department for Communities)
Judith Woodburn	(Department for Communities)
Sarah McAdorey	Housing Executive
Katherine McCloskey	Housing Executive
Kelly Cameron	Secretary (NIHE, Secretariat)

Apologies:

Cllr Nick Mathison	Ards & North Down Borough
Ald Jim Speers	Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough
Ald Allan Bresland	Derry City & Strabane District

1.0	<p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chair extended a welcome to Members and Officials from the Housing Executive and the Department for Communities.</p>	
2.0	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>None.</p>	

<p>3.0</p>	<p>To adopt the Minutes of the 464th Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday 10th October 2019</p> <p>It was proposed by A Fitzgerald, seconded by C Elattar and resolved, that the Minutes of the 464th Meeting of the Housing Council held on Thursday 10th October 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
<p>4.0 4.1</p>	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>Members Queries</p> <p>The following queries have been responded to since the last meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Speers – Rent Arrears • Anne-Marie Fitzgerald – Heating scheme in Craigavon <p>It was noted that all other matters arising would be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	
<p>5.0 5.1</p>	<p>The Housing Executive’s Board Bulletin</p> <p>Board Away Day on Tuesday 29th October 2019</p> <p>It was reported that the Board held it Away Day on Tuesday, 29th October 2019 in the Clanabogan Village Hall, 15 Dudgeon Road, Omagh. Items discussed were:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Responses to BCS Review of Maintenance; <p>At the request by Members, Mr Bailie undertook to seek approval from the Housing Executive Chair, if Members could have sight of the report on the Management Responses to the BCS Review of Maintenance Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Planning, Performance, Participation and Prospects; • Welfare Reform Action Plan; • Behind the Scenes, Preparing for Change; • Visit within Camphill Communities Trust, a Supporting People supported scheme. 	<p>C Bailie</p>

	<p>Board Meeting - Wednesday, 30th October 2019</p>	
5.2	<p>Finance Report as at 31 July 2019</p> <p>The Board had noted the financial position for both Landlord Services and Regional Services as at 31 July 2019, and approved the actions planned to address significant issues. The 2019/20 budget submission was previously approved at the Board meeting on 27 March 2019.</p>	
5.3	<p>Demolitions</p> <p>The Board had previously requested a paper on the decision making process for demolitions, the paper included the approval process for demolition of Housing Executive-owned stock and the current status of approved/planned demolitions.</p>	
5.4	<p>Compliance/Health and Safety Assurance Report</p> <p>The Board had been advised of an update on Compliance/Health and Safety. The paper provided assurance that outstanding issues identified within the paper were being addressed by the Compliance/Health and Safety Department. The issues raised included Gas safety, Lift Inspections, Fire Safety, Electrical Inspections, Legionella, Asbestos and RIDDOR Reports.</p>	
5.5	<p>Bonfires Update</p> <p>The Board had received an update on the costs associated with bonfires on Housing Executive land during 2019. The Housing Executive does not sanction, consent to or authorise the use of Housing Executive owned land for the purposes of bonfires. However, the Housing Executive has worked with communities to promote positive cultural expressions and engaged with local groups to address issues as and when they have arisen on specific sites in Housing Executive ownership.</p>	
5.6	<p>Matters Arising from the Board Bulletin</p> <p>Mrs Grehan's referred to Council's Community Plan, in particular social housing, in response Mr Bailie felt that housing does not focus sufficiently enough in the Development Plans and Councils are at different stages of their Plans and some are more engaging than others.</p> <p>Mrs Grehen felt that it wasn't clear to Councils how to obtain a balance of what percentage social housing should feature in their Development Plans. She referred to her Council area being a challenge as they feared given too much of a percentage allocated to social housing, developers would not be keen to do the work.</p>	

Mr Bailie highlighted the importance of identifying housing need which the Housing Executive carry out extensive research analysing the data which is fed into the Councils development plans. He added that some Councils have a reluctance, that if you have any social housing, it would deter developers to undertake the work or alternatively they accept to build social housing but exclude it from the private housing which causes a stigma. The Housing Executive promotes 'people living together'. Getting the balance between good planning and good integration and it is vital to get community 'buy in' to make this work.

Mr Bailie added that the Housing Executive are keen to promote mixed tenure, but don't want have large social housing estates, particular ones who don't have the proper infrastructure and facilities. The potential benefits of community planning is you create areas were people want to live and can live happily. The Housing Executive can advise Councils on what they think is sustainable and would be happy to work with Councils and share with you their information.

Mr Bailie referred to the provision of social housing and private developments, he felt that Councils could have a valuable role, including conditions for Contractors, if planning permission was to be given.

Mr Polley referred to the 10/20% for affordable housing in a mixed tenure estate stating that this could be made up of shared ownership, co-ownership and social housing.

Mrs Elattar felt that the Housing Executive's housing need statistics and the actual housing need in the areas, is mismatched, particularly in the rural areas where there is 'hidden' housing need.

Some Members felt that the true picture of housing need is not being reflected and weren't confident that Latent Demand testing was always a reliable method to identify.

In response, Mr Bailie explained that the Housing Executive advises customers realistically, given their points level and circumstances and wanting to declare a preference for a certain area, they could be on the waiting list for a long time, but the Housing Executive would not discourage anyone from putting their name on the social housing waiting list and force them into the private rented sector.

Mrs Elattar accepted the process but felt that it put people off putting their name on the waiting list for certain areas, as their chances are limited of being housed there. Therefore, the waiting list for the area is not reflecting the need.

	<p>Mr Bailie added that a way round this situation, under the proposed Housing Selection Scheme review, people will be allowed to have more preferences, therefore maybe capturing the hidden need in some areas and eliminate missing that level of demand in certain areas.</p> <p>Several Members reiterated the lack of housing in the rural areas and this drives the younger generation out of the area to seek housing elsewhere.</p> <p>Mr Finlay also felt that local points should be given to local people living in an area who want to remain in that area.</p> <p>Mr Finlay felt that the private rented sector was not a suitable option for many tenants as they can't afford the higher rents and universal credit is now an additional financial stress.</p> <p>Mr Ruane said that under the new D1 process, a number of sites in the Newry, Mourne & Down Council had been made available for social housing and unfortunately business plans have not been approved. Mr Bailie undertook to clarify the position on this matter.</p> <p>AGREED: A presentation to be arranged on Housing Need Assessment, in particular to rural areas and latent demand testing.</p>	<p>Mr Bailie</p> <p>Secretary</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Housing Issues, Department for Communities</p> <p>Mr Price and Mr Polley gave a detailed monthly update on the Department for Communities Housing Issues, under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Newbuild starts <p>NOTED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date 238 units are on site. The Housing Executive continues to engage with the developing housing associations in bringing forward planned schemes. • Shared Housing update: The Draft Programme for Government Shared Housing Programme is fully allocated with 26 shared schemes programmed, delivering 814 social housing units; meeting the year to date, and full PfG targets set. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ownership <p>NOTED: Lower target was initially set for this year due to limited available funding. The Department for Communities secured additional funding for Co-Ownership and the annual commitment has now be increased to 1091.</p>	

There has been 485 acceptances to date. Demand for the shared ownership product increased during 18/19 to approximately 100 per month.

- Programme for Social Reform

NOTED: A revised draft of the Landlord Outline Business Case to April 2018 baseline has been developed with options to address the investment challenge in the NIHE. An outline implementation plan and budget has also been completed so that Officials are ready to advise Ministers once the opportunity arises.

- Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy

NOTED: Consultation responses have been analysed and collated; a publication report will issue in due course. Findings were presented to the Housing Executive Board. A modelling and research project has commenced and will consider implementation of a number of proposals. The Housing Executive is currently considering how proposals can be implemented. This will be presented to the Department, upon receipt of Housing Executive's proposed way forward, further consideration will be required as to what potential there is to progress certain proposals in the absence of a Minister.

- Reclassification of Northern Ireland's Social Housing Providers

NOTED: The Draft Bill is completed. The Secretary of State has given commitment to bringing the bill forward as parliamentary time allows.

In response to Mrs Grehan's question, Mr Polley clarified that ONS classification applies to Housing Associations in the public sector. The Department makes available a loan to the private sector known as a financial transaction capital (FTC) and for 4 years the Department has funded Co-ownership Housing Association on the basis, because the Housing Associations are currently classified as public sector, the Department are not permitted to give Co-ownership an FTC. In order for Co-ownership to continue to operate, they need money from the capital funding, which is limited as you are competing for the money against health, education, roads etc. Therefore, if ONS reclassification is not in place for the next financial year, options will have to be looked at for funding Co-ownership.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting People Delivery Strategy<p>NOTED: The first draft of the Housing Executive's Supporting People Strategy 2020-23 will be the subject of a public consultation.</p><p>The Department recognises the significant challenges for the Housing Executive who are currently managing approximately 850 contracts serviced by around 86 providers.</p>• Homelessness Strategy<p>NOTED: Work is continuing with the Housing Executive and across Government on Year 3 of the Action Plan. Two pilot projects commenced on 1 July 2019 to look at how to secure sustainable accommodation and appropriate support for homeless households. Review of temporary accommodation is ongoing with the final report of the research element of the Review expected to be completed in Autumn 2019.</p>• St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena<p>NOTED.</p>• Regulation of the Private Rented Sector<p>NOTED: Landlord Helpline was procured, delivered and underway. A research company was appointed on 23 November 2018 to look at dispute resolution in the private rented sector and provide options on the way forward. The paper was completed in May 2019 and the Department is now examining the options to deliver a pilot mediation service which has received Permanent Secretary approval. It is anticipated that a pilot service could be operational late 2019/early 2020. Due to the timescale that has elapsed since the consultation closed in 2017, legislative proposals have been put on hold until direction is given by a new Minister when in place.</p><p>In response to Mr Finlay's question, Mr Polley explained that the regulation of the private rented sector would include; improvement to safety; working better with Councils; tenancy deposit scheme; Landlord register scheme and secure of tenure etc.</p><p>Several Members reiterated Mr Ruane's concerns that the private landlords do not have to sign a landlords register scheme and highlight issues and conditions some tenants present to him, but are afraid to take any action in case of the consequences.</p><p>Mr Bailie confirmed that living conditions would be taken into account, during the assessment of need stage and in the past, the Housing Executive has intervened in some cases.</p>
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Members noted that legislative proposals for the Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector have been put on hold until a new Minister is in place.

- Increasing Housing Supply

NOTED: Housing Division continues to engage in discussions with Local Councils, Housing Executive, Housing Associations and other stakeholders with a particular focus on areas of ongoing and planned mixed tenure developments and affordable housing. It is anticipated that this work will inform the development of a draft Housing Supply Strategy, with the specific aim of turning the curve on housing stress and housing supply. To date, three engagement sessions have taken place. The first took the form of an innovation lab, run in partnership with DoF colleagues. The second was facilitated by the Construction Employers Federation and involved builders of private and social homes, while the third was facilitated by UK Finance and involved key representatives of the lending sector. A further two events are scheduled for the near future, involving the construction skills sector and Local Development Officers.

Housing officials are working with colleagues within the Department to develop a suite of actions to deliver on key issues identified by stakeholders, for the review and approval of an incoming Minister.

In addition the Department issued a consultation on its thinking around a revised definition of Affordable Housing with a view to widening the scope of the affordable housing offering.

The consultation closed on the 13 September 2019. An analysis of the consultation responses is underway to inform decisions on the way forward.

- Affordable Warmth Scheme

NOTED: The Five Year Business Case had been approved for the period 01 June 2019 to 31 March 2024.

- NIHE Rent Scheme

NOTED: The Chair of the Housing Executive has written to the Department recommending a rent increase for 2020-21 of CPI +7%. The Department is currently liaising with the Department of Finance on the matter. It was noted that the rents remain frozen at 2015/16 levels for 2019/20 which has the implications as set out in the Social Housing Reform Programme Business Case.

	<p>The long term sustainability of the NIHE’s portfolio of 86,000 homes requires decisions as set out in this Business Case but this matter awaits the return of Ministers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Reform Mitigation payments <p>NOTED: The Department will work with the Housing Executive to ensure a joined up approach to communicating with tenants regarding the end of Welfare Reform Mitigation payments in March 2020 pending any decisions arising from the ongoing discussions on this matter.</p> <p>Mrs Grehan referred to social supermarkets and asked for clarification whether it was the intention for this service to cease in March 2020. Mr Price undertook to clarify this issue.</p> <p>Referring to the uncertainty of mitigation in March 2020, Ms Grehan reiterated that tenants urgently need to be made aware of these changes and not be left close to the deadline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERDF Investment Growth and Jobs Programme 2014-2020 <p>NOTED: The Department supports the Housing Executive in their bid to the ERDF Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme 2014 - 2020 to secure funding to improve energy efficiency within its stock.</p>	<p>P Price</p>
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PRESENTATIONS

<p>7.0</p>	<p>Presentation - Statutory Appointments to the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive</p> <p>Members received a presentation by Judith Woodburn from the Department for Communities on Statutory Appointments to the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. (Copies of the Slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix A).</p> <p>Mrs Woodburn explained in detail the Commissioner for Public Appointments –Code of Practice and the Selection Process.</p> <p>It was noted that in line with legislative requirements four Housing Council members are appointed to serve on the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. In the current absence of a Minister, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make these statutory appointments.</p>	
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	<p>The Housing Council nominates more of its members than only the four required, and at least one from each political party is represented on the Council. This is in line with the Commissioner for Public Appointments best practice and would ensure that the Secretary of State is given a choice.</p> <p>It would ensure as far as possible that nominations are representative of the community in Northern Ireland. This request is in line with the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.</p> <p>Several Members expressed their concern at the length of time taken to appoint the four Housing Council Members to the Board of the Housing Executive and the lack of political representation on the Board since May 2019.</p> <p>AGREED: The Secretary to write to the Permanent Secretary referring to the void of the four Housing Council Members to be appointed to the Housing Executive Board, when the new Secretary of State is appointed following the General Election, this issue should be treated as a matter of urgency.</p>	<p>Secretary</p>
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Presentation - Customer Support & Tenancy Sustainment Strategy</p> <p>Sarah McAdorey from the Housing Executive gave Members a presentation on Customer Support & Tenancy Sustainment Strategy. (Copies of the Slides are appended to these Minutes – Appendix B).</p> <p>Members noted that the Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy for 2019-2022 demonstrates the Housing Executive’s commitment to provide care and support to minimise tenancy breakdown, prevent homelessness and promote stable and sustainable communities.</p> <p>The aims of the Strategy are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support customers throughout their housing journey; • Create secure and sustainable tenancies; • Foster vibrant, stable communities. <p>Members noted that there are 5 pillars of tenant sustainment the Housing Executive has identified, as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Support • Money Support • Employment Support 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive and Responsive Support for at Risk Customers • Neighbourhood/Community Support <p>The Chair commended the Housing Executive work being undertaken in this area and thanked Ms McAorey for her Presentation.</p>	
9.0	<p>Social Housing Development Programme - Progress Report October 2019</p> <p>Members noted the report.</p>	
10.0	<p>The Housing Executive's Scheme Starts October 2019</p> <p>Members noted the reports.</p>	
11.0	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Welfare Reform - Housing Executive Rent Arrears</p> <p>Mr Finlay reiterated concerns that as a result of the Universal Credit system, tenant's rental statements are now showing arrears. In particular, those tenants who have never been arrears, prior to the new system and found this unacceptable and unfair to tenants.</p> <p>At the request of Mrs Grehan, Mr Bailie undertook to provide a breakdown of the Housing Executive's Rent Arrears Recovery.</p>	C Bailie
12.0	<p>Date and Venue of Next Meeting – Due to the General Elections scheduled for Thursday, 12th December 2019, it was agreed that the next Housing Council Meeting would be held on Thursday 5th December at 10.30 am in Corrs Corner, Newtownabbey</p>	

The Meeting concluded at 12.30 pm

Northern Ireland Housing Council – Statutory Appointments to the Board of the Housing Executive

Housing Legislation

- Schedule 1 of The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 states:
 - “The Executive shall consist of ten persons appointed by the head of the Department of whom 4 shall be members of the Council”
 - “(1A) The Council shall, in accordance with such procedure as the Department may direct, nominate such number of persons who are members of the Council as the Department may determine for consideration for appointment as members of the Executive”.

Commissioner for Public Appointments

NI – Code of Practice

- CPA NI is required, by law, to prescribe and publish a Code of Practice to regulate the process by which public appointments are made.
- This sets out principles and practices which Government Departments are required to adopt.
- It provides Departments with a guide to the steps they must follow to ensure a fair, open and transparent appointment process.

Commissioner for Public Appointments – Code of Practice

- Appointments to the NIHE Board are regulated by the CPA NI, with a Commissioner representative on the selection panel.
- Competition for appointments to the Board in 2015 attracted criticism from CPA NI due to there only being 4 nominees.
- CPA NI has been engaged in relation to all NIHE appointments.
- The NI Executive has introduced gender equality targets for public appointments.

Statutory Nominations

- A statutory right to nominate applicants for appointment arises where a public body's founding legislation or constitution states that it has the right to have its interests represented on the Board of the public body.
- Applicants for nominated positions are required to undergo a selection process that complies with CPA NI's Code of Practice.
- CPA NI has been engaged on the process to enable the appointment of Housing Council Board Members, with the Commissioner confirming her support for a process, which is highly similar to the process agreed for the emergency appointments, through an exception to her Code of Practice.

Selection Process

- In the current absence of a Minister and using the powers conferred by the NI (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018 the Secretary of State for NI is responsible for making appointments to the NIHE Board.
- Candidates are required to complete an application form and attend a “Conversation with a Purpose”. This covers conflicts of interest and time commitment.
- Candidates who successfully meet the criteria and achieve an agreed pass mark will be put forward to the SofS for consideration for appointment.
- In addition to the names of candidates, the SofS is provided with a summary of each applicant’s skills and experience, including their performance at the “conversation”, based on information supplied during the selection procedure.

Questions?

Housing
Executive

**CUSTOMER
SUPPORT & TENANCY
SUSTAINMENT
STRATEGY
2019-2022**



Sarah McAdorey

**Housing Information &
Tenancies Manager**

Why Customer Support & Tenancy Sustainment?

- Demonstrates the Housing Executive's commitment to
 - provide care and support to **minimise tenancy breakdown**
 - **prevent homelessness**
 - promote stable and **sustainable communities**
- **Cross tenure** – aimed at putting the customer at the centre of our service and taking a holistic approach to delivering support and advice suited to wherever they are in their housing journey

Defining Support and Sustainment

- **Customer Support** is everything we do to help our customers prepare for, look after, afford and maintain their homes.
- Delivered through both Landlord activities (Patch) or through our Housing Solutions
- Successful outcome of this support is **Tenancy Sustainment** (cross tenure)

Tenancy Failure

- Usually defined as Tenancies which breakdown within **first 12 months**
- Not all terminations are negative moves
- Analysis shows that there is not a sudden drop off in termination rates after the first year
- Tenancy instability or failure is why many of our customers approach us in the first instance

Who Is At Risk of Tenancy Failure?



Why Encourage Sustainment?

- **Because people and their homes are at the heart of what we do**
 - 423 Intro & 2181 Secure Tenants H'Less Presentations 2017/18
- **Reduce Void levels within our stock and associated re-let costs**
- **Costs of supporting homeless households:**

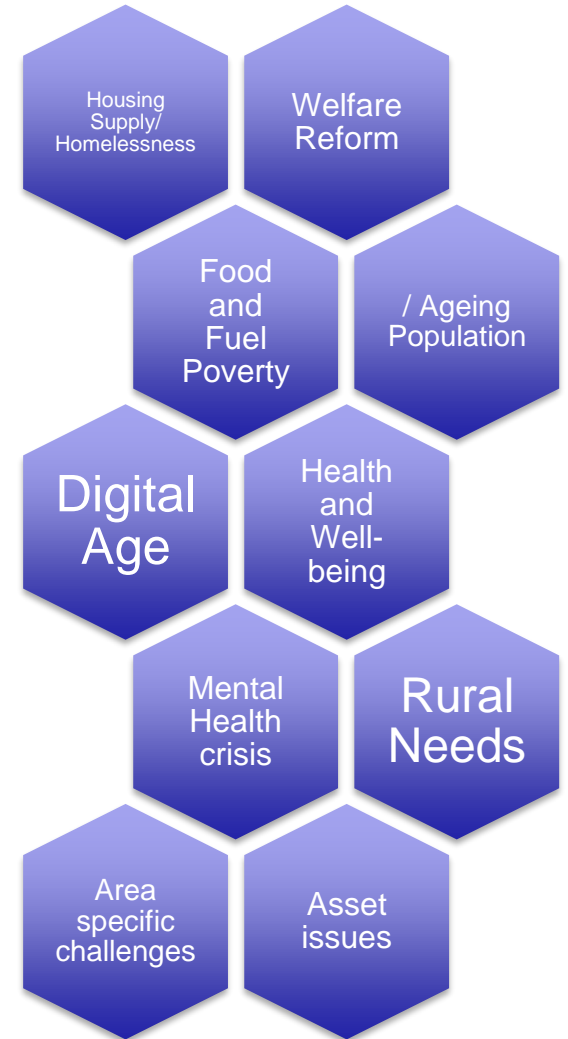


Housing Landscape

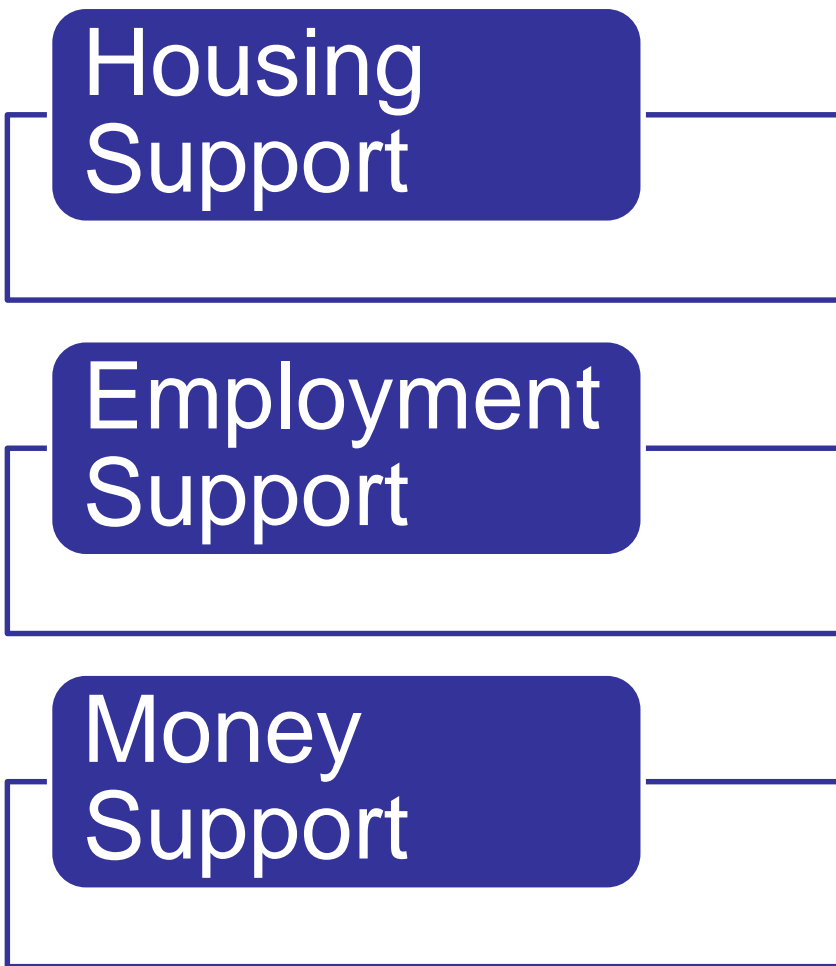


- **Corporate Plan**
 - **People**
 - **Property**
 - **Place**
- **Strategic Links**
- **Other Developments**

Welfare Reform Act
2012



Pillars of Sustainment



Our Aims

- 1. Support our customers throughout their housing journey**
- 2. Create secure and sustainable tenancies**
- 3. Foster vibrant, stable communities**



Action Plan



- **Some Actions:**

- **Map customer journeys and consider incentives for engagement**
- **Review pre, early tenancy and sign up processes**
- **Digital engagement and media campaigns**
- **Better use of customer insight data**
- **Financial Inclusion**
- **Energy Saving Advice and Fuel Poverty**

Initiatives Already Underway

Living well with **Dementia** starts at home



We can offer practical advice and assistance to support your household's needs

Contact your local office and ask for the **Dementia Champion** for more information.

03448 920 900
nihe.gov.uk

Housing Executive

Dementia Friendly Communities

NATIONAL DEMENTIA HELPLINE 0300 222 11 22



Just a minute

We welcome JAM Card holders



Building a better understanding of mental health

FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

Housing Executive

Going A Step Further

Innovation Fund & Supporting Local Initiatives

How to Plan Ahead For Your Home Packs

Mental Health Awareness

Links with CV writing and bursary schemes for WorkWear

JAM Cards

Housing Health Checks

Youth Engagement e.g. Miniversities and Literacy

Furniture Recycling Schemes

Next Steps

- **Targeted Consultation**
- **Development of Framework for Innovation Fund**
- **Measuring our Performance and categorising Sustainment Work**



Any questions?

