

Building Thriving Communities



Housing Association Community Investment Survey



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NIHACT (the Northern Ireland Housing Association Charitable Trust) would like to thank the following housing associations for participating in this important survey:

- Abbeyfield and Wesley Housing Association
- Alpha Housing
- Apex Housing Association
- Ark Housing
- Choice Housing Ireland
- Clanmil Housing Association
- Connswater Homes
- Covenanter Residential Association
- Fold Housing Association
- Grove Housing Association
- Habinteg (Ulster) Housing Association
- Hearth Housing Association
- Helm Housing Association
- NB Housing
- Newington Housing Association
- Rural Housing Association
- South Ulster Housing Association
- St Matthew’s Housing Association
- Triangle Housing Association
- Woodvale and Shankill Community Housing Association

NIHACT is indebted to our colleagues at the National Housing Federation, the representative body for English housing associations, which has undertaken two Community Investment Surveys of its own.

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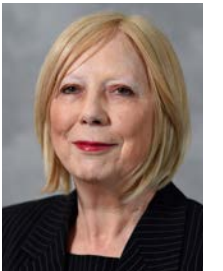
The administration of the Northern Ireland Housing Associations’ Charitable Trust is delegated by NIFHA to its Community Investment Committee.

The current committee members are:
Carol Kinkead (Chair) – NIFHA Board
Brian McKenna – Choice Housing Ireland
Bronagh O’Kane – Fold Housing Association
Eileen Patterson – Fold Housing Association
Kieran Walsh – Helm Housing
Teresa McCloskey – Apex Housing Association





Housing associations are engaged in a wide range of community investment activities, including working with schoolchildren and older people on ICT and digital inclusion



FOREWORD

By **Carol Kinkead**, Community Investment Committee Chair

For the first time, the scope and scale of community investment activity in Northern Ireland have been captured.

Housing associations are among Northern Ireland's biggest charities and social enterprises. In spite of this, many are unaware of the scope and scale of our movement's work.

Housing associations provide rented homes for a wide range of people. A variety of supported housing is offered, from sheltered housing for older people to supported living for people with learning disabilities.

Good housing, care and support can be transformational. Beyond these vital services, however, housing associations are engaged in an array of community investment work making a big social impact across Northern Ireland.

For the first time, the scope and scale of this community investment activity has been captured through this research.

Why is this important? It is a truism that we value what we measure. As social enterprises, housing associations are driven by their mission and values. But to translate our vision into real social impact we have to quantify this social investment - inputs, outputs and outcomes. This gives housing associations a firm foundation from which to refine and expand their work to make an even bigger difference.

As a result of this important survey, we now possess vital information about the scope and scale of housing associations' community investment activity.

Data can be analysed according to the type of service or investment, its location, and the split of funding between housing associations' own investment and external sources.

The analysis goes beyond data to consider housing associations' views on their future activities. Encouragingly, most are committed to doing more community investment work in the years ahead.

Ruth Flood Associates has undertaken the research on behalf of NIHACT. For their thorough and skilful analysis, we are very grateful. However, none of this would have been possible without the fulsome commitment of participating housing associations. Although the data gathering was an onerous task, these efforts have clearly been worthwhile.

Northern Ireland faces major social and economic challenges over the next few years. Local housing associations are committed to playing our part in meeting them. I am confident that this research will act as a powerful springboard in our efforts to help this place flourish.

WE NOW POSSESS **VITAL INFORMATION**
ABOUT THE **SCOPE AND SCALE OF**
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

CHAPTER 1

HEADLINE FIGURES

This survey provides key information on the scope and scale of housing associations' community investment activity in 2014/15.

- Housing associations and their partners completed almost 400 community investment activities
- Almost 100 of these were capital projects completed in the last five years
- 300 community investment services were delivered during the last year
- Across these 400 activities a diverse range of activities was delivered, from the construction of community centres and play centres, to environmental initiatives such as loft insulation, as well as activities to combat isolation, reduce fuel poverty, provide education, create jobs and build thriving cohesive communities

THIS MEANS:

- For every £1 invested in communities, 39p came from housing associations and 61p was secured from partners
- For every £23 of housing association turnover, £1 was spent on additional community investment activities by the sector and its partners
- For every £60 of housing association turnover, £1 was spent on additional community investment activities by housing associations
- Over 25,000 people benefitted from housing association community investment
- Approximately 250 apprenticeships were created
- Almost all housing associations expect to increase funding for community investment activities over the next three to five years



£8.7 MILLION SPENT IN A YEAR BY HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR PARTNERS - **£3.4 MILLION BY HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS AND £5.3 MILLION BY PARTNERS**



CHAPTER 2

STARTING POINT

Housing associations are among Northern Ireland's biggest charities and social enterprises. Many are aware of the sector's work to provide high-quality housing, care and support.

There is, however, much less awareness of housing associations' wide range of community investment activity. This comprises work beyond the 'core services' that government funds the movement to deliver. Housing associations undertake these services to maximise their social impact, often complementing core housing, care and support.

Sometimes community investment activities are solely funded and delivered by the housing association concerned; often, however, there are a number of funding and delivery partners.

In tough times for Northern Ireland, our movement is committed to expanding the breadth and depth of our community investment activity. NIHACT exists to support our sector's community investment activity.

To facilitate this, we needed a better understanding of the scope and scale of existing activity. We were also seeking insights into housing associations' ambitions to do more.



NIHACT therefore commissioned the community investment survey to fulfil two main objectives:

1. To quantify housing associations' community investment activities; and
2. To assess the sector's aspirations for community investment, especially potential new opportunities and partnerships.

Community investment can be interpreted very differently; through this study we have sought to establish a clearer understanding of what it means for our housing association sector.

METHODOLOGY: HOW THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

The survey comprised two main components:

- Completion of a detailed questionnaire by each housing association; and
- Detailed interviews with housing association chief executives, to discuss current community investment activities and their vision for the future.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

Housing associations are supporting their tenants and carrying out crucial community investment work across Northern Ireland.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Information on almost 400 community investment activities was collected through the community investment survey. These activities fall into two different categories – **capital projects** that have taken place within a five year period (April 2010 to March 2015) and **community services** that have taken place in the year from April 2014 to March 2015.

A huge range of support is delivered in these 400 activities. Common aims include meeting tenants' needs, building good community relations, creating great places to live and work, and combating challenges such as fuel poverty, social isolation and ill health.



Helm Housing's tenant family fun day is just one of the many community investment activities the Association has delivered

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Included in almost 100 capital projects recorded is the construction of community centres and play centres, environmental/fuel poverty initiatives such as loft insulation and solar panels, as well as additional security measures and facilities for older people.

Projects highlighted include the development of a community hall at Mersey Street by Connswater Homes, a multi-use sports pitch at Sally Gardens by Fold Housing Association, a loft insulation programme by Grove Housing Association and the inclusion of IT hardware in housing developments by Clanmil Housing Association, to give just a few specific examples.

Most capital projects have relied on housing associations securing significant match funding. Key partners providing substantial additional funding include the Special EU Programmes Body (£3.65 million); Atlantic Philanthropies (£1.75 million); Belfast City Council (£0.78 million); Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (£0.53 million); John Mitchell GAC (£0.35 million); and the Cosy Homes scheme (£0.32 million).



Community Facilities

Community centres/halls, playgrounds, sports pitches



Environment and Fuel Poverty

Solar panels, wall and loft insulation



HA-Funded Adaptations

Home adaptations to ensure comfort and safety such as an extension, a ground floor toilet, handrail or ramp etc



Security

Fencing, anti-climb paint, security cameras



IT Hardware

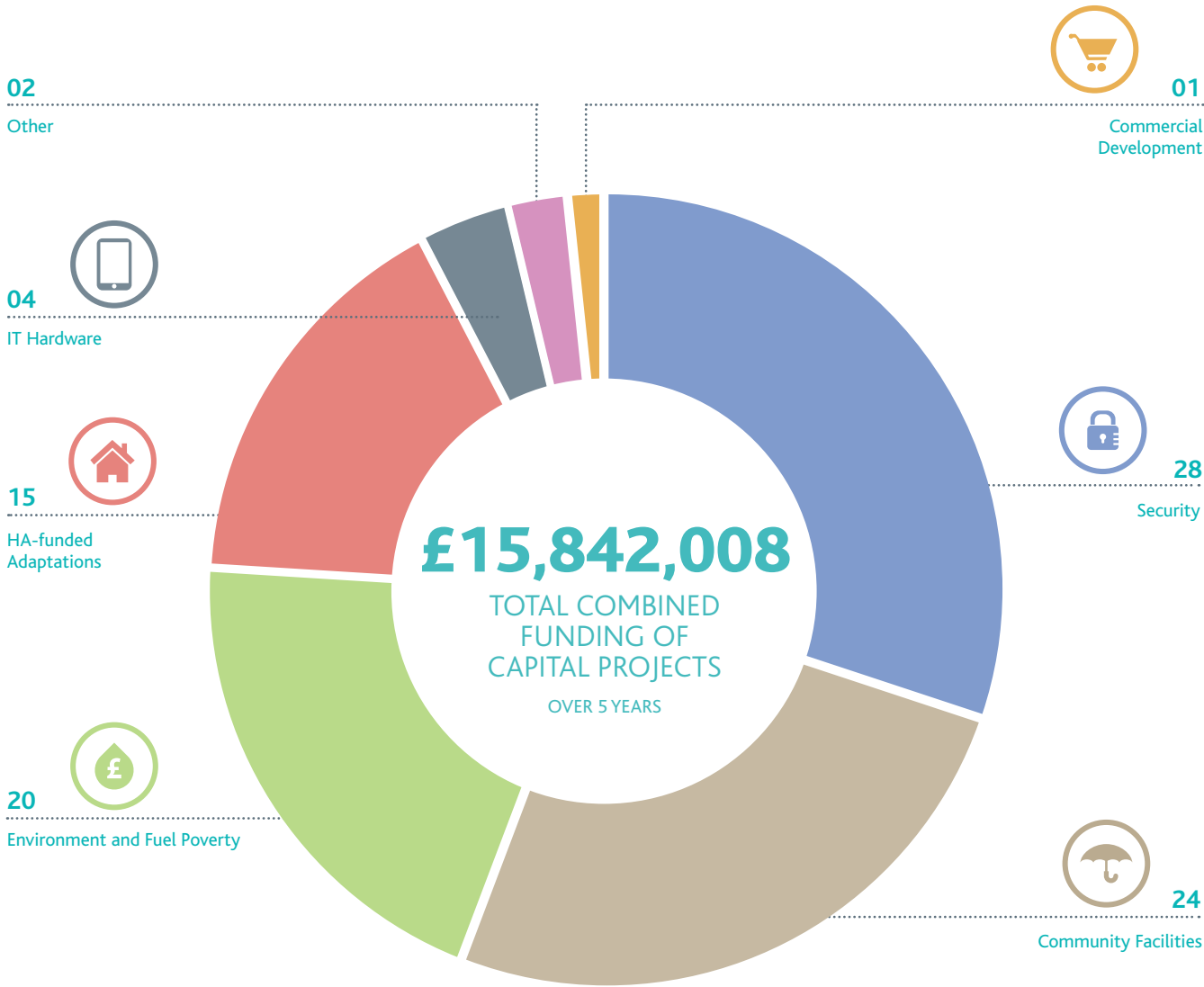
Computer hardware



Commercial Development

Retail premises

TYPES OF CAPITAL PROJECTS



CATEGORY	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	COMBINED FUNDING	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
Security	£690,271	-	£690,271	28
Community Facilities	£2,883,125	£5,809,208	£8,692,333	24
Environment/Fuel Poverty	£2,324,819	£473,600	£2,798,419	20
HA-funded Adaptations	£1,431,838	£100,000	£1,531,838	15
IT Hardware	£116,472	-	£116,472	4
Other	£210,000	£1,270,000	£1,480,000	2
Commercial Development	£532,675	-	£532,675	1
Total (over 5 years)	£8,189,200	£7,652,808	£15,842,008	94
Average Annual Investment	£1,637,840	£1,530,562	£3,168,402	19

COMMUNITY SERVICES

A wide range of tenant and community needs is met through the services provided day-to-day by housing associations. These are more programme and activity based, in contrast to the capital projects that take much longer to deliver. Almost all housing associations are regularly delivering projects.

Housing association community services cover a wide number of themes and areas. For example, almost all housing associations are providing shared future and community cohesion projects. These include fun days and community/cultural events, gardening projects and tenant forums.

Likewise, health and well-being is a significant area of activity, with projects offering tenants the opportunity to take part in regular physical activities and counselling, as well as general health awareness and education. A lot of these activities are only available thanks to the extensive partnership working with the voluntary sector and statutory bodies.

Key partners providing finances for these community investment services include a much longer list of diverse organisations, some with remits in specific areas of work, eg European Social Fund, Department of Education and Learning, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, The Big Lottery Fund, Pilgrim Trust, Boots Pharmacy and Barclays.



Shared Future and Community Cohesion

Community safety activities, cross-community events, crime prevention



Education and Skills

Adult education, capacity building, IT initiatives



Employment and Enterprise

Building trade skills, work placements, employment programmes



Poverty and Social Inclusion

Credit union/saving schemes, financial literacy initiatives, white goods/furniture schemes



Health and Well-being

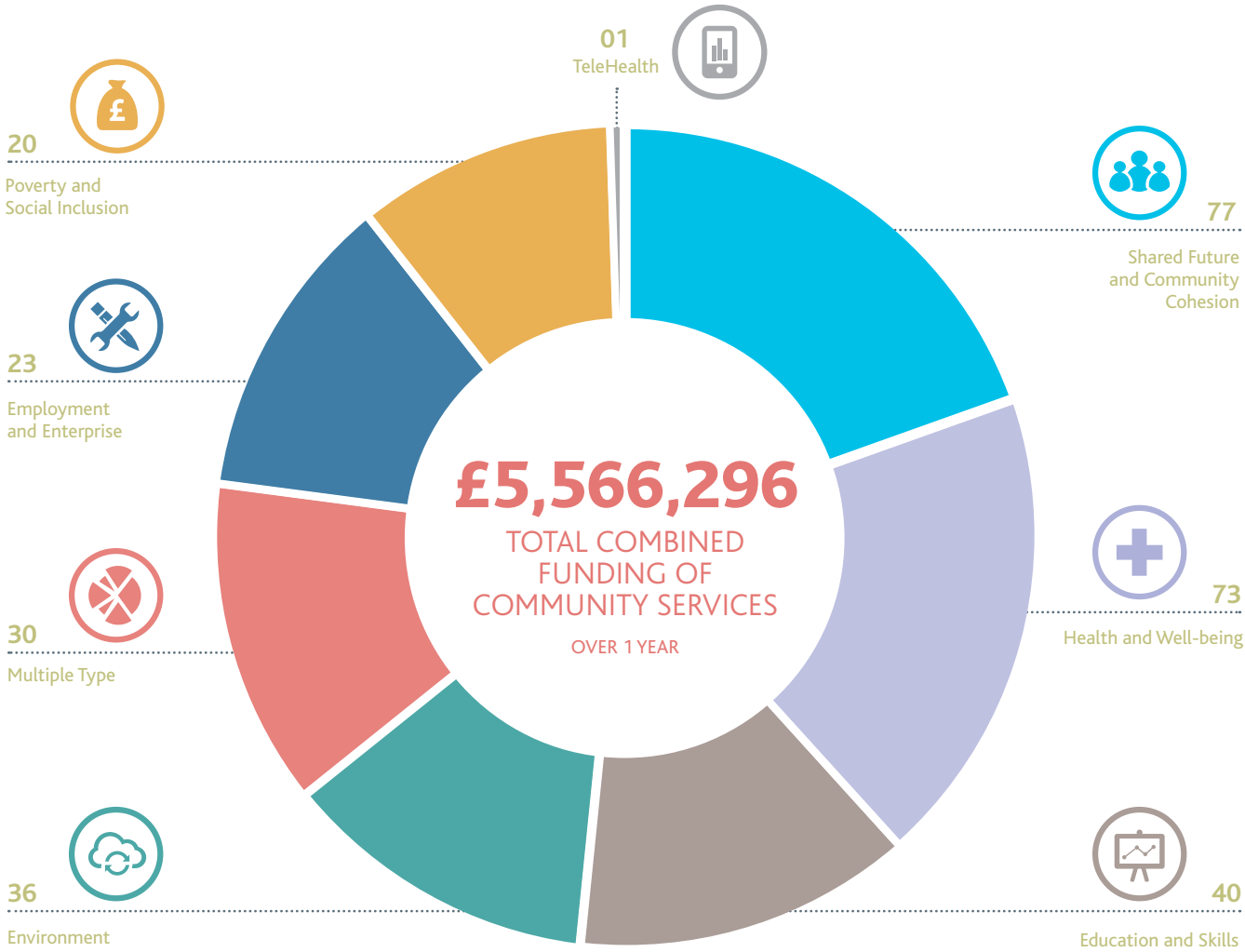
Community health workers, adaptations, older people health initiatives



Environment

Energy efficiency measures, general environmental improvement projects, litter days, care takers

TYPES OF COMMUNITY SERVICES



CATEGORY	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	COMBINED FUNDING	NUMBER OF PROJECTS
Shared Future and Community Cohesion	£300,695	£131,004	£431,699	77
Health and Well-being	£341,710	£197,621	£539,331	73
Education and Skills	£178,675	£26,401	£205,076	40
Environment	£136,354	£1,769,215	£1,905,569	36
Multiple Type	£125,876	£25,850	£151,726	30
Employment and Enterprise	£161,298	£888,746	£1,050,044	23
Poverty and Social Inclusion	£35,655	£49,750	£85,405	20
TeleHealth	£502,706	£694,741	£1,197,447	1
Total (over 1 year)	£1,782,968	£3,783,328	£5,566,296	300



Through Triangle's Progression Towards Employment Service, Gary Steinderg has secured paid work in his local B&M Home Store in Antrim



PROGRESSION TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

The 'Progression Towards Employment Service' prepares people with learning disabilities and autism for the world of work using a supported employment approach. It focuses on individuals whose learning disability means they cannot take part in more mainstream government support programmes.

Participants face a number of challenges and barriers to working that other non-disabled participants in work programmes do not face. They often require support over a longer timeframe, within the working environment, to become integrated with their colleagues. Triangle facilitates a supported and staged approach to working, with participants with the service combining facility based enterprise and open supported employment models within their Progression to Employment Service Continuum. For some individuals this may include spending time in one of their five geographically dispersed enterprise facilities.

These facilities act as a preparation stage before participants move on to open employment opportunities supported by the service's field based Supported Employment team.

Since 1998 the Progression Towards Employment Service has helped approximately 350 participants every year. 10% of scheme participants are Triangle tenants while 90% are members of the wider community.

Around 28% of participants end up in temporary or permanent paid work (a programme percentage that outperforms mainstream back to work/employment programmes).

Triangle's delivery is heavily reliant on effective partnership working. The service is funded primarily under the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2014-2020. The Department of Education and Learning and NHSCT (Northern Health and Social Care Trust) also provide funding and support.

As part of the current service, in kind match funding arrangements help deliver a high quality effective service. Three NHSCT Day Opportunities co-ordinators contribute a total of 10 hours per week to the service.

This involvement assists with the interactions between statutory health professionals and the service with regard to the referral process. Additionally, the Day Opportunities co-ordinators facilitate any additional support required by the individuals, eg Speech and Language Therapy, Social Work support, etc.

Triangle is working to improve how it measures the outcomes of this programme for the young people involved and has recently developed a soft outcomes framework for regular measurement which considers progression around key areas such as confidence, self esteem, teamwork.

"Around 28% of Progression Towards Employment participants secure temporary or permanent work"



Gary Steinderg enjoys working in the food aisle at his local B&M store in Junction One, Antrim



“I’ve been in paid work now for around six months and it has really changed a lot for me. I’m very happy”

Gary Steinderg



CASE STUDY

TRIANGLE

Gary Steinderg from Randalstown joined Triangle Housing's 'Progression Towards Employment' programme in 2012 and has now secured paid work in his local B&M Home Store in Antrim.

"My coach Brian Henry searched for a job for me while I was in Ballymena in a place called Alternative Angles. Once the trainees improve they get moved into supported employment. It was around the end of February 2015 when I started a six-week trial to see how I got on and in May I decided to leave Alternative Angles and move up to the next level of work."

"I've been in paid work now for around six months and it has really changed a lot for me, I'm very happy."

"I like working on the food aisle, I like to tidy up and keep the shelves well stocked for customers. It's nice to get some paid work, it's made a big change to my life. I'd been searching for a job for about five years since I left school, it wasn't too easy at the time. I would like to work here for a long time, I've made a lot of good friends."



NUMBER OF STAFF
27.5



TOTAL STAFF COSTS
£625,188



IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS: STAFF
£177,917



PARTNER FUNDING
£885,331



NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
338



IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS: RENT
£15,000



IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS: DAYCENTRE FACILITIES
£3,580



“It’s nice to get some paid work, it’s made a big change to my life”



Jamie Spence finds volunteering with Abbeyfield & Wesley, Ballymena House, a rewarding experience



CRAFTY VOLUNTEERS BRIGHTEN LIVES OF OLDER PEOPLE

Abbeyfield and Wesley has a long history of volunteer involvement. Currently it has 55 active volunteers, voluntary trustees and a full time staff member who co-ordinates all volunteer activity.

In December 2014, two new volunteers, Gemma and Jamie, were recruited to support Abbeyfield and Wesley's house in Ballymena. Initially, the volunteers spent time getting to know the residents and from there, it was agreed they would visit weekly to undertake a variety of craft activities.

At first, residents were tentative in their involvement but as the weeks went on and enjoyment levels grew, the participating residents tried their hand at a range of different projects, from making Easter bonnets and Stetsons to drawing in chalks, to salt dough modelling.

A photo board in the house hallway was established to display pictures of the various activities.

The project has proved a great success in combating isolation and loneliness. It has become a focal point of activity for the house. As a result the residents involved have increased their social interaction and built their confidence. Abbeyfield and Wesley has achieved this high impact with relatively little additional funding thanks to the generosity of their volunteer network.

Abbeyfield and Wesley resident, Ethel McDonald, said: "It's great to have Gemma and Jamie come in to work with us. We all enjoy it very much. I'm doing things I never thought I could do as I'm partially sighted. We've been painting and making little houses. It passes the time for us all and it's a good challenge and a great laugh."



**"The project has proved
a great success in
combating isolation
and loneliness"**

Residents in Abbeyfield and Wesley's Ballymena House have responded positively to volunteers





“It passes the time for us all and it’s a good challenge and a great laugh”

Ethel McDonald, Resident



CASE STUDY



Volunteers Gemma Lowry and Jamie Spence are brightening up the lives of residents at Abbeyfield and Wesley in Ballymena with their arts and crafts workshops.

Gemma said: “I have a degree in Fine and Applied Arts but I’d like to go back to university and eventually become an arts therapist and to do this I need to get some work in a voluntary capacity. I chose to focus on elderly people and got into volunteering at Abbeyfield and Wesley in Ballymena through Volunteer Now.

“I come in and do arts and crafts workshops with the residents and the laughs and carry on we have is amazing!”

“It is great fun, I always look forward to coming in and they always are quite willing with my many arts and crafts ideas!”

Jamie commented: “Gemma and I started volunteering at Abbeyfield and Wesley on the same day. My career background was in social services but when I had my children I decided to take a career break and last year I thought it’s about time to give something back.”

“We have such fun and it is really rewarding. The residents have become really attached to us and we love coming in to see them, we are all great friends now.”



NUMBER OF STAFF
0.02



TOTAL STAFF COSTS
£431



IN KIND CONTRIBUTIONS: STAFF
Volunteer Time



NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
6



MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT
£120



“The residents have become really attached to us and we love coming in to see them”

INVESTMENT

OVERALL INVESTMENT

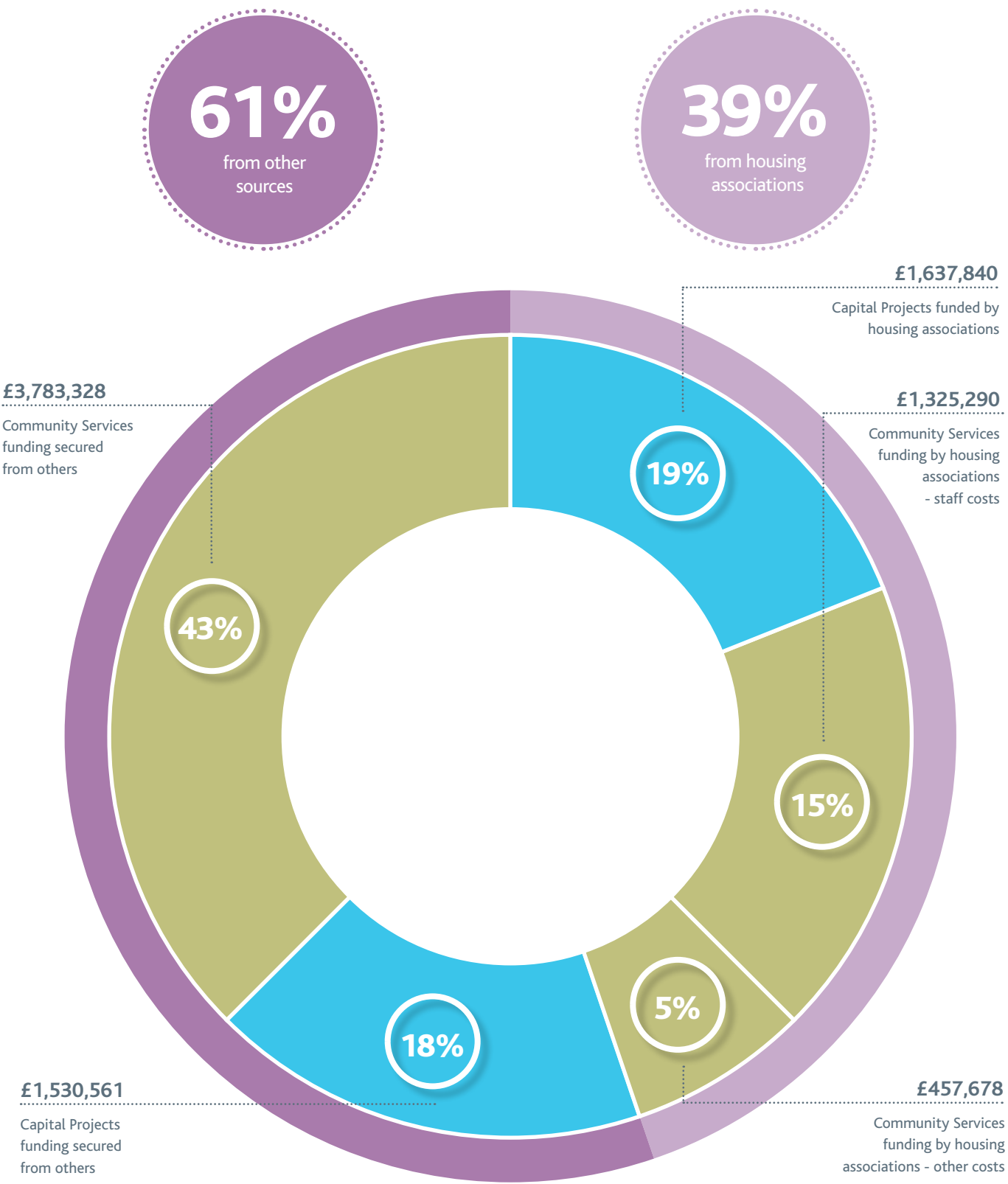
Successfully delivering this range of community activity required a significant financial commitment by housing associations and their partners. In a sector with an annual turnover of £214 million, the contribution specifically made by housing association monies represents:

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	COMBINED FUNDING
Capital Projects (over 5 years)	£8,189,200	£7,652,808	£15,842,008
Community Services (over 1 year)	£1,782,968	£3,783,328	£5,566,296

CAPITAL PROJECTS	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	COMBINED FUNDING
Funding for Capital Projects (over 5 years)	£8,189,200	£7,652,808	£15,842,008
Average Annual Investment	£1,637,840	£1,530,561	£3,168,401
Percentage of Sector Turnover	0.76%	-	-
This means that for approximately every £130 of housing association turnover, £1 is spent on capital projects.			

COMMUNITY SERVICES	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	COMBINED FUNDING
Funding for Community Services (over 1 year)	£1,782,968	£3,783,328	£5,566,296
Percentage of Sector Turnover	0.83%	-	-
This means that for every £120 of housing association turnover, £1 is spent on additional community services.			

SPEND ON COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES





Clanmil tenant Grainne O'Shea has met new friends and learned new skills through the Tea and Drills programme



TEA AND DRILLS OPEN DOORS FOR TENANTS

Tea and Drills was a series of workshops run by Clanmil Housing Association in partnership with **WOMEN'STEC**, an organisation that trains women in non-traditional industries such as trades and ICT.

The programme provided a series of taster sessions designed to teach a group of Clanmil tenants (women and men) essential DIY skills, enabling them to do simple jobs around the home as well as offering a platform for those who might be interested to progress into accredited training and employment.

Following on from this initiative, Clanmil has successfully achieved further funding with **WOMEN'STEC**, through the European Social Fund, 2014-2020, the Department of Employment and Learning, Belfast City Council and private sector organisations, Gilbert Ash Construction Group and JMC Mechanical and Construction Ltd, to deliver a new £850,000 programme based on the same model called SPEC, Supporting People, Empowering Communities.

Through SPEC, some 500 participants can access a range of entry-level programmes including accredited courses in joinery, plumbing, electrics, horticulture, furniture making, painting and decorating, tiling, entrepreneur training, money management, computers, first aid, health and safety and ICT.

Lynn Carvill, Chief Executive of **WOMEN'STEC** commented: "Participation on the SPEC programme addresses barriers that unemployed and economically inactive people face, builds confidence and increases aspiration to progress onto further education and training, volunteering opportunities, employment and self-employment."

She added: "**WOMEN'STEC** engages with women, who are socially and economically disadvantaged, working to remove barriers they face and build their self-confidence, motivation and aspiration to realise their full potential."

£850,000
programme



"500 participants can access a range of entry-level programmes"



Tea and Drills has helped many Clanmil tenants to build their confidence



“The best thing that has come from this course is my independence; I’m working on my self-esteem and self-confidence to get back into work”



CASE STUDY



Clanmil tenant Grainne O’Shea has set her sights on a career in trade after taking part in a six week SPEC painting and decorating course.

She commented: “Clanmil had mentioned about the course when we were signing up for the houses and I actually laughed because I’ve always got a painter in to do my house. I thought to myself “I’m not going to be able to paint” but when I found out more about the course I decided to give it a go and I’m so glad I did. I’m definitely more hands on than I thought I was.

“We learned the basics of painting and decorating but there was a lot more to it, there was the social aspect of meeting your neighbours and integrating with them. Through the course I’ve become friends with the girl that lives next door to me.”

Grainne added: “I’ve already been down to **WOMEN’S**TEC and put down my name for a tiling course. A few years ago I would never have imagined myself working in a trade but this would be a stepping stone.

“The best thing that has come from this course is my independence, I’m working on my self-esteem and self-confidence to get back into work. It’s always good to keep learning and build up more independence.”



NUMBER OF STAFF
0.1



TOTAL STAFF COSTS
£2,300



NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
20



OTHER HA FUNDING
£5,000



“A few years ago I would never have imagined myself working in a trade but this would be a stepping stone”

Grainne O’Shea, Clanmil Tenant

BENEFICIARIES OF COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

Although figures are necessarily approximate, at least 25,000 people benefitted from housing association community investment services in 2014/15.

As our case studies and the table opposite demonstrate, some activities are purposefully targeted at small numbers of tenants with particular needs, whilst others seek to benefit a larger group, or reach out to the whole community.

The thousands of beneficiaries' lives are enhanced in innumerable ways. Organised outings prevent loneliness and isolation amongst older people. Holiday clubs provide engaging, healthy and low-cost activities during school vacations. Hundreds benefit from environmental improvements in an estate, boosting well-being and civic pride.

The sector has provided access to around 250 apprenticeships predominantly across development contracts and through social clauses.

In addition, we collected information on 23 services in the employment and enterprise space, which by their very nature have lower numbers of beneficiaries per project as they tend to be highly focused and intensive.

“Most importantly these activities help our tenants sustain their tenancies. The wider community also benefits from having this stability and there are direct employment benefits as staff can have greater job satisfaction and be acquiring greater skills”

Housing Association Chief Executive

For some individuals and communities, the impact can be truly transformational, for example:

- **Single parents** struggling to manage their finances have their well-being transformed when given access to affordable credit and support to develop better financial management skills
- **Older people** for whom local sponsored activities make all the difference, ensuring that they see and talk with someone in the week, supporting positive mental well-being
- **Young people with learning disabilities** who get access to a support programme which helps them to build skills to get a paid job
- **Building safer, more cohesive and tolerant communities** that work and socialise together, taking every opportunity to make their areas great places to live

TYPES OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	AVERAGE NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES PER PROJECT
Health and Well-being	8,942	74	122
Shared Future and Community Cohesion	6,730	77	87
Multiple type	4,308	30	144
Environment	2,689	36	75
Education and Skills	1,136	40	28
Poverty and Social Inclusion	644	20	32
Employment and Enterprise	593	23	26
Total	25,042	300	514



Housing associations are carrying out a wide range of community investment activities which are making a positive impact



Newington tenant Geraldine McKee feels more settled in her home after meeting neighbours at the Association's fun days



FUN DAY UNITES INTERFACE COMMUNITY

Interface violence between the Protestant and Catholic communities has historically blighted North Belfast, particularly the Limestone Road. For some time, Newington Housing Association has worked hard to build better community relations in the area. Newington's Fun Day is an important initiative in continuing this work, ensuring that people moving into new homes in the area met and got to know each other.

On opening the award-winning Parkside housing development in 2014, Newington organised a 'Community Fun Day' on the Limestone Road. Local residents groups and the PSNI were engaged in this initiative to bring more normality and fun to a difficult sectarian interface. The Fun Day saw children and adults come together for a variety of activities including face painting, bouncy castles and a barbeque.

Since then, Newington has continued to develop its work in this area. In 2015 the now annual Fun Day was combined with a celebration of International Peace Day.

This allowed the initiative to develop into a community event to celebrate the peace that the Limestone Road now enjoys, in stark contrast to its past. 600 balloons were released by children from Protestant and Catholic primary schools. There was also a 'Meet the Neighbours' lunch and a 'Tea Dance' for senior citizens.

Commenting on the success of Newington's fun days, Sergeant Brian Caskey, PSNI, said: "The fun day allowed the Neighbourhood Team to engage with existing and new residents on the Limestone Road in a very relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. We could be proactive in meeting local people and it emphasised that partnerships between the local community, the Police and Newington Housing were delivering."



300
beneficiaries

"I love it here,
it's a different
way of life"



Newington's fun day has helped to build community relations in North Belfast



“The fun day celebrates the peace that the Limestone Road now enjoys”

Sergeant Brian McCaskey, PSNI



Sergeant Brian McCaskey is pictured with Newington's Director of Operations Anthony Kerr and community workers



CASE STUDY



Nurse and busy mum Geraldine McKee feels settled in her new home and community after meeting neighbours through a Newington fun day.

"I'm from the New Lodge so I didn't know very many people when I moved in around a year ago. I saw a leaflet that came through the door from Newington to let us know about a fun day that was coming up. At the first fun day I got to meet some of the tenants who had moved in before me. It made me feel very welcome.

"I brought my two boys along to the second fun day, which was a cross community peace day. They loved it, the police and fire brigade were there and the boys got their faces painted and did some creative work. They met friends from school and the kids from across the road.

"I'm only here a year but since the fun day I now recognise more faces and I can wave over at neighbours when I see them. I love it here, it's a different way of life."



NUMBER OF STAFF
0.1



TOTAL STAFF COSTS
£3,560



NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
300



OTHER HA FUNDING
£2,000



“I got to meet some of the tenants who had moved in before me. It made me feel very welcome”



Apex has been working with Derry Credit Union to help its tenants to access affordable credit



A FAIR DEAL WITH AFFORDABLE CREDIT

During rent arrears meetings Apex Housing Association became aware that for some tenants, their main form of obtaining credit was from doorstep lenders, both legal and illegal.

Typical interest rates charged ranged from around 272% APR to 5000% APR and beyond. Apex found that tenants often did not know what interest rate they were paying on their loans, if the loan was from a legal or illegal lender, or the length of the term of the loan.

If the amount to be paid to the doorstep lender was affordable, then more often than not, the tenant took out the loan.

In response, Apex has developed an affordable credit project in part of Derry/Londonderry. Funding was secured from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland to work with Derry Credit Union and the local community in delivering the project. Throughout the project, barriers to credit union borrowing have been broken down.

Tenants do not have to have the traditional 'proposer and seconder' before they are eligible for a loan, nor are they required to have an established savings pattern to secure a loan.

To date, 108 loans have been granted to 60 users of the scheme with a total of £21,000 borrowed, saving an estimated £16,000 in interest. Users are encouraged to save small amounts each week and a total of £9,200 has been put aside by people who have never had savings before. Considering that the scheme loaned to high-risk borrowers, Apex is delighted that only 6% of loan capital has had to be written off.

The funding for the scheme has now ceased, but, due to its success, Derry Credit Union has decided to continue with it and Apex has been able to replicate the scheme in two other areas of Northern Ireland.

“108 loans have been granted to 60 users of the scheme with a total of £21,000 borrowed, saving an estimated £16,000 in interest”



Some tenants were obtaining high cost credit



“The Affordable Credit Scheme was my lifeline. I no longer need to use loan sharks”

Marlene McLaughlin, Apex tenant



CASE STUDY



When Apex tenant Marlene McLaughlin came into financial difficulties she began using doorstep lenders, viewing this as an easy way to access some extra money. But her financial situation soon spiralled out of control and she was no longer able to pay back the hefty repayments.

After years of money worries, Marlene was referred to the Shantallow Support Service by her health visitor and she signed up for the affordable credit scheme. She is now debt-free, has been able to arrange her first-ever family holiday and is putting money away for a rainy day.

“I never understood interest rates before, to me it was just get a cash loan on your doorstep and pay back £5 a week.

“The health visitor came one day and noticed I was a bit down and depressed so I had a cry and a chat and told her how much I owed altogether. She had quite a lot of concerns about that. She referred me then to the Family Support Service.

“They encouraged me to join the affordable credit scheme. It was my lifeline. I no longer need to use loan sharks. I have no debt now and at long last I am managing my money.”



NUMBER
OF STAFF
0.03



TOTAL STAFF
COSTS
£748



IN KIND
CONTRIBUTIONS:
£2,000



PARTNER
FUNDING
£15,000+
£10,000
external
staff costs



NUMBER OF
BENEFICIARIES
60



“I have no debt now and at long last I am managing my money”

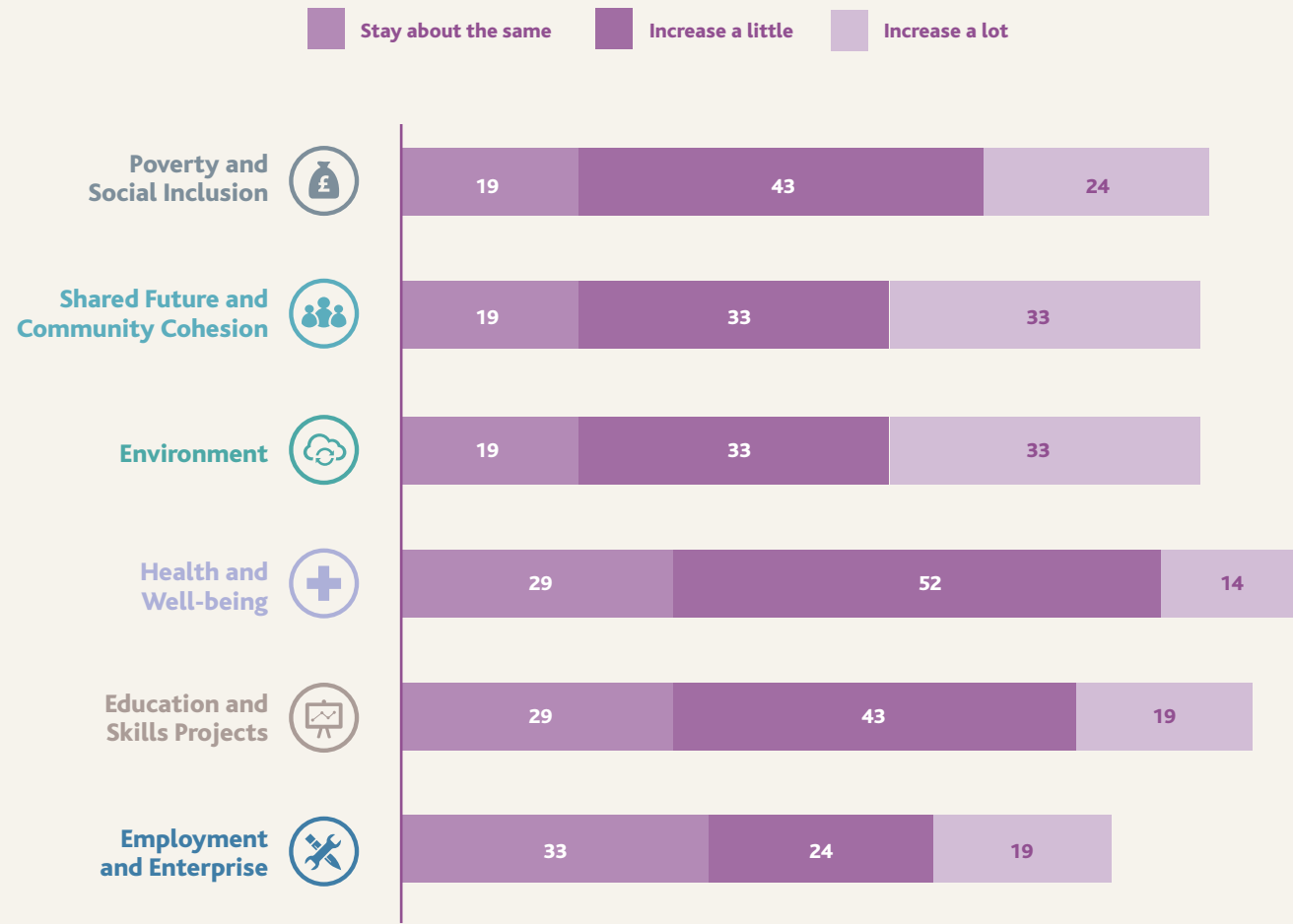
CHAPTER 6

FUTURE PLANS FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

This report demonstrates that there is significant community investment activity being undertaken. Furthermore, there is also strong ongoing commitment by and ambition for the sector to increase and develop its work in this area.

As the data in the diagram below shows, upwards of a quarter of Chief Executives are committed to increasing their community investment activity a little and upwards from 14% are committed to increasing it a lot, across the sub areas.

VIEWS ON CHANGING COMMUNITY INVESTMENT SPEND IN THE NEXT 3-5 YEARS



Supporting tenants

Looming welfare reform changes were of concern to a number of housing associations, with a general consciousness that financial difficulties for tenants are likely to increase. It is in this context that it is considered that tenants need housing association support more than ever.

Fulfilling organisational ambition

Some Chief Executives have an exciting and ambitious agenda for their organisations as they evolve their activities to respond to the increasingly diverse needs of tenants, and complex funding arrangements. Delivering more, and better, community investment activities is about delivering on some of that ambition and vision.

Being true to the foundations of the housing association movement

For a number of housing associations, despite increasing financial pressures in their organisations, there is a desire to see the housing association movement live up to its original foundations; supporting those in most need.

Many housing associations see that they can make much of some of the opportunities and partnerships in the sector, if only they think to do so. They are also aware that they can very positively impact the lives of their tenants even with small-scale projects.

Because we can

Effective partnership working is, for some housing associations, what successful community investment activity is all about. A number of housing associations are seeking ways to increase outcomes for tenants by working effectively with partners who also need support to reach their target audience, and already have the relevant skills and resources to deliver their service.



TeleHealth has given Colin McCordick a new lease of life



INDEPENDENCE AND PEACE OF MIND THROUGH TELEHEALTH

FOLD's TeleHealth Service supports people to live independently and maintain their tenure. It prevents people from needing to move to residential or nursing care, and supports hospital discharge through enabling self-management of health conditions. When launched the service was originally targeted at people with long term health conditions such as diabetes, stroke or COPD but patients are now referred for a wide range of conditions.

The service provides for the installation of a home health hub and measurement sensors in the individual's own home, which link to the Fold TeleHealth 9am-5pm triage centre. Patients are able to take their own vital signs, measurements such as pulse and blood pressure, using equipment that records data relevant to their health condition.

The data is then relayed to a nursing team which reviews any readings outside the norms expected and provides reassurance and advice. The triage nurse team can escalate a call for a local or emergency response if required.

The main objectives of the service are to:

- Provide peace of mind to patients that their condition is being monitored
- Arrange appropriate and timely support to manage critical risks
- Promote a greater sense of knowledge of condition and ability to self manage at home

This service is provided on behalf of all five Health and Social Care Trusts throughout Northern Ireland. Since the service launched in December 2011 over 4,000 patients have benefitted from the service.

Queen's University is currently working with Fold to complete an independent evaluation of the current service which will inform the ongoing development of the service.



**"4,000 patients have
benefitted from Fold
TeleHealth since 2011"**



Fold's TeleHealth triage centre provides appropriate and timely support for clients



“Without TeleHealth I think I would have ended up in intensive care again”

Colin McCordick



CASE STUDY



Colin McCordick (65) lives with his wife Olive in Ballynahinch. He suffers from bronchiectasis and emphysema, a condition of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which makes it hard for him to breathe.

Colin uses TeleHealth, a HSC service which is delivered by Fold, to monitor his condition. He says the system has made his life much easier.

“Not too long ago I was fit as a flea. Then over the last number of years I had started to get repeated chest infections.”

After a short break in England, Colin went to the doctors with a chest infection and was given an antibiotic but a few days later he became very ill and was transferred to intensive care at the Ulster Hospital.

“When I got home, the respiratory team came out to our house and that’s when I found out about Telemonitoring NI. They told me I could be monitored from home because I was too weak to go to appointments.”

“With my TeleHealth system I use a pulse oximeter to monitor my heartrate, a thermometer for my temperature and a questionnaire hub to monitor my condition.”

Under the TeleHealth NI COPD service, measurements are checked on a daily basis against set parameters. If readings are outside these parameters, a triage nurse based in Fold will contact the patient to provide relevant support and information. Where appropriate, the nurse will escalate the patient’s condition to their healthcare professional, who will be able to view the readings on their computer screens and take necessary actions such as contacting or arranging to visit the patient.

Colin added, “With my condition, there’s no point in me saying “Oh I’ll go to the doctor next week” that could be too late. TeleHealth has helped me tremendously. I know now my condition is not going to go away but there are things I can do to manage it. Without it I think I would have ended up in intensive care again. Everybody knows there is help out there but now my help is now very, very accessible.”



NUMBER OF STAFF
21



TOTAL STAFF COSTS
£502,706



NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES
2,250



PARTNER FUNDING
£694,741



“TeleHealth has helped me tremendously”



TENANTS SHELTERED FROM RISING FUEL COSTS THROUGH SOLAR PV

Choice Housing is strongly committed to maximising the energy efficiency of its homes. In recent years, Choice has invested heavily in energy efficiency measures, focusing on improvements to building fabric along with heating and lighting upgrades. Choice examined renewable technologies as a means of delivering further savings for tenants, with Solar Photovoltaic (Solar PV) systems chosen as the most viable option.

Choice manages a large number of sheltered housing schemes with occupants collectively paying for communal electricity costs such as corridor lighting and laundry facilities as part of their weekly service charges. Schemes were assessed based on a number of factors, such as electricity consumption, orientation of buildings, and the age and condition of each roof. 14 schemes were selected as the most suitable for Solar PV systems.

The financial model for this investment was based on government incentives for generating renewable electricity, alongside a reduced electricity charge to tenants at selected schemes. Around 400 homes will have reduced costs as a result of this investment, alongside reduced future improved security around electricity prices and a reduced impact on the environment expected to total over 50 Tonnes of CO2 each year.

Prior to undertaking the work, tenants were fully consulted via the Choice Tenants' Forum, individual meetings at each scheme, and further information in writing to each customer benefitting from this initiative. There was unanimous support and savings of over £2,600 were delivered and incorporated into 2015/16 service charges, with further savings to be identified as part of the annual review for 2016/17.

Each scheme is monitored to reduce risk and ensure tenants receive expected financial savings, and the nature of this initiative means that savings will be delivered for at least 20 years.

400

homes will enjoy reduced costs

"Savings of over £2,600 were delivered in 2015/16"



Choice Housing Ireland has installed solar panels at James Court to make energy savings

Tenants have noticed savings in electricity costs since solar panels were installed at James Court



“We’ve had lots of work carried out which has helped to reduce energy costs for our tenants”

Julie Ann Hurle, Choice scheme co-ordinator



CASE STUDY

choice

Choice Scheme Co-ordinator Julie Ann Hurle has noticed savings in electricity costs since solar panels were installed at James Court. Solar panels have helped reduce electricity costs at Choice's James Court scheme.

“At James Court we’ve had lots of work carried out in recent years, including wall and loft insulation, which has really helped to reduce energy costs for our tenants.

“The roof of our scheme was replaced recently and Choice took the opportunity to fit solar panels to help reduce electricity costs. Prior to the solar panels being fitted,

tenants at the scheme were invited to a tenants meeting to explain what was proposed and they supported this initiative, understanding that it would save them money for years to come. With the solar panels being installed at the same time as the new roof it also meant there was no extra disruption for tenants.

“In recent years at James Court our tenants have taken an interest in recycling and so aside from the money saved through our solar panels, it’s also great to know that this initiative means we’re doing even more to reduce our impact on the environment.”



50t
(tonnes) of CO²
saved each year



“It’s great to know that this initiative means we’re doing even more to reduce our impact on the environment”

MOVING FORWARD

By **Conor Creaney**, NIHACT Manager

This first Community Investment Report captures the considerable impact of housing associations’ range of services in neighbourhoods across Northern Ireland.

Although there is a lot to be proud of, our sector recognises that there is much more to do. That is why most housing associations are planning to extend their community services over the next few years, often in partnership.

It will be challenging to sustain investment in community services in spite of welfare reform and other business pressures. However, to meet the needs of tenants, our sector recognises that we have to step-up activity as other agencies retreat. With government no longer able to provide the range of support it once did, nurturing the ability of communities to help themselves is likely to become more important.

Local housing associations value their status as independent charities but Northern Ireland needs us to be strategic, so service provision matches identified local needs, and to further develop our ability to measure impact. Ultimately, community investment’s value lies not in the activities themselves, but in the difference they make in people’s lives.

As the manager of NIHACT, I am tasked with strengthening the Trust’s ability to support housing associations in maximising their social impact.

This report is just a beginning from which we can build. Looking ahead, the charity will do more in identifying potential partnerships, pursuing funding opportunities and assisting members directly.

Together, we can create a housing association sector which is able not just to build new homes but also increasingly able to support the emergence of new, thriving and resilient communities.

MOST HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ARE PLANNING TO **EXTEND** THEIR COMMUNITY SERVICES OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, **OFTEN IN PARTNERSHIP**



Young people’s art talent brightens the face of Sailortown, Belfast, as part of Clanmil’s StreetArt project

APPENDIX

IMPACT ACROSS NI: COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY IN LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS

Housing associations are operating across Northern Ireland and this is reflected in the geographical profile of the sector's community investment activity.

As expected, the nature and extent of investment varies significantly by local authority area. Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, key cities in which the sector owns many homes, attract much of the community investment spend of housing associations and partners.

HOUSING ASSOCIATION CAPITAL PROJECTS SPEND BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA			
LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	TOTAL FUNDING
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	£287,367	£82,718	£370,084
Ards and North Down Borough Council	£660,330	£165,287	£825,617
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council	£98,678	£134,014	£232,692
Belfast City Council	£2,687,532	£5,870,633	£8,558,165
Causeway Coast and Glens District Council	£282,891	£145,972	£428,863
Derry City and Strabane District Council	£3,004,847	£303,077	£3,307,924
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	£42,038	£71,003	£113,041
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	£434,889	£614,118	£1,049,007
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	£92,240	£118,075	£210,316
Mid Ulster District Council	£161,318	£51,686	£213,004
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	£437,071	£96,225	£533,295
Total (over 5 years)	£8,189,200	£7,652,808	£15,842,008



HOUSING ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY SERVICES BY LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA			
LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	HA FUNDING	PARTNER FUNDING	TOTAL FUNDING
Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	£67,283	£118,021	£185,304
Ards and North Down Borough Council	£109,610	£175,509	£285,117
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	£116,380	£75,609	£191,988
Belfast City Council	£693,893	£1,126,185	£1,820,078
Causeway Coast and Glens District Council	£123,225	£497,935	£621,160
Derry City and Strabane District Council	£278,990	£1,170,594	£1,449,584
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council	£63,350	£51,901	£115,252
Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council	£78,418	£58,399	£136,817
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	£121,308	£370,663	£491,972
Mid Ulster District Council	£43,991	£84,109	£128,100
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council	£86,521	£54,405	£140,926
Total (over 1 year)	£1,782,968	£3,783,328	£5,566,296

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NIHACT

6C Citylink Business Park
Albert Street, Belfast
BT12 4HQ
Tel: 028 9023 0446

