



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Ireland



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Northern Ireland

# ALL-IRELAND HOUSING AWARDS 2023

## Good Practice Compendium

Sharing the lessons learnt from the  
All-Ireland Awards 2023

Kindley sponsored by:

**choice** 

Choice are delighted to support the CIH All-Ireland Housing Awards as the sponsor of the Good Practice Compendium 2023

**choice**   
Together we enrich lives



Our mission is to enrich lives through great homes, services and communities

Choice Housing Ireland Limited (Choice) is a registered voluntary Housing Association and charity. We are a 'profit for a purpose' social enterprise established over 40 years ago to provide decent housing and tenant support services at an affordable rent. We work with a whole range of like-minded partners to bring about positive change for our tenants and their communities.

Today, Choice has over 13,000 homes and employs almost 400 people in a Group structure that includes:

- Choice Services - our in-house repairs and maintenance service provider
- Maple and May - a professional landlord improving standards for private tenants as well as increasing the supply of affordable housing for sale
- Oaklee Housing – a leading Approved Housing Body in the Republic of Ireland providing customer focused housing and support services
- Comhar FM - a consortium encompassing the financing, design, construction and maintenance of six social housing development sites located in and around Dublin

Through our Group structure we are committed to using our significant resources and expertise to deliver more and better homes and services for all.

**oaklee**   
housing

**choice**   
services

**+Maple  
May**

**f** **tw** **in**

T: 0300 111 2211  
[choice-housing.org](http://choice-housing.org)

# Welcome

## Welcome to the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) 2023 All-Ireland Housing Awards Good Practice Compendium.

Recently, the quality of the social homes we manage and the way we work with residents and tenants has received some high-profile attention. We must strive to provide quality homes and services, and when we fail in that mission, we must apologise and rectify things as quickly and completely as we possibly can. To do this - to learn and improve - is part and parcel of being a professional.

However, we must also shout from the rooftops about the benefits of social housing, and proudly share examples of good practice. More than three-quarters of Northern Ireland's social homes have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band rating of A-C, a high amount compared with the rest of the UK and with other tenures of housing. There is still much to do to improve on this, but it is a vital fact in ensuring that social tenants are warmer, and our carbon footprint is lower - both of central importance for the times we live in. And it's a good example of the shared commitment to quality among social housing providers and government, and recognition of the difference it makes to people's lives.

As the cost of living crisis continues, debate has intensified with questions rightly being asked as to whether housing awards are justifiable in the current

climate. The CIH charter describes our goal to "promote the science and art of housing, its standards and ideals". A large amount of the work we do is about sharing good practice, and awards play an important role in doing this. We should all share our work and learn from one another. This is fundamentally why we continue to host the awards ceremony, now in its fourteenth year. And it's why we produce this Good Practice Compendium, which showcases exemplars of best practice from the past year.

Whenever I read through these compendiums, I'm always astounded by the dedication and commitment of our entries - and this year is no different. This publication features some great examples of exceptional work, showing how a positive commitment for change can make a big difference to people's lives.

As housing professionals, we must remember that the work we do every day has an important impact on the individuals and communities we serve, as shown in this library of good practice, which I hope will inspire you.

I would like to thank our headline sponsor, Aico, and all the sponsors of the individual awards. With your support we have been able to share the fantastic content in this compendium.

And finally, I'd like to thank you - for your ongoing support of CIH and for professionalism in housing.



**Justin Cartwright CIHCM**

National director - Northern Ireland  
Chartered Institute of Housing

		Page
<b>Best housing development</b>		<b>8</b>
Collier's Place, Duleek, Co. Meath	North & East Housing Association CLG	8
Glenwhirry/Glendun	Clanmil Housing	9
Delivery of Cost Rental Homes at Kilcarbery Grange	Tuath Housing	11
Cappagh Green - Mixed Tenure Development	Radius Housing Association	12
Station View, Derry	Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd	14
Gardenmore Green	Radius Housing Association	15
<b>Excellence In communication</b>		<b>17</b>
Improving our Member Communications	Co-operative Housing Ireland	17
NIFHA Comms Forum- Cost of Living Crisis Campaign	NIFHA	19
Tuath Housing tenant Engagement Strategy, Creation and Launch	Tuath Housing	20
<b>Excellence in customer service</b>		<b>22</b>
Discretionary Housing Payment	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	22
Expansion of Choice Services 2022	Choice Services Ltd	23
WE HEAR	Circle voluntary housing association	25
<b>Excellence in health and wellbeing</b>		<b>27</b>
Drugs Accommodation Support Project/Ormeau Centre	Extern	27
Complex Lives Initiative	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	28
It Takes a Village	Co-operative Housing Ireland	29
Mindful Bodies Programme	Radius Housing	31

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*



<b>Excellence in housing innovation</b>		<b>33</b>
Financial inclusion	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	33
Choice Tenant Support Fund	Choice Housing	35
An Innovative Approach to Supporting Tenants to Sustain their Tenancies	Clanmil Housing	36
Moylinney HAPPI Development, Newtownabbey	Radius Housing Association	37
Park West Plaza Office to Residential Conversion	Tuath	39
HomeHak	HomeHak	40
<b>More than bricks and mortar</b>		<b>42</b>
Sleaty Park View Resident Association - Community Garden	Cluid Housing Association	42
Ballygraique Bio Diversity Project	Cluid Housing association	44
Empowering Tenant Engagement within Radius Housing and beyond	Radius Housing	45
Working Together to Make a Difference and Connect	Grove Community Housing Association	47
<b>Promoting shared communities</b>		<b>49</b>
Ark Creative Communities	Ark Housing	49
Great Communities	Choice Housing Ireland Ltd.	50
Droimnin Community Garden	Clann Housing Residents	52
Creating a Shared Community at Felden	Clanmil Housing	53
Sharing similarities, celebrating differences	Oaklee Housing	54
Knock Knock	Radius Housing	55
<b>Working in partnership</b>		<b>57</b>
'One Safe Place' - Foyle Family Justice Centre	Apex Housing Association	57
House 10, Enterprise Court	Choice Housing Ireland Ltd.	58
Multidisciplinary Homeless Support Team	Extern	59
Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid (New Beginnings, Railway House)	Oaklee Housing	61
Partnership is Key to Graham Gardens Turnaround	Clanmil Housing	62
Community Transition and Reconnecting Project	Radius Housing	64

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*

Net zero in housing		66
Laois County Council Retrofitting Programme	Laois County Council	66
Energy Efficiency in Social Housing project	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	67
Improving Warmth and Wellbeing	Co-operative Housing Ireland	68
Retrofit Programme & EnergyCloud	Clúid Housing	69
Housing Organisation of the year		71
Tuath Housing - Delivering Excellence	Tuath Housing	71
Driving professionalism, learning and development, and inclusion	Choice Housing	73
Housing team of the year		75
Development Team	Choice Housing	75
Clanmil Money Advice Team	Clanmil Housing	76
CHI's Asset Management and Property Services (AMPS) Team	Co-operative Housing Ireland	78
Housing Management Team	Oaklee Housing	79
Young professional of the year		81
Sarah Dunphy	Cluid Housing Association	81
Jade Bogle	Radius Housing Association	82
Cheryll Dillon	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	83
Ali Leech	Tuath Housing	84
Aoife O'Fearghail	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	86
Ben Conway	Radius Housing	87

*In order to keep the authenticity of these projects, and to convey the passion felt by those involved, we have not altered any of the text submitted to us as part of these entries.*

<b>Best housing story</b>	<b>89</b>
---------------------------	-----------

Magic in the Mansions	Cluid Housing association	89
Belmayne Community Hub	Cluid Housing Association	91
Drumellan Park, transforming the lives of its residents	Choice Housing	92
Oriel Lodge Residents	Clann Housing	93
Churchwell Gardens Residents Association	Oaklee Housing	94

<b>Housing Hero</b>	<b>96</b>
---------------------	-----------

Tara Hughes	Cluid Housing	96
Linda Watson	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	97
David Kortukohun	Circle Voluntary Housing Association	98
Ger Corkey	Oaklee Housing	100

<b>Outstanding contribution to housing</b>	<b>102</b>
--	------------

Janet Hunter	Northern Ireland Housing Executive/ Housing Rights	102
Edward Allingham	EHA Group	103

# BEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Sponsored by: **Housing Executive**

This award recognises developments that provide desirable and sustainable places to live, improving the lives of people within the community. The well-designed development will demonstrate creative approaches and excellence from concept to delivery.

## Collier's Place, Duleek, Co. Meath

**Lead organisation:** North & East Housing Association  
**CLG**

**Partner organisations:** Meath County Council



### Statement of support

Located in the centre of historic Duleek, the design allows for both privacy and community interaction. Design features include the use of selected brick quoins, tasteful external colour scheme and contrasting front doors, private gardens, and communal garden furniture throughout, creating a highly aesthetic landscaped 'sense of place'.

The site was strategically selected due to its proximity to all vital services. Adjacent to the main street, the design solution responds appropriately, in that the street scape has been enhanced to the end the estate does not detract, nor is it at a remove from the environs of the surrounding residential area, hence a visual connection is maintained. Advantage has been taken of the site context and its significant road frontage. The homes are single storey terraced bungalows and with the scheme nestled in the town, it is essentially a 'community within a community' with open access, but with secure boundaries, no through road, creating an oasis of calm with town centre adjacency living.

The scheme, as well as having sufficient off-street parking for residents, has easy access to public transport including Bus Eireann regular services to Navan, Drogheda and Dublin City Centre, as well as immediate access to local amenities and the town Garda station. The central location affords tenants sustainable travel means with walking and public transport and minimises the need to use cars. This also has health benefits for tenants and enhances wellbeing and quality of life.

The houses are designed to age friendly and universal access standards, with wheelchair accessibility throughout. The two bedroom properties can facilitate visiting carers/family with the additional bedroom. Level entry, internal turning circles and full horizontal circulation, level access shower rooms, all feature. The needs of the older person resident profile can be immediately accommodated, but with additional adaptation for changing needs being capable of facilitation without any significant structural alteration, given all internal walls are stud partitioning. The built environment therefore promotes and facilitates 'ageing in place' allowing the residents to remain in their homes for as long as is possible.

In terms of managing fuel poverty, an air-to-water heat pump provides all space and domestic hot water heating with individual room thermostats. A demand control ventilation (DCV) system provides continuous ventilation throughout the house. The homes enjoy plenty of natural day light. The design allows for minimal maintenance and has provision for enclosed waste bin management. There is no stove or open fire therefore no harmful carbon emissions are produced. With much of the electricity generated in the country coming from renewable energy, these houses have a very low carbon footprint. The dwellings are extremely well insulated and therefore require low levels of energy to heat. LED lighting is provided throughout the houses. Each home has an A3 Building Energy



Rating. As such, these houses provide a comfortable and economical home for tenants.

In addition to establishing initial prevailing demand for these homes, the nomination and allocations process realised a very expeditious and efficient uptake, reflecting high local demand for access to this accommodation type. A number of tenants right sized from current social housing stock therefore freeing up further housing for families in the area. Most of the new residents hail from Duleek and its environs, thus maintaining local links to the area, friends and family.

Replicability is a key factor here, with other schemes of similar accommodation profile elsewhere in Co. Meath, Co. Laois, and at preliminary proposal stage for Co. Cavan.

Scheme Data:

Practical Completion: Phase 1 - June 2022 (17 homes) & Phase 2 - September 2022 (5 homes)

Average Cost per home: €229,863.00

Funding: DHPLG - Capital Advance Leasing Facility/ Housing Finance Agency Senior Borrowings

## Outcomes and achievements

Collier's Place, Duleek, Co. Meath is a high-quality development of 22 x 1 & 2-bedroom bungalow homes developed by North & East Housing Association with the support of Meath County Council. Turnkey construction with strategic housing provider partner Zilic Developments Ltd. delivered the first of these bespoke specification homes in just over 12 months. In addition to bringing the previous brownfield disused industrial site to an appropriate residential density, sensitive to the tenant needs and surrounding area, the accommodation delivery, tenancy allocation, and evident tenant experience, are an excellent example of all party collaboration in the accelerated delivery of fit for purpose, sustainable homes to meet local demand.

The development has been designed to provide for an older person resident profile, and people with primary or secondary impaired mobility. The design provides for the residents enjoying the benefits of first-rate living conditions in a healthy, safe, accessible, remotely supported and visually attractive environment.

"This is a really fantastic development....this doesn't happen by chance and is about real good positive collaboration" Mr. Daragh O'Brien, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

"This is a high quality development which represents significant investment in much needed age friendly, social homes in Duleek" Cllr. Nick Killian, Cathaoirleach Meath Co. Co.

# Glenwhirry/Glendun

## Clanmil Housing



## Statement of support

The Glenwhirry and Glendun Court development in Newtownabbey was completed in 2022 at a cost of £5m. It comprises 51 apartments for a mix of tenures including social rent, private rent, active older people (Category 1), and, in partnership with the NI Health and Social Care Trust, homes for young people leaving care.

Newtownabbey is an area of high housing need with 1668 applicants identified as being in housing

stress in March 2017. The area is made up of diverse communities with a history of conflict and poor community relations.

Clanmil wants to help make Northern Ireland a more shared place as we believe that shared communities have a lasting positive impact on people's lives. For this reason, the scheme was delivered as a "Housing for All" scheme under the NI Executive's T:BUC strategy.

The project involved the refurbishment of six existing apartment blocks that had been purpose-built as student accommodation for the nearby Ulster University. The buildings had been vacant for many years and were very rundown. Their size and location offered huge potential.

Each block consisted of privately accessed apartments at ground floor with two storey own-door maisonettes above.

Working with RMI architects and MJ McBride contractor, Clanmil sought to help meet local housing demand by maximising the number of units, whilst also meeting the standards in the Housing Association Guide for multiple categories.

The aim was to be sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area, whilst significantly revitalising it to provide safe, secure and attractive homes.

Many of the existing structures, including the majority of external walls, floors and roofs, were retained and the materials palette was chosen to complement the local neighbourhood.

Significant structural alterations were made, including the removal of all internal stairs and modification of cavity wall insulation and exterior finish. The architect's aim was to provide an attractive entrance to each block, with a direct visual connection to green space. These, along with other improvements, provided a new lease of life to these formerly dilapidated structures.

To ensure existing floors could be divided into individual apartments, new internal corridors were added at each level linking to a new highly glazed central circulation core in each block, creating a distinctive modern look for the development. This was created with full height glazing and cladding, with three storey zinc clad dormers on the main elevation.

Existing windows were increased in size and new aluminium frame and timber clad windows were added to maximise natural light.

To reduce carbon emissions and ensure heating and

energy systems were efficient, the thermal, acoustic and fire performance was upgraded throughout the building.

All blocks face onto an attractive communal amenity space surrounded by native trees. Many have a small private rear garden. All have access to a secure communal bin area and storage for mobility scooters, for those with mobility needs.

The development achieved Secured by Design (SBD) Gold Certification. SBD is the official police security initiative aimed at improving the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit. The gold level was achieved due to the considerate treatment of the boundaries, ensuring safety and privacy for residents without creating harsh barriers.

To the north of the site additional mature hedging was introduced in place of masonry walls to ensure a more attractive approach from the main access road. The east side of the site faces the coastline of Belfast Lough and here, the boundary was enhanced and strengthened to protect it from exposure to prevailing winds, whilst maximising the stunning panoramic views.

## Outcomes and achievements

The Glenwhirry/Glendun Court is a high-quality refurbishment project providing mixed tenure homes in a shared neighbourhood:

- 18 two apartments for Over 55s
- 12 two bedroom apartments for General Needs
- 6 one bedroom apartments for General Needs
- 9 two bedroom apartments for private rental
- 6 one bedroom apartments for younger people leaving care (delivered alongside the NI Health and Social Care Trust)

The project has reinvigorated this derelict site into a place that seamlessly integrates into the local landscape and that residents are proud to call their

home.

The modern design solution provided meets current standards of living. The homes are constructed to Lifetime Homes standards to ensure they can be adapted as people's needs change over time. Safety and security has been built into the design and construction of the homes.

A focus on upgrading the existing thermal elements and internal environment has brought the homes up to Energy Ratings B and C.

Strong partnerships and a collaborative approach with NI Housing Executive and the NI Health and Social Care Trust have resulted in a housing solution that caters for a mix of tenures including social, private rentals and homes for young people leaving care.

# Delivery of Cost Rental Homes at Kilcarbery Grange

**Lead organisation: Tuath Housing**

**Partner organisations: South Dublin County Council**



## Statement of support

Kilcarbery Grange is a new development, spearheaded by South Dublin County Council, which consists of more than 1,000 'A' rated energy efficient homes, representing the first truly mixed-tenure Strategic Housing Development in Ireland providing social, cost rental, affordable for sale, private rental, and owner-occupied accommodation. As part of this development, 74 cost rental homes were delivered at Kilcarbery Grange by Tuath Housing, in partnership with South Dublin County Council, providing a new form of tenure for middle-income earners who struggle to find secure, affordable accommodation elsewhere on the open market.

In early 2021, Tuath received funding approval to acquire a total of 74 apartments over two blocks under the new Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL) Scheme. The two blocks, comprising 37 apartments each, are known as Southgate Hall and Northgate Hall. The breakdown of homes in each block is identical being 16 x one-bed apartments and 21 x two-bed apartments. The homes in Kilcarbery are part of an overall South Dublin County Council initiative to provide over 1,000 new homes on local authority land with a mix of social, private, and affordable homes being delivered by Adwood Limited.

All 74 homes have now been allocated to tenants, eligible for cost rental accommodation, using a lottery system run on Tuath's website. The apartments were completed to a high specification and include all appliances, window blinds and quality flooring throughout, with ample communal carparking to cater for all homes at surface level surrounding each block. Southgate Hall was completed in June 2022

and Northgate Hall in late July 2022. Rent payable by tenants is in the region of 35% below current market rents.

Kilcarbery demonstrates that by planning a mixed tenure scheme in its totality that the vision and principles laid out before construction have come to fruition. A sense of place, cohesion and purpose have been created and the development was designed to harness the existing positive aspects of the character of the lands and the surrounding larger landscape. The cost rental homes at Kilcarbery provided are part of a larger development which has succeeded in delivering a permeable and legible network of streets and spaces with strong connections to the surrounding areas.

Kilcarbery Grange overlooks Corkagh Park, one of Ireland's largest parks, which is a fantastic family-friendly resource containing walking routes, cycle lanes, a playground, a pet farm, and sports pitches. The development also benefits from being located adjacent to the historic villages of Clondalkin & Lucan which offer a range of amenities ranging from sporting pursuits such as GAA, golf, and rugby clubs as well as the Clondalkin Leisure Centre and a wide range of cafes and restaurants. This exceptional development providing A rates homes on land owned by the Council is being put to effective use to deliver much needed accommodation to families in a high demand, high value location. Kilcarbery provides a unique and perfect example of a development where all types of tenure are catered for and designed into the overall project from concept stage to delivery.

The main entrance to Kilcarbery Grange opens directly onto the Outer Ring Road, linking the development with the M7, M4 and M50 in minutes, thus providing residents with ease of access to the rest of the country. Local transport links include an excellent train service at both Clondalkin/Fonthill or Adamstown train stations and the LUAS Red Line at The Red Cow, each of which have superb park and ride facilities. Dublin bus has a service close by with numerous bus routes taking commuters to the city centre, The Docklands and beyond.

Speaking at the Official Opening in August 2022, Minister Darragh O'Brien said "Government wants to make affordable rent a reality and I am delighted that in [Kilcarbery Grange], tenants will pay rents which are more than 35% below local market rents. I'd like to thank Tuath for their work in bringing these projects, and more, to fruition."



## Outcomes and achievements

Delivered through the innovative cost rental model, tenants at Kilcarbery Grange are charged a rent that covers the cost of delivering, managing, and maintaining a home only, making homes more affordable. The rents for these cost rental homes are set at €1,025 for a one-bed apartment and €1,229 for the two-bed apartments. This represented excellent value for money at 35% below market for rented properties in the area. These 'A' rated, energy efficient new homes have immediately impressed their new occupants with their high-quality design, well-proportioned rooms, and excellent finishes throughout.

The new homes were delivered in collaboration with South Dublin County Council, Adwood Ltd., and Tuath Housing via a combination of funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritages' Cost Rental Equity Loan (CREL) scheme

and private finance through the Housing Finance Agency (HFA). The Kilcarbery development represents the first truly mixed tenure Strategic Housing Development implemented by South Dublin County Council, which provides social housing, cost rental, affordable for sale, private rental and owner-occupied accommodation and is an excellent example of public, private and voluntary partnership in action.

The success of this development is evident from the high-quality homes delivered under the programme, providing new homes for individuals and families. One of Kilcarbery's new residents, a healthcare assistant, noted "At first, I didn't believe it, a new build house for this price, especially in Dublin. I feel so lucky, we finally found a home. The security and approachability from Tuath gives me and my family so much peace of mind."

# Cappagh Green - Mixed Tenure Development

**Lead organisation:** Radius Housing Association

**Partner organisations:** RMI



## Statement of support

Radius has recently completed a high quality, mixed tenure development at Cappagh Green on the outskirts of Portstewart. The tenure blind development of 75 social homes and 12 affordable homes was the first of its kind in the North West area.

Cappagh Green is part of DfCs Housing for All Programme which forms part of the NI Executive's 'Together: Building a United Community' Strategy which aims to create a united and shared society in Northern Ireland. Cappagh Green is supported by a 5-year Good Relations plan which includes bonding events with new tenants and bridging events those living in the wider Portstewart area to build a strong cohesive community.

The scheme was awarded through a Competitive Land Design and Build procurement route. BW Social Affordable Housing proposal offered a stylish and attractive development in an accessible location with great amenities which met the housing need in the

area. Funding was provided by NIHE/DfC of £5.6M with private finance of £6.1M contributed by the Association to cover the total investment of £11.7M

A central spine road runs through the scheme which creates a landscaped boulevard with a village green appearance and permeability through the site. A series of cul-de-sacs come off the central spine with green spaces at the ends and significant landscaped buffer zones between our new development and existing neighbours.

Two communal open spaces have been provided, one of which has been enhanced under the HFA initiative with a high quality multi-functional outdoor meeting space with water & electricity supply to ensure that long-term, those living in Cappagh Green have a space for social gatherings, workshops, health and wellbeing initiatives which encourage and support community integration. This space has been very successfully utilised since its completion for Good Relations events with residents including an Easter event and Christmas event. The design is conducive to many different used and is a natural meeting point where tenants enjoy socialising and building relationships within the development.

The housing mix was developed in conjunction with NIHE Placeshapers to ensure the homes built met the needs of those on the waiting list in the area and created a sustainable scheme which delivered new homes for as wide a demographic as possible. The development includes 2, 3 and 4 bed family homes, one and two bed apartments with some specifically designed for older people and wheelchair users. There was an identified need for family accommodation for wheelchair users so 4 two storey wheelchair homes were constructed with thru the floor lifts to access the first floor. When planning was lodged the projected



social housing need in the borough (published in the Housing Investment Plan Update 2018) stood at 592 units with one of the areas of greatest need being Portstewart

Portstewart is a holiday destination and given the proliferation of second homes in the area which contributes to the Causeway Coats & Glens area consistently being one of the most expensive areas in which to buy property. The Association was keen to provide affordable housing to promote choice and inclusiveness. We worked closely with a local agent to ensure homes were sold to first time buyers or those upsizing and who were going to occupy the property full time in order to contribute to the sustainability of the scheme. Twelve 3 bed family homes were

marketed by a local agent for £165,000 which allowed potential purchasers to access Co/Ownership.

Cappagh Green is tenure blind and meets the design requirements of the Housing Association Guide including specific Wheelchair Housing Design Standards, Lifetime Homes Criteria and Secure By Design. The Association improved its offer to tenants by installing fully tiled wet rooms with thermostatic showers downstairs and painting homes internally. These items do not attract grant funding and were fully funded by Radius.

Radius and its partners delivered Cappagh Green over 4 months in advance of the scheduled completion date despite the challenges of Brexit and the Covid pandemic.

## Outcomes and achievements

Cappagh Green offers sustainable and high quality homes for those wishing to rent or buy in area with high demand and low availability where local residents are often priced out of the market.

Outcomes include:

- Sensitively developing a mixed tenure scheme.
- Making a significant impact on the social housing waiting list for the area by providing 87 homes for up to 343 people.
- Providing a varied mix of houses including 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-bedrooms homes
- Providing 12 affordable family homes which could be purchased using co-ownership
- Providing 6 homes for wheelchair users, 4 two storey houses and 2 one bed apartments.
- High customer satisfaction

- Providing 95 jobs over the construction period
- Creating a central multi use meeting space to facilitate engagement with tenants and wider local residents under Housing for All status.
- 5 year Good Relations Plan drawn up with new tenants and local community
- Ongoing culture and diversity partnership projects with local schools, community and voluntary groups and other housing providers
- CEF Excellence Award Winner 2022 for Social Housing Scheme.

A tenant of the wheelchair home advised " My partner, myself and the boys would like to wish you and all at Radius a very Merry Christmas, this will be the first Christmas in five years that I can relax and enjoy, this house has made my life a lot easier and it's all thanks to you and Radius."

# Station View, Derry

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd



## Statement of support

Habinteg's Station View apartments represent the very highest standards in social housing. Overlooking the Peace Bridge and River Foyle in the Waterside area of Derry City Centre, Station View is a modern, stylish development of 42 apartments for over 55s, which has breathed new life into this part of the Waterside.

Habinteg identified the Waterside's potential for regeneration and launched a Competitive Land, Design and Build brief seeking appropriate sites in the area in January 2019, recognising the opportunity for social housing to be at the forefront of this regeneration, paving the way for further investment in the area.

This area had not benefited from significant new housing development for 15 years and, therefore, did not have an established waiting list. Habinteg worked collaboratively with its key stakeholders at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to identify suitable over 55s who would benefit from the location to begin to establish this as a residential area.

An exciting proposal by the Martin Group for an apartment block, with recent planning approval, was submitted for the vacant brownfield site on Duke Street. The design aimed to maximise the site potential by using the steep slope's height to provide 7 floors, complementary to the neighbouring tall buildings and reflective of the mill buildings of Derry's past. The striking frontage comprises vertical panels of buff brick, grey engineering brick and white render, with feature corner windows and the upper floor set back with a roof top terrace.

Consultation prior to construction was positive and served to reinforce the association's strongly held belief that the site represented a good news story for

the Waterside. The Martin Group and Habinteg refined the scheme taking on board development, housing, maintenance and community comments. Construction commenced on site in August 2019 and the development was completed in May 2022 at a total cost of £6,026,800. Funding of £3.7m was provided by NIHE and delivered through the Department for Communities.

With the site located close to local amenities, shops, schools and churches and well served by local transport routes and the rail line to Belfast, Habinteg saw that this development, with more than 100 residents, would increase footfall in the area and provide support for local shops and businesses.

The attractive and sympathetically designed building comprises 42 apartments for over 55s: 22 three person two bedroom apartments; 19 two person one bedroom apartments; and one two bedroom three person wheelchair accessible apartment. The design combines features of modern styling along with a sensitive enhancing of the appearance of the surrounding area.

Each of the properties conforms to Lifetime Homes and Secure by Design requirements with energy measures as 'fabric first'. The building construction is of brick and block walls, concrete floor slabs and stairs, flat roof, aluminium window and door frames, quality thermal and sound insulation and appropriate services.

Community Involvement projects were undertaken throughout the construction process and are ongoing. High levels of satisfaction were noted among tenants and the community on completion.

"I am absolutely delighted with my new home, the location is so handy to all amenities, the views are amazing over the city, the lift access is also great - I couldn't be happier my prayers have been answered."  
(Tenant, 8 Station View)

"We are delighted with this high quality development providing much needed accommodation in this area. Feedback from our residents is very positive regarding the high quality and space provided in their homes. Residents advise that they are enjoying the close proximity to local amenities and the spectacular views of the river and city. (Homes and Communities Team).

## Outcomes and achievements

Station View makes an innovative and ongoing contribution to the Waterside area with its attractive design and sustainability approach. It is a tasteful and positive addition to the environment and benefit to the local community, providing much needed quality housing.

Outcomes include:

- Sensitively developing a vacant brownfield site
- Quality new housing for up to 107 persons / 42 households
- Innovative design to challenge social housing stereotype
- Promote sustainable City Centre Living
- Appealing features including dark coloured window frames, buff & grey brick walls & render

- Quality dwelling layouts and specifications
- Attractive streetscape
- Working with MLAs and Councillors
- Substantial investment of £6,026,800
- Very satisfied tenants and local community
- Further community involvement plans together with new tenants and local community

Following the success of this development, Habinteg is continuing its developments in the Waterside area with 73 apartments beside Station View and 21 apartments at Spencer Road, totalling to a substantial investment in this area of over £21,000,000.

# Gardenmore Green

## Radius Housing Association



### Statement of support

Radius completed its stylish and contemporary development at Gardenmore Green in March 2022. The homes were constructed on a 0.5ha brownfield site in the well-established residential area of Twinbrook in West Belfast. The site was purchased by Radius from the NI Housing Executive through the land disposal process.

Hall Black Douglas Architects were the appointed following a Design Competition in conjunction with the Royal Society of Ulster Architects in August 2018. HBD designed 14 new homes with associated parking, green amenity space and soft landscaping to comply with the requirements of the Housing Association Guide, Lifetime Homes and Secure by Design criteria.

At design stage the need for social housing in West Belfast was immense with 3,499 applicants on the waiting list to be housed in the area and 557 of those specifically waiting for a home in Twinbrook. Radius has provided 8 No 2-bedroom homes, 5 No 3-bedroom homes and 1 No 3-bedroom, 2

story wheelchair home which reference, and are sympathetic to the surrounding residential context.

The stepped topography of the site combined with the variety of pitched roof structures, creates an interesting streetscape. This is further enhanced by pockets of landscaping planted with native shrubs and trees, which soften the boundaries of the development.

Radius required a building material that had longevity in both its structural integrity and appearance. Brick was the solution in this case, due to its inherent properties as a robust building material with low maintenance requirements. The use of buff brick as the primary cladding material offered a contemporary blend of the red brick and buff render used within the surrounding residential context.

The Project Team felt strongly that arriving homes was something to be celebrated and set about using brick to showcase the best in social housing design by creating a unique identity to each dwelling and a striking visual impact from street level. Buff coloured mortar was selected to compliment the brickwork and was laid with flush joints to create a monolithic aesthetic to each dwelling. Projections and recesses were formed on the elevations through the use of brick feature panels and cantilevered brick soffits.

Particular care and attention given to the recessed entrances which appear to be carved out from the front elevation of each dwelling. Cantilevered brick soffits wrap over the top of the spaces to provide shelter from our unpredictable weather. Grey recessed brick feature panels were laid in a vertical stack bond coursing, wrapping around the front elevation to the front door of several homes, adding visual interest and a sense of tactility to the entrance.

The development represented an investment of 2.43M by Radius with funding of 1.365M secured from NIHE.

The development has provided much needed high quality social housing for the local West Belfast community, whilst making a positive contribution to the existing built context. This has been demonstrated by the development winning a national Brick Award in 2022 in the Small Housing Development category

with the judges commenting that "The creativity of the project is thought provoking, the houses are interesting and have been carefully crafted."

Our tenants, the end users have confirmed the initial brief of celebrating arriving home having confirmed that Gardenmore Green is a very special place to live.

## Outcomes and achievements

One tenant has commented, "The development is a very special place to live in Twinbrook, it's a small, homely development with a real sense of community. Everyone sent Christmas cards this first year with names and house numbers on them so I have got to know many more of my neighbours. This development is so different to the housing around it and everyone takes so much pride in their homes - I have even found my son picking up litter that has blown into the street! My home is open plan with so much light entering through a corner window and glazed doors. I feel safe and settled here and count myself lucky to be raising my family in such a lovely street"

- Re-use of a brownfield site
- 14 No High-quality energy efficient homes for 54 people to help alleviate fuel poverty.
- Innovative design and an attractive streetscape.
- Creation of a development which creates a sense of place.
- Winner of National Brick Award 2022 for Small Housing Development



# EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS

Sponsored by:

**resource**  
Sustainable Creativity

In challenging times, being there for your community is exceptionally important. This award recognises landlords whose communication with their tenants and residents has been outstanding over the past year, keeping them fully informed and supported.

## Improving our Member Communications

### Co-operative Housing Ireland



#### Statement of support

Co-operative Housing Ireland has had a clear focus on improving its Member (tenant) related communications and suite of materials for Members throughout 2022, with the support of all departments within the organisation, and the expertise and input of CHI Members from throughout the country wherever possible.

Development of a suite of materials for our Members

Developing a suite of new materials has been vital to improving the communications to our Members. The Member Association Toolkit was one of the first new assets developed for Members and is a useful and easy to follow guide for those who wish to set up a Members Association in their area and become active and involved in their community. All new materials were developed for Members with their voice to the fore. To achieve this, the Comms team focused on delivering a new and specially designed sub-brand which gave Member-focused materials their

own identity. Materials created for Members in 2022 included a Fire Safety brochure, Paying Your Rent brochure, and a Being a Good Neighbour brochure. As part of our new suite of materials, and as part of a special project recognising the need to nurture and sustain positive mental health and wellbeing across our communities, a Mental Health and Wellbeing toolkit was also developed at the end of our 'It Takes a Village' series of workshops for adults and young people living in CHI communities.

Continuing our communications excellence

All new publications and materials for Members were created against the backdrop of a busy Communications calendar aimed at keeping our Members informed of changes which affect them, and improvements to our delivery of services. A new national repairs and maintenance number was created to centralise and streamline how Members report repairs. This was communicated in a timely manner to all Members across our various channels.

Co-operative Housing Ireland's new website launched in March 2022

Earlier in the year, CHI launched its new website, [cooperativehousing.ie](https://cooperativehousing.ie), which featured a dedicated area to Member stories and opportunities, while also hosting Member-focused publications, an FAQs sheet, a system to report repairs, a pay rent facility, webchat and useful contact details for CHI offices. Any changes to services are updated here and integrated with our text messaging and email communications, along with our social media posts. Opportunities for Members and Member stories are posted here to be shared with the broader CHI community.

## Prospective Member Communications

As part of the new website, CHI decided to create a new section dedicated to prospective Members in response to the high volume of queries the organisation receives from the public about housing opportunities within CHI. A webpage and downloadable PDF were generated to explain the journey to a CHI home and provide appropriate details around requirements for local authority housing lists such as income bands and application forms. This webpage also includes a handy guide to setting up a co-operative and links to sources of information and inspiration to those who wish to build their home using a co-operative housing solution.

## Member-led content

As part of our strategy to deliver engaging and relevant communications to all Members within a timely manner, CHI includes Member voices as much as possible across all our channels, for example, press and media, website posts, official publications and events. Key to this has been the inclusion of Members speaking at events, for example, taking on MC roles at housing launches, sharing their experiences of what having a CHI home means to them in the press, or writing about how an event or activity impacted them for our Member newsletter.

## Outcomes and achievements

CHI Communications both internal and external have been well received by key stakeholders. It is important to us as a Member-led organisation to include and celebrate the diversity of voices that shape and inform our organisation. Member-led content exists across our list of publications and Members are asked for their invaluable input, feedback and contribution to the design and content of all outputs. Members are included in the planning and delivery of events, and are invited to speak at housing launches, unveilings and publication launches.

### Internal Communications

86% of CHI Members say they are happy with CHI communications to them when neutral responses are removed. This is on par with CHI's last survey conducted in 2020, when 87% of CHI Members surveyed said they were happy with how CHI communicated to them.

### External Communications

4 TV appearance in 15 months for CHI launches.

Print: Irish Daily Mail, The Star, The Echo; TV: RTÉ TV One News; Online coverage, RTÉ, FM104 (possibly

news bulletin also), Echo Live. Key Handover Halliday's Mill coverage in Dundalk papers – Democrat, The Argus.

### Digital Communications

Steady growth in social media from quarter to quarter.

#### Q3 stats versus Q2

##### Twitter

+60% Engagement Twitter

+44% link clicks

+5% Followers

##### Linked In

+30% engagement

+30% impressions

+36% followers

### Member Publications

Member Association Handbook, Being a Good neighbour, You and your rent, Mental Health Toolkit.

# NIFHA Comms Forum- Cost of Living Crisis Campaign

## NIFHA



### Statement of support

The NIFHA Comms Forum brings together the majority of Housing Associations across Northern Ireland to collaborate on joint communications campaigns addressing issues impacting social housing tenants. Representatives of the Forum are made up of communications managers/ officers from each Housing Association in N. Ireland, with the aim of working together to develop joint campaigns with increased impact, as a result of collaboration.

In October 2022 the Forum launched their Cost of Living Crisis Campaign. NIFHA launched the campaign with a Cost of Living Commitment/ Pledge, which all Housing Associations were encouraged to sign up to. This Commitment was launched through a Press release in October 2022 and highlighted HAs commitment to the following

- Be proactive in seeking to identify and support those who are experiencing difficulty in paying their rent to ensure that tenancies continue;
- Provide access to income and benefit entitlement advice;
- Communicate support available to tenants and encourage them to actively engage with their landlord if problems arise.

The launch of the Housing Association's Commitment was followed by a Cost of Living social media campaign, planned and delivered through the NIFHA

Comms Forum in partnership with MW Advocate. The campaign built upon the commitment made by Housing Associations to support tenants over the cost of living crisis and members of the Forum worked together, alongside M W Advocate to develop key themes/ messages for social media content, that could both highlight how Housing Providers were supporting service users, whilst also providing content that would support the most vulnerable to the impact of the Cost of Living crisis. This social media campaign showcased the actions which are being taken by Housing Associations to support their most vulnerable tenants during the cost of living crisis, and showed the direct support social landlords are providing. Housing Associations from across N. Ireland participated in the campaign, including, Radius, Grove Housing Association, Arbour Housing, St Matthews Housing Association, Rural Housing Association, Apex, Triangle Housing, Newington Housing Association, Co-Ownership, Craigowen, Clanmill, Ark Housing, Choice, Connswater, Abbeyfield and Wesley, NB Housing, Alpha & Habinteg.

To ensure continuity of messaging, the Forum worked together to develop a series of social media cards, which linked directly to the Cost of Living Commitment, launched in October 2022. These social media cards were designed by M W Advocate and could be adapted by Housing Associations, who populated the social media cards with content highlighting their commitment to their service users during the Cost of Living Crisis.

As part of the Forum's strategy to maximise impact and track the success of the campaign the Forum also established a hashtag for the Cost of Living Crisis campaign (#NIFHACoL). This ensured that whilst a range of Housing Associations were participating across a variety of platforms, there was a collaborative approach to sharing content. All Forum members were encouraged to retweet, like and share content from other Housing Associations participating in the campaign, highlighting the collaborative approach to communications, which is at the heart of the Forum's work.



## Outcomes and achievements

The NIFHA Cost of Living Commitments piece received strong coverage in local press and social media following the launch of a press release documenting Housing Associations' commitments in October 2022, and was featured in local newspapers including the Irish News.

The social media campaign, which followed also received strong coverage with key outcomes including:

- 38 original tweets from NIFHA Comms Forum members
- 409,059 potential impacts on Twitter
- 117,956 potential reach on Twitter

- 150 retweets of posts relating to the campaign
- 336 likes

Another key achievement was the collaboration achieved through the Forum. The Forum successfully involved 18 housing providers in the campaign, which took place over November and December 2022. This collaborative approach to social media campaigns, which is an ongoing focus of the NIFHA Comms Forum, ensures that through partnership working social housing providers/ Co-Ownership can achieve increased impact in communications campaigns. The Forum hope to launch a series of new campaigns in 2023, which further highlight key issues impacting tenants and the work housing providers are doing to support the most vulnerable.

# Tuath Housing tenant Engagement Strategy, Creation and Launch

## Tuath Housing



## Statement of support

In the Summer of 2022, the Tuath Housing Tenant Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2025, 'Your Voice, Your Home, Your Community' was launched with a Nationwide network of events and engagement with residents and communities around Ireland. Resident consultation and participation have been central to the development of the Strategy, and its launch. Our Tenant Engagement working group, a consultation group of Tuath Housing residents and Tuath Housing staff, including management and other staff from within housing services, was established in early 2020. The purpose of the working group is to enable staff and residents to work together to improve the services Tuath provides and give residents an opportunity to have an input into the services they receive and decisions that affect them.

The process of residents and staff working together has been a rewarding one. According to Tuath resident and member of the working group, "I found being on the working group very easy and it is rewarding knowing that my opinion matters." Another

member says "As a Tuath resident I wanted to give something back. I appreciate the ethos and aims of the association and want to support the development of tenant engagement. Getting involved is a great step towards having a say in your community. It recognises the shared responsibility we have in making our communities work well."

Louise Thompson, Tuath Housing Manager and Chair of the Tenant Engagement Working Group. "Understanding the changing needs of our residents is vital if we are to deliver a truly great housing service. We recognise that informing and listening to residents' views is essential to help us deliver a housing service to meet our customers' needs. We want to work with residents to provide more opportunities to get involved and to share their knowledge and experiences with us."

To enable all residents to have a say in the development of the Tenant Engagement Strategy a national survey was developed by the tenant engagement working group and sent out to every Tuath household of which 35% (1,770 OF 5,000 of total households) of all households responded. The strategy's vision is for Tuath residents to become an integral part of our business, influencing how services are provided, how decisions are made and how money is spent. We want to implement best practice to ensure that communication, consultation, and engagement is meaningful and transformative both for Tuath and our residents.

The Strategy details the seven objectives supporting the plan for how Tuath will involve residents in the delivery, and continuous improvement of services



in the next four years. For the Strategy launch on Thursday 14th of July, seven simultaneous events were held across the country. Each event took as its theme one of the seven pillars outlined in the Strategic Plan – Involve, Enable, Communicate, Build, Integrate, Embed and Empower. The aim of each event was to bring to life the intrinsic meaning behind each of the seven pillars guiding the strategy. Invitations to attend were extended directly to residents and their communities via door-to-door communication with housing staff and through social media, residents' groups, and direct messaging.

#### The Seven Pillars of the Tenant Engagement Strategy:

**EMBED:** Embed a culture of tenant engagement to involve residents in the housing services' planning, delivery, decision-making and review processes.

**INVOLVE:** Raising awareness of tenant engagement from the beginning of tenancy so residents know how they can get involved.

**ENABLE:** All tenants will have a chance to influence how Tuath provides services and makes decisions to provide increased housing services, standards and living conditions.

**COMMUNICATE:** Provide effective, timely and relevant communications between residents and Tuath as their housing services provider.

**BUILD:** Create safe physical surroundings to make sure that residents feel connected to their communities and local support.

**INTEGRATE:** Support the development of cohesive, integrated communities by ensuring that staff have the knowledge and skills to help sustain vibrant, multicultural communities.

**EMPOWER:** Provide residents with relevant support, training, and development opportunities to develop the confidence and skills they need to get involved.

## Outcomes and achievements

On 14th July 2022, seven simultaneous Strategy launch events were held in Dublin, Louth, Meath, Kildare, Westmeath, and Cork City. Activities for residents of all ages included summer fetes, face painting, soccer extravaganzas, workshops on art, graffiti art, bike maintenance, digital skills for the elderly, animal care and music in addition to barbecues, garden parties and attendance of local musicians lending to the celebrations on the day.

Full capacity was reached at each of the seven launch events, with a high turnout by residents. Excellent support was provided by local community groups and organisations from such as Crosscare, Alone, Vodafone, GAA and Soccer Clubs, local TD's, councillors, and local celebrities including players from Dundalk United FC, Cork City Ladies Soccer club, and GAA veteran Tomas Mulcahy in addition to coverage in local and national media.

The main launch event in Cork City received significant radio coverage, featuring on 96fm and Redfm's daily news roundup, and a written article featured in The Echo, a widely popular local paper in Cork City. The auxiliary events also received radio and radio coverage, such as the Dundalk Event, held in Oriel Park, which featured in the Dundalk Democrat. The event was well received on Tuath's social media channel, with various posts with photos and videos from all the events. The purpose of each post was to highlight the community spirit generated by each event, and also link users to the new Strategy on the Tuath website. The success of the campaign was highlighted by the fact that the document was downloaded over 1000 times from the Tuath website within the first 2 weeks of the launch. The document

remains the most viewed publication of all time on the Tuath website.

Coverage of the Strategy and launch were also included in Tuaths' bi-annual residents' magazine delivered to over 9,000 Tuath homes, in addition to the monthly resident online newsletter and on all Tuath Housing social media platforms. The Strategy will be a live, active, working document that we hope will develop and evolve over the next four years. We are at the beginning of our journey of working in partnership with our residents, but we are proud of the progress we have made so far, and we will continue to grow and develop our resident-led approach which is fundamental to creating sustainable communities.

To view the full Tenant Engagement Strategy, follow the link here <https://tuathhousing.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Tuath-Tenant-Engagement-Strategy-22-25.pdf>

A short video from the main launch event in Cork City can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38HBpZbnxN4>

Picture 1: Tuath's Tenant Engagement Working Group made of Tuath residents and Tuath staff. The purpose of the working group is to enable staff and residents to work together to improve the services Tuath provides and give residents an opportunity to have an input into the services they receive and decisions that affect them.

Picture 2: Official launch of the Tenant Engagement Strategy, Bishops Avenue, Cork. There were seven events held around the Country.

# EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Sponsored by: **Co%ownership**

In a rapidly changing environment, the need to deliver excellent service is more important than ever. This award recognises housing teams who go above and beyond to deliver truly outstanding customer service.

## Discretionary Housing Payment

### Northern Ireland Housing Executive



#### Statement of support

In June 2021, a review of the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Scheme commenced. A working Group was set up to oversee the review and was made up of representatives from the following departmental business areas and organisations:

- Housing Benefit, The Housing Executive
- Social Security Policy and Legislation Division, DfC
- Housing Division, DfC
- Housing Rights
- Law Centre NI
- NIFHA
- Advice NI.

The aim of the review was to consider the current use of DHPs and assess how the scheme could be improved to help more people living in the private rented sector in Northern Ireland.

DHPs were originally seen as a short term safety

net to help people whilst they try to improve the circumstances that led them to need a DHP. However, due to the limited availability of affordable housing in the private rented sector they were generally awarded for up to two years and are a valuable support to tenants living in the private rented sector in helping sustain their tenancy. In light of this, at the outset of the DHP review the policy objective of DHPs was broadened out to help sustain tenancies and prevent and alleviate homelessness.

The DHP review was completed in November 2021 and in December 2021 the Housing Executive worked quickly to implement a number of policy changes, including:-

- Removal of the two year time limit for awards.
- The 13 week protection rule becoming policy going forward. This had previously been introduced as a short-term measure at the outset of Covid-19 to provide additional financial help for tenants living in the private rented sector who are in receipt of the housing costs element of Universal Credit and have recently lost their job, been made temporarily redundant or had a reduction to their income.
- Claimants moving from temporary accommodation and young people leaving care will have the full shortfall between contractual rent and LHA met for a period of 13 weeks.
- Claimants receiving UC housing costs who have had a bereavement within their household which resulted in their Local Housing Allowance rate being reduced will have the reduction covered in full by DHP for a period of 9 months.

- All new awards will be paid to a minimum of the 50th percentile of LHA and if appropriate and applicable to the 75th percentile.
- Any UC claimants in receipt of housing costs who have had a significant change in their income or circumstances can request a review of their DHP award.

Following the introduction of the policy changes, Housing Benefit Units worked quickly to review all awards which ended in October 2021 and re-instate. A review of all DHP awards under £10 per week was then completed and awards were increased to at least the 50th percentile and if applicable to the 75th percentile. Staff in the HB Units then worked to review all awards which ended between 1 April and 30 September 2021 and re-instated where appropriate.

Housing Rights highlighted that 'the Discretionary Housing Payments review has played a key role in helping the people we support to keep their homes. By increasing the amount and duration of DHP awards, as well as broadening the circumstances in which they can be accessed, DHPs now go even further in protecting people living in the private rented sector from homelessness. For one of our clients who was made redundant, the new DHP awards enabled him to afford his rent until he secured a new job. For another client, who was facing eviction as a result of rent arrears caused by financial abuse, a backdated DHP award meant she could pay her debt and keep her home.'

## Outcomes and achievements

As a result of the policy changes to the DHP scheme, we are now maximising spend and helping more people than ever before to sustain their tenancy and as a result helping to prevent and alleviate homelessness. A number of customers have also phoned us to say how grateful they are for the additional help, something which hasn't happened in any notable numbers before. The feedback from customers confirms that the additional support is very much needed in the private rented sector and is an acknowledgement of how we make a difference, which is one of the core values of the Housing Executive.

The Department for Communities noted that 'given historical underuse of DHP, the Department was very keen to work with Housing Rights and the Housing Executive to make best use of the available funding, and to target it better at our core business objectives of reducing housing stress and homelessness. It was great to work with such knowledgeable partners. The operational knowledge of the Housing Executive was crucial in identifying possible improvements, and most importantly putting these into operation very quickly'.

# Expansion of Choice Services 2022

## Choice Services Ltd



### Statement of support

In 2017 Choice Services Ireland Limited (CS) was set up as an internal business unit within the Choice Group to provide maintenance services to circa 4,300 homes in West / North Belfast along with the Antrim / Larne area, and a further 550 homes in the Republic of Ireland.

In early 2022 with the impact of increasing inflation and the rising cost of living affecting tenants' financial sustainability, work was undertaken to test the value for money in delivery of maintenance services. As a result, in March 2022 Choice took the decision to expand CS delivery provision by a further 4,200 homes in South and East Belfast and Co Down to cover approximately 80% of the total Choice housing stock. This expansion by CS, during a period of significant rising inflation, saw an immediate cost saving on the response repairs budget and extended the award-winning tenant engagement process.

The expansion was completed within a six week period, by 5th May 2022. The key challenge for CS was managing a substantial expansion that doubled the scale of the business and considerably expanded its geographical cover, within a narrow timescale. It was also vital that this expansion work did not negatively impact the existing customer service provided. However CS ensured that all customers, existing and new, were informed of the changes and that service was delivered uninterrupted.

On the 5th May 2022 Choice Services also welcomed 32 new colleagues both via TUPE and recruitment, who immediately delivered service to the expanded area. This transition was smooth and all new staff were successfully integrated from day one. Uniform, tools, training in the Choice way of working, and liveried vehicles were sourced in advance to facilitate this operation. During this expansion, the average monthly task volume increased from circa 1250 orders to 2500 and initially included responding to a legacy of work backlog. It is against this backdrop that the success of CS as a quality maintenance provider shines through.

CS staff employ a range of systems and devices to co-ordinate workloads and effectively communicate with colleagues and tenants, in particular mobile device applications are key to ensuring high standards of customer service are achieved and maintained. Many of the incoming staff had no previous experience of mobile devices to co-ordinate workload, so were given training to ensure CS procedures, customer care and quality standards were understood and followed. This training included for example, empowering new staff to complete response repairs without the need to seek

client permission to approve variations, up to the value of £500. This removed significant internal bureaucracy for staff yet retained strong cost controls (eg records of pictures, materials consumption and individual job costing remained).

With the increase in task volumes, CS reflected on existing processes to improve communication, offer increased ownership for tenants, and provide greater flexibility in co-ordinating home visits. In December 2022 CS launched a portal which allows tenants to manage any pre-booked appointments via an on-line calendar. In the first week of operation out of 965 booked appointments, 197 were re-arranged remotely by tenants, to suit their own home arrangements. This released CS staff to enable greater effectiveness and prioritise other work. The figures show a clear appetite from tenants for this function and CS are continually monitoring and refining the process to give more flexibility to tenants. In addition, during the first week of tenant appointment self-management, no access rates dropped by 8% and CS anticipates that this will continue, alongside wider cost efficiencies to Choice, and for tenants at this financially critical time.

## Outcomes and achievements

Choice Services (CS) have built on their successes. CS issue customer feedback requests for 100% of our response orders within 15 minutes of job completion. We receive an average customer feedback return of 9% of response tasks with current satisfaction levels at 94% to 96.9%. It is indicative of the staff commitment, that existing customer satisfaction levels were unaffected by this major expansion.

CS have reduced maintenance costs through their proactive innovations with the average cost of a response repair task in 2022 decreasing by 11% compared with the previous year. This is a timely saving considering the cost of living crisis.

Feedback from our customers is our true measure and examples include:

Guek in South Belfast, Very polite and professional engineer. Repair job carried out with great efficiency. I am extremely grateful for the emergency response, otherwise I would not be able to sleep tonight.

Diane in North Belfast, Great work. Team are all polite and friendly. Can't fault Tony and the guys. Was worried about the repair so close to Christmas. But no mess was left. Very happy with the job.

Dinah in Newry, Excellent indeed and as above thank you and far better than the last contractors.



# WE HEAR

## Circle voluntary housing association



### Statement of support

Circle VHA strive to live the WE HEAR values (Willingness, Empowerment, Honesty, Excellence, Accountability & Respect) in everything we do and everything we set out to achieve. The 2021-2024 strategy sets out 4 goals, the first being Tenant First. One of the actions set out to achieve this goal is listening and responding to the tenant experience.

The Income Management team work with tenants together rent and service charge payments. The team often receive calls and emails from tenants who are having trouble paying their bills due to the increasing cost of living. They will take every step possible to engage with tenants to avoid tenancies coming under threat of termination.

The Income Management team encourage any tenants experiencing financial difficulties to contact MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service) for support. It is important to clearly communicate with tenants that are in arrears or are at risk of going into arrears, to provide direction to support services such as MABS and outline how these services can assist them. In cases where tenants have engaged with MABS, it has been beneficial for both Circle VHA and tenants. At times MABS will contact the Income Management team to request that we allow them time to work with the tenant to assess their finances before involving the Residential Tenancies Board. Once tenants engage with MABS, they generally have a better understanding of how to budget effectively and this

helps to create a more sustainable tenancy in the long term. Some examples of the team engaging with tenants to provide security of tenancy are:

- A tenant has been in arrears since 2019 and had been engaging with the team through 2021 but suddenly stopped in early 2022. The team tried to organise in person meetings to engage with the tenant but were unsuccessful. They also sent letters detailing the arrears and the support services available. The tenant began engaging with MABS in August 2022 and has now begun to reduce the arrears.
- A tenant lost their job in 2022 and contacted the team to discuss their rent payments as they were worried about meeting their contribution. The team advised the tenant to contact their local social welfare office to apply for available supports. The tenant was reassured that their rent payments would be recalculated and backdated once they submit the relevant documents. The tenant's rent contribution was subsequently recalculated and backdated to when their income reduced.

Circle consistently work to improve services for tenants. One way this was achieved was by sending a team made up of staff from across different departments to visit an approved housing body named B3 Living based in London. This trip generated many service improvement ideas. One new idea that emerged was how to reduce our call abandonment rate. Feedback from some tenants stated that they found it difficult to make contact via the phone system and at times the call disconnected before they received an answer.

Circle's leadership team viewed this an urgent issue that needed to be resolved as quickly as possible, in line with the Tenant First goal. Upon return from B3 Living a new process was devised where the Customer Services and Repairs team would act as an overflow for all other departments. The team worked on implementing this with the phone provider Genesys and over the coming months abandonment rates reduced significantly. While there is still work to do to further reduce abandonment rates, they are now in line with industry standards.

## Outcomes and achievements

Tenant case studies and feedback from the Income Management team outlines the success of engaging with tenants directly and providing details of the different supports available. Circle work to empower tenants to help themselves and as outlined above, where tenants engage with the Income Management team or services such as MABS, it has been beneficial to both Circle and tenants.

To assess the outcome of the phone overflow process we can see the success since its implementation. The team's visit to B3 Living took place in early September

2022. Circle's abandonment rate from January to October 2022 averaged 17% per month. The new overflow process for the phoneline was implemented in mid-November. Calls would route to the intended department and if they remained unanswered for a set period, they would then overflow to the Customer Services and Repairs team, who have done an outstanding job in managing the additional calls they receive. This seen an immediate impact on the abandonment rate which reduced to 9% in November and reduced further to just 5% in December, with these being 2 of the 3 busiest months of 2022.

# EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Sponsored by:  **Tuath**  
Housing

This award will focus on excellence in the areas of fit for purpose housing, adaptations and services.

The award celebrates organisations that have developed activities, services, policies, or strategies that contribute to the positive health and well-being of tenants, residents, or the wider community.

## Drugs Accommodation Support Project/Ormeau Centre

**Extern**



### Statement of support

The Drugs Accommodation and Support Programme (DASP) is a leading provider of services to individuals who are homeless and who are IV drug users.

Working In partnership with NIHE, Belfast HSCT, PSNI the Public Health Agency and the DPP, DASP delivers life-changing and life-saving services to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in our society.

The service is based in Belfast and supports men and women who are actively injecting substances to attain accommodation and to stabilise their substance misuse through assessment and provision of pathways to specialist addiction services.

Central to the delivery of this life-saving service is

the specialist accommodation provided for up to 12 people, (at any one time) who are engaged with DASP, within Extern's Ormeau Centre, a facility which provides temporary accommodation for 29 people experiencing homelessness.

The provision of a non-judgmental service and a safe space within which service users can manage their injecting use is essential for their overall health and wellbeing and capacity to move from emergency accommodation to independent living in the community. DASP and Ormeau Centre staff work collaboratively to remove the barriers to support and stability for services users through a Harm Reduction ethos which recognises the intrinsic worth of each individual, respecting their views and choices, in order to work at the individual's own pace and therefore achieve better and longer term outcomes.

In partnership with the DASP Co-ordinator, Ormeau Centre staff work closely with all DASP service users in providing support which focuses on reducing the harm that injecting drugs causes. In addition to educating service users about safe practice in injecting and providing clean equipment, service users are supported in the areas of health, housing, benefits and training and with access to specialist services, including substitution treatment. The aim is for service users to be able to stabilise their use and circumstances so that they are in a position to move from emergency provision to their own independent accommodation in the community when they are ready and healthy enough to do so.

"DASP is the best thing that has ever happened because before DASP I didn't have any choices or any ongoing support. Had I used drugs anywhere else I have stayed I would have been forced back onto the streets.

"Through the Ormeau Centre and DASP I finally have had the opportunity of addressing the addiction issues that I have been struggling with for years. Before DASP and the OC I would have injected both heroin and cocaine. Now, I don't touch either. DASP is helping me get my life in order.

"The Ormeau Centre is a safe space to use and a safer place to finally reduce my need for drugs. The staff are dead on. They don't judge. They don't preach. They do offer us all a great deal of support and I'm really grateful for it. Since staying at the Ormeau Centre I have had more choices and opportunities to make myself better.

"It's been brilliant for me and I really think that it has been a great education for those in authority - like the PSNI and the courts - who need to understand what it is to have a drug addiction". Bernard, Service User.

## Outcomes and achievements

Historically, the service users supported by Ormeau Centre/DASP are hard to engage due to their multi-complex needs, chaotic lifestyles and their previous experiences of trauma. DASP workers adopt an assertive outreach approach to engaging service users who are living on the streets and injecting. These service users face multiple risks in terms of their health, wellbeing and safety. Once admitted into the Ormeau Centre they are given the opportunity to address, reduce and manage these risks.

Of the 108 service users resident in the Ormeau Centre within the DASP protocol since April 2018, 25 have returned to their families or moved on to independent accommodation in the community.

95 were supported to access GP services, 98 were supported to access appropriate benefits and 50 were supported to access statutory addiction services.

A crucial element of the support provided is in the area of overdose prevention. All staff working within the DASP protocol are trained in harm reduction techniques and in the administering of Naloxone (a medication used to reverse or reduce the effects of an opioid overdose).

Since 1st April 2018 a total of 95 overdoses were successfully managed/reversed within Ormeau Centre under the DASP protocol, saving 40 lives.

# Complex Lives Initiative

## Northern Ireland Housing Executive



### Statement of support

The Drugs Accommodation and Support Programme The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Chief Executive, Grainia Long is part of the Belfast Partnership's Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) on Drugs, Alcohol and Mental Health. In 2021, Grainia championed the 'whole system' approach to supporting people caught in a cycle of rough sleeping, substance misuse, poor physical and mental health and offending behaviour, along with other key partners, resulting in a decision by the SLG to develop

the approach for Belfast. This 'whole system' approach formed the basis of the Complex Lives Project. The initial prototyping phase of this project began on 1st October 2021 and ran until 30th September 2022.

The 'whole system' approach involved bringing the breadth of agencies and services across housing, health, criminal justice, employment and skills and other support together in a shared, agreed, and sustainable way of working to engage with people and improve outcomes. A key focus of the project was increasing the ease of access to a range of services and support which can too often be both confusing and overwhelming to the service user, through the provision of a single access point to multidisciplinary support.

Key statutory partners include Belfast City Council (BCC), the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), the Public Health Agency, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust, Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), along with key voluntary sector providers engaged in the multidisciplinary approach including representatives from the Simon Community, Welcome Organisation, De Paul and Extern.



The development of the multi-disciplinary team (MDT) has been pivotal to the success to date.

Partners have agreed that their understanding of the other services within the MDT has significantly improved, this includes the services which each partner provides, their strengths and the limitations under which they operate. As a result it is agreed that the working relationships between these services have been greatly enhanced.

As planned, the multiagency approach is also having a positive effect on the service user journey, as comprehensive background information is shared allowing all needs and risks to be identified more quickly and ensuring that planned and viable pathways to support are available. This reduces repetition of their experience for the service user and enables the team and each individual agency/organisation to take a more holistic approach to support through greater

understanding of the their lived experience.

The MDT has been effective in securing and maintaining some level of positive outcome for the majority of individuals it has supported. These outcomes have most often involved smoother transitions to more appropriate accommodation aligning closely with the Housing First principles which the project aims to work to. Additionally, through improved communication and flexibilities in referral processes, the MDT have then able to link several of these service users to appropriate support with both statutory and voluntary agencies.

Work is ongoing to further develop the approach with a view on the long term to embedding the practice across Northern Ireland.

## Outcomes and achievements

The effects on the service user are clear. Having appropriate accommodation and support to facilitate improvements in health and wellbeing in place will improve chances of further successful transitions and sustaining a tenancy.

By enabling services users to access and maintain engagement with both support services and accommodation providers, pressure has eased on the statutory services and reduced the need for repeat referrals to multiple providers.

Housing Advisors are reporting a higher level of job satisfaction and reward when meaningful support and accommodation solutions are put in place. This is largely credited to the smaller yet more complex

caseload, of those in the complex lives project, allowing advisors the space and time to provide a more intensive level of support and put in place the measures needed.

Outreach providers have been able to reduce to the level of support provided to some service users and both the PSNI and BCC Safe Neighbourhood Officers have reported a reduction in disruption in the City Centre.

Customer commented, "I have been supported in getting off drugs and finding my own tenancy and know that I will have their support in maintaining it. Without complex lives I don't know where I would be."

# It Takes a Village

**Lead organisation: Co-operative Housing Ireland**

**Partner organisations: Soar**



## Statement of support

Co-operative Housing Ireland (CHI) teamed up with Soar to run 'It Takes a Village', a Mental Health and Wellbeing initiative among young people and adults

in the wider CHI Community. CHI is an Approved Housing Body providing 4,300+ high quality homes to low-income households. Soar is a collective movement which believes that there is greatness within all young people. 'It Takes a Village' workshops were held with young people and adults living in CHI homes in Carlow, Laois and Cork, and a Mental Health and Wellbeing toolkit was developed by CHI and Soar post workshop for all CHI households. The toolkit was informed by the observations and feedback of those who took part in the 'It Takes a Village' workshops and was delivered to over 4,000 CHI households nationwide. An official launch of the toolkit was held with young people and their parents in St Fiacc's Hall, Graiguecullen, Co. Carlow and was attended by officials from both Carlow and Laois County Councils. CHI Members from Carlow, Laois and Cork travelled to be in attendance, shared a light lunch together and went bowling to celebrate the launch of the Toolkit and mark the end of the 'It Takes a Village' programme.

The youth-focused 'It Takes a Village' workshops were aimed at young people aged 13-16 years. They centred on areas that impact a young person's mental health with an aim of developing communication skills and creating understanding around the impact that community can have on mental health. Themes included:

- Understanding what stepping outside your comfort zone means
- How it feels to be a teenager
- What it means to be a hero
- What community means
- How supportive a community can be

The workshops for adults aimed at increasing empathy towards young people who may be going through a tough time with their mental health or wellbeing. The workshops focused on:

- What mental health is
- How to support our own mental health
- Remembering what it was like to be a teen
- Learning what teenagers want adults to know
- Being more aware of the supports around you
- The importance of listening

Central to 'It Takes a Village' was to recognise the needs of young people in the community, who often

do not have the same say as adults in community decisions. The programme unpacked issues that have a deleterious effect on the mental wellness of young people and encouraged adults who took part to connect more fully into the feeling of what it is to be young.

The programme was well received by everyone who took part. Speaking about his experience of taking part, Jefferson, a young person from Co. Laois said, "It was great to take part in 'It Takes a Village'. I got to meet with people I knew as well as a variety of new and different types of people and learn how we can all communicate what's going on for us in different ways. I think overall I learned a lot from everyone and I'm glad I took part."

The creation of the toolkit was a collaborative effort between CHI, SOAR and the young people who took part in the in-person workshops. The energy, expertise, and willingness of participants to have open and honest conversations ensured the toolkit's success. It is hoped that everyone who received the 'It Takes a Village' Toolkit will find something useful within its pages and be encouraged to reach out for support when needed.

'It Takes a Village' could not have happened without financial support from the Housing Finance Agency and their continued commitment to positively impacting the social fabric in communities throughout Ireland.

## Outcomes and achievements

Young people who took part in the workshops learned invaluable life skills to mind their mental health, and how to be a support to those experiencing a tough time through listening skills and sign-posting to relevant supports. 100% of participants said they would recommend taking part in the workshops to others, and 50% said they would feel comfortable reaching out for support if they needed it.

Speaking about the programme, one young participant said, "It was awkward at first, but I got a bit used to it as it went on, I did feel embarrassed and

scared about sharing a personal experience with the group, but it helped me to learn things about myself and others. It also made me feel safe and comfortable as others have similar experiences and can relate to my struggle."

After taking part, 67% said that they would challenge what it means to be a teenager, 50% said they understood better what it means to be a leader, and 33% said they would explore what it means to be a hero in the community.

# Mindful Bodies Programme

**Lead organisation: Radius Housing**

**Partner organisations: ACT Initiative**



## Statement of support

The Mindful Bodies Programme (Women Supporting Women) developed by Radius Housing Association is a 12 week mental health and emotional wellbeing and awareness programme designed to develop community health champions, which was run out with women in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast

The programme is a partnership between:

- Radius Housing
- Shankill Act Initiative
- Twaddell Women's Group
- The Centre of Health and Wellbeing,
- Belfast Drug & Alcohol Coordination Team
- Belfast Health & Social Care Trust Health

NISRA statistics reflected that Northern Ireland's most deprived areas had a suicide rate that was almost twice that of the least deprived areas in 2020. Radius consulted with local housing teams and the issues they faced in dealing with tenants with complex needs including mental ill health. They also met and consulted with local community groups.

The partnership groups developed a programme to support women in the Super Output Areas of deprivation in Woodvale 2 (deprivation scale 12) & Woodvale 3, (deprivation scale 17) as reflected in (NISRA) figures.

The main target group was those experiencing or impacted by the following –

- Low mood, anxiety or depression
- Chronic Pain Management
- Legacy of the Troubles
- Suicide

The aim of the Mindful Bodies programme was to provide individuals with the awareness, skills and knowledge to take control of their own health and better manage mental health & emotional wellness, in addition to providing training on suicide awareness. The programme was funded by the Public Health Agency through the Clear Project and has helped equip local people with skills and strategies to cope with the daily stresses of life and manage their wellbeing to improve their quality of life.

21 Radius Housing tenants and members of the Woodvale and Greater Shankill community completed the 12-week health and wellbeing programme. Over the 12 weeks, participants attended awareness workshops on the benefits of alternative therapies, mindfulness and learnt about healthy & unhealthy ways of coping including drug and alcohol use/misuse awareness. This included prescription medication and illegal drugs. The workshops were attended by Act and Twaddell Women's Group and women from the wider community across Woodvale and Shankill areas, supported by Julie Davison, Women's Coordinator for Act Initiative. Facilitators included Extern Connections Belfast Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team (BDACT), the Centre of Health & Wellbeing, and Lifeworks who delivered the Safetalk Suicide awareness Training.

The programme also gave space for the women to discuss personal issues that affect them and their families and any negative impact this had on their own mental health.

All 21 participants completed Safetalk training which will have a positive impact on their families and local community as they are now all trained and equipped to signpost others who are struggling with mental health.

Through the delivery of this project is hoped participants will be in a better place learn to understand, accept and use restorative approaches to engaging on a cross community level with all cultures. This will be a longer-term goal but in the interim, this has been a great starting point for the women to build relationships and networks on a cross community level.

Clare Flynn, Advanced Health Development Practitioner (Mental Health) BHSCT, added "Supporting people to understand their mental health and take positive steps to promote their own well-being is a vital part of our efforts to address the issue of mental health in our communities. While services and therapies have an important role to play in addressing poor mental health, giving people the skills to improve their own well-being can make all the difference in helping them recover and stay well."

## Outcomes and achievements

All 21 participants completed pre and post evaluations using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and 100% showed positive change to their mental health as a result of taking part in this programme. This has had a domino effect into their homes and families and contributes to making life better for them and the community.

X5 partnership groups who came together to design and develop programme; local groups on the ground and specialist health and wellbeing practitioner groups.

Additional Outcomes as a result of the programme has included - -

1. 21 women completing an OCN Level 1 in Restorative Practices and Mediation facilitated by Shankill Alternatives.

2. Connecting with other groups across the city for Feel Good February 2022 in partnership with NI Drug & Alcohol Coordination Team, Belvoir Community Hub and Radius.

3. Building Community Networks/Partnerships

Success Story:

4. Development and establishment of a permanent Women's Hub in Act Initiative as a direct result of this programme.

Link to Belfast Live Media Coverage -

<https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/woodvale-greater-shankill-residents-commended-23149761>

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3lpho4xwq4hjlib/AAD6ACn7oI5VQ214oNxoXz\\_ra?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3lpho4xwq4hjlib/AAD6ACn7oI5VQ214oNxoXz_ra?dl=0)



# EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING INNOVATION

Sponsored by:

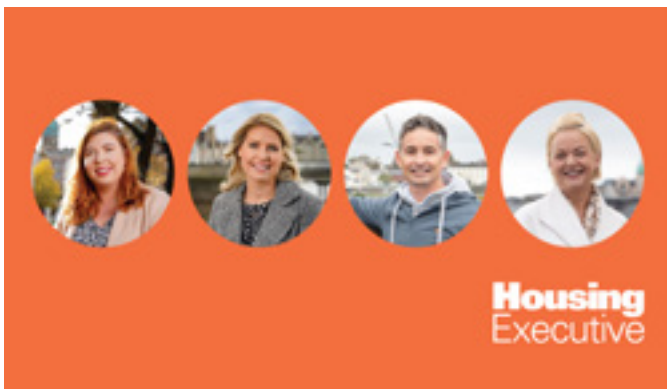


An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta  
The Housing Agency

This award is aimed at programmes or projects which can clearly demonstrate how they have developed an innovative approach that has made a real difference to the lives of tenants and customers. This could be any new product, service or technology – being able to demonstrate innovation is the key.

## Financial inclusion

### Northern Ireland Housing Executive



#### Statement of support

Empowering customers to maximise their financial inclusion and nurture financial resilience was a key focus for the Housing Executive throughout 2022 as NI moved beyond the pandemic and into an acute Cost of Living Crisis.

Those engaging with the Housing Executive are already disproportionately likely to live with low or no income, and a high proportion of people living in social housing are reliant on welfare benefits. However, NI's lowest-earning households have also seen discretionary incomes decrease by 46.1% since 2021, meaning many now have less than £25 per week to spend after bills and living expenses.

Financial exclusion can act as a barrier to personal and economic development, have a negative impact on mental health, and can disrupt households; potentially leading to family and tenancy breakdown.

Tackling financial exclusion is imperative for building financial resilience, sustaining tenancies, preventing homelessness, and stress reduction. Such an overarching problem requires an innovative and wide-ranging solution.

Financial Inclusion Managers were introduced in Housing Services in 2019/20 to help tenants with money worries, debt advice and/or benefits with an overall aim of assisting tenants to maximise their income, reduce money worries and assist tenants to prioritise their rents. Over the course of 2022, the Housing Executive expanded its Financial Inclusion team to place the financial resilience of customers at the heart of everything the organisation does.

The Housing Executive now has seven Financial Inclusion Managers, and three Deputy Financial Inclusion Managers. Of these, three staff work within the Housing Solutions team, and seven work directly with tenants and frontline staff across the province.

Tenants and customers are now referred to the Financial Inclusion team at all key points of their journey with the Housing Executive--right from the point of application. The Financial Inclusion team perform benefit checks, provide budgeting advice, solve complex benefit issues, advocate for customers who are appealing benefit decisions, and provide onward referral for specialist debt advice.

#### Statements of Support

"...thank you for all your help from start to finish with my pip claim...I have struggled so much with anxiety and depression alone with my daughter. I had always worked and was left in a position where I had little

money for myself and my daughter, and UC had left me in arrears with the housing executive and rates.

I have now cleared my arrears, and am left in a better place mentally also...I really would have been lost without you and your support."

"Mrs F has just called to advise she got her PIP claim sorted and backdated. She stated if she hadn't of spoken to you she would remain in financial hardship and she wanted me to pass on her thanks to you for all your help and advice, without you she wouldn't have had a clue what she would have been entitled to."

"We were referred to the Financial Inclusion Manager after making an enquiry about benefits to our Patch

Manager. We weren't expecting much as we believed we weren't entitled to any. After a chat and help with the application process, we found out we were entitled to over £800 a month in Universal Credit. They also helped us to apply for DLA for our daughter. Without the initial referral, we would still be struggling and unaware of what we are entitled to."

"I used the Financial Inclusion service as I was stressing over my rent arrears. I spoke to my local Financial Inclusion Manager who realised I was entitled to help with my rent and was owed money which covered my arrears. This service has been a massive help to me."

## Outcomes and achievements

Through engagement with Financial Inclusion Managers, tenants have been supported to: maximise their income. Over the 2022 calendar year, the financial inclusion team have:

- Identified £1.4 million of additional benefit entitlement for tenants, and £193,519 for housing applicants;
- Received an average of 215 tenant referrals, and 14 housing applicant referrals, per month;
- Achieved an 80% engagement rate with tenants, and an 87% engagement rate with housing applicants;
- Provided benefit and budgeting advice to 655 tenants and 66 housing applicants;
- Resolved outstanding, complex benefit issues for 157 tenants;
- Referred 66 tenants to our partners, Advice NI, for specialist Debt Advice; and

- Revised Making Your Money Work training for Patch Managers and supported the roll-out of this across the organisation.

### Case Study 1

- Loan parent with 1 child
- Homeless and although working, hostel accommodation unaffordable
- FIM ran benefit check. Applicant not receiving Child benefit as thought she wasn't entitled as child born in USA
- Resulted in backdated claim increasing entitlement by £91.21 per week as well as receiving full housing benefit

### Case Study 2

- 67 year old applicant living alone
- Following FIM advice, Attendance allowance applied for and received
- Applicant also received DHP of £20 per week and assistance with rates

# Choice Tenant Support Fund

**Lead organisation: Choice Housing**

**Partner organisations: Bryson Charitable Group, Trussell Trust, Homeless Connect**



## Statement of support

With over 40,000 people requiring housing assistance in Northern Ireland, there is a growing need for sustainable housing that offers tenants the chance of living independently, along with the provision of social and financial support.

Food and energy bills are surging at their fastest rate in almost a decade, fueling concerns that struggling families face a choice between eating and heating, coupled with the rise in benefits not matching that of real time inflation, plunging thousands of vulnerable people into further poverty.

In this context Choice has delivered a range of vital support services to tenants, with a focus on financial management and sustainable tenancies. Our support services deliver workable platforms for tenants to access real time support and advice.

The Choice Financial Inclusion Team deliver an invaluable service, ensuring tenants receive appropriate financial advice. The demand for these services has grown from 508 requests in 2020/21, 650 in the 2021/22 period and 701 referrals from 2022 to date.

The support provided to tenants includes:

- Benefit maximisation and financial application
- Housing Benefit entitlement checks and application assistance
- Securing grants (for example to set up first home)
- Support for tenants in arrears (i.e., developing sustainable repayment / budgeting plans)
- Assistance with Universal Credit applications and maintenance of claims.

In addition to this service, Choice introduced a Tenant Financial Support Fund (TSF) in 2021/22 allocating funding of £250k to assist tenants experiencing financial hardship, providing real support in areas where tenants struggle to sustain tenancies. In its first seven months of operation, c700 tenants availed of this initiative.

A Framework was agreed which outlined funding streams covering:

- Emergency Heating & Electricity
- Emergency Household Items
- Food Poverty
- Home Starter Packs

To maximise the impact of this fund, the most vulnerable groups were prioritised to ensure it benefitted those who most needed assistance.

To deliver on the Framework, Choice established a Service Level Agreement with Bryson Charitable Group to administer the awards in voucher form for fuel poverty and by means of purchase, delivery, installation, and removal of old goods relating to household items. Two types of payments were made via this fund:

- Fuel Payment
- Household Item Payment

Choice's IT team developed new digital application forms for both energy and household item grants, making it easily accessible for tenants to use and review their applications.

Under the food poverty and home starter pack funding streams, Choice provided assistance to c3,400 households and donated £35k to the following charities:

- The Trussell Trust who provide emergency food and support to families in need with a network of 41 food banks across N.I., operating in all 18 constituencies.
- Local homelessness charity Homeless Connect which supports people across N.I transitioning from homelessness into a new tenancy. The support came in the form of 'Getting Started Boxes,' which included a range of essential items helping eligible tenants set up their new home.

The Getting Started Boxes contain a range of food and basic hygiene items and are an addition to the Home Starter Packs that provide basic household items to set up home. Such items include a microwave, slow cooker, kettle & toaster, cutlery, crockery, towelling and bedding etc.

Kathy Henry, Homeless Connect:

"We exist to prevent and reduce homelessness in Northern Ireland. The support from Choice will enable us to offer Getting Started Boxes to more people which is especially important in this tough economic climate."

The Financial Inclusion Team applied for over 200 starter packs for Choice tenants equating to £41,400 worth of support.

Jonny Currie, Trussell Trust:

"We welcome this partnership with Choice providing vital support to our network of food banks in Northern Ireland".

## Outcomes and achievements

The support given to tenants provides the tools to understand and manage budgets and wider living circumstances, which in turn ensures sustainable tenancies. This financial stability lessens the chance of tenants returning to homelessness and provides further opportunities in terms of employment, training or volunteering.

Financial support tenants received from 2022 to date:

- 701 Referred Cases
- £4.4m Financial support secured for tenants
- 312 Referrals to DfC grants
- £576k Grants accessed
- 289 Assistance with Universal Credit Claims
- £1.45m Housing Costs secured

- Tenant Support Fund Reach 5,935 households

Choice have extended the TSF throughout 2022/23, doubling the budget from £250k to £500k to support more tenants.

Testimonial, Choice tenant:

"I cannot even start to put into words the help the team have given me. For two years I was not in a good place, and I let my finances slip badly, I was facing eviction. The team helped me access £3,400 of benevolent fund money to stop my eviction and have worked with me since, helping me maintain my arrangement to pay. I really feel they went over and above and without them I believe I may have lost my home. My tenancy is stable and I'm able to manage my finances".

# An Innovative Approach to Supporting Tenants to Sustain their Tenancies

## Clanmil Housing



### Statement of support

An Innovative Approach to Supporting Tenants to Sustain their Tenancies

We want our customers to sustain their tenancies for as long as they choose. With this in mind, we support customers who are in rent arrears to manage and resolve their situations in order to protect them from financial difficulty and potentially losing their home.

We understand that early intervention is key to success and in the financial year 2022-2023 Clanmil acquired and successfully implemented a new software solution from Mobysoft Ltd called RentSense that helps facilitate this.

RentSense uses Automated Intelligence to analyse customers rent accounts and produce a focused list of customers who are at high risk of rent arrears. It uses algorithms to analyse payment behaviours, aggregate trends and provide predictive intelligence. The result is a highly accurate list of customers who are in rent

arrears, or at high risk of falling into rent arrears, which facilitates earlier intervention, improved efficiencies, a reduction in the cost of rent collection, increased rent collection, and better outcomes for customers.

RentSense has enabled Clanmil's Income Recovery team to focus their time and effort on our highest risk customers - not just those who are in arrears, but those at risk of falling into arrears in the future. The new solution projects customers' rent balances and promotes early intervention. This increased focus on prevention allows the Income Recovery team to contact tenants at the earliest possible stage, ensuring they are signposted to our in-house specialist financial inclusion team if they need financial advice and support.

Prior to RentSense, Clanmil had taken a traditional reactive approach to income recovery, which depended on time consuming manual processing and provided no ability to predict future risk.

One of Clanmil's core values is to Believe in Better. This investment in a leading solution like RentSense, demonstrates that Clanmil aims to deliver the best possible service to our customers. It also shows a desire to provide staff with the best possible tools to deliver our social purpose; to provide homes and services that really make a difference to people's lives.

The new RentSense software enables the Income Recovery team to complete their weekly arrears caseload within four working days compared to five days when using our previous software. This frees up time for the team to undertake additional tasks to the benefit of our customers. We are now able to review our customers' accounts more than once each week, complete follow up investigations and arrange



more dedicated one to one home visits with tenants. All without detrimentally impacting existing levels of output and customer service. We have also been able to free up a further 15 staff hours each week to support the wider housing team where there is additional business need. Most importantly, our staff are now confident that they are delivering accurate account information and a high standard of service to our customers when resolving their account queries.

The delivery of this successful solution shows that Clanmil embraces new technology, strives to deliver

best in class solutions and recognises the importance of innovation. Today, with RentSense, Clanmil's Income Recovery team operates in a pro-active, accurate and efficient manner, utilizing the benefits of this innovative new software to protect our customers' financial circumstances and help them sustain their tenancies for as long as they choose. Given the current economic climate and ongoing cost of living crisis, protecting our customers from financial difficulty is of the upmost importance to Clanmil.

### Outcomes and achievements

- We have reduced our self-funding customer arrears by £56,000 year to date.
- RentSense has enabled us to prevent future expected arrears of £14,500.
- We now signpost high-risk tenants to financial support and advice at the earliest possible stage preventing their arrears getting out of control.
- Our bad debt provision was £92,000 below budget at quarter 2 this year as RentSense has helped reduce customers historic debts.
- Staff satisfaction surveys pre and post implementation showed a marked improvement in staff satisfaction of 35%. Staff are now delivering best in class credit control advice with the reassurance that they are using accurate account information.
- We returned an 88% customer satisfaction result post implementation from customers who dealt with Income Recovery team members. Our customers are seeing the benefits of pro-active engagement and accurate information. They have greater levels of trust knowing their account information is accurate.
- We have removed four key risks from our daily procedures:
  - Customers at risk are no longer missed due to manual oversight
  - All customers at risk are contacted within 1 week of falling into debt
  - Customers not at risk are no longer contacted unnecessarily
  - The risk of manual error has been removed

## Moylinney HAPPI Development, Newtownabbey

**Lead organisation: Radius Housing Association**

**Partner organisations: NIHE & DFC**



### Statement of support

HAPPI Moylinney Newtownabbey

This project at Moylinney Newtownabbey is the first HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) principle project in Northern Ireland.

This pilot project was completed in partnership with NIHE and DFC to ensure older people have homes that are welcoming and where they can age with

dignity and safety in their own homes.

The principles are:

- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings and bicycles
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'

Radius' was at the forefront of the introduction of sheltered accommodation over 45 years ago with our roots firmly in older people's accommodation. As society changes so do expectations in terms of where and how people live.

Radius' vision at Moylinney was to design energy efficient, affordable, safe, bright homes with private

and communal open space to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

The project was developed on the former site of a dementia unit, promoting sustainability through reuse of a Brownfield site. The development was the provision of 20 new homes comprising of 6 family homes and 14 spacious apartments with additional internal and external social spaces.

Close attention was paid to designing high quality private and communal spaces throughout the design that creates areas of passive observation, allowing the scheme to sit openly and securely on the site and enabling tenants to utilise the space, confident that is a secure but yet ensuring the feel connected to the surrounding area.

Internally the main entrance leads through to a hotel-like lobby area with communal lounge / kitchenette and large balcony area. Each spacious open plan apartment is designed to maximise natural lighting with large dual aspect windows and private balconies. A private scooter store was provided adjacent to the main entrance to promote accessibility and safety for all.

The tenants have been in the properties for some months and already they have developed a real sense

of community with the communal areas being well used not just by the tenants but also their families and surrounding community members. The properties have provided a warm comfortable home where our older tenants feel safe and secure without any sense of isolation.

The large communal balcony and communal spaces provide throughout the building have encouraged tenants to meet and mix, reducing isolation and loneliness and enabling new friendships to form. A number of events have been held to ensure the local community feel this new building is part of their community and the space and facilities are there for all to use. The large open gardens have been populated with a number of seating areas and benches to ensure people have the opportunity to enjoy outdoor space, encourage tenants to meet in the garden space and enable communal BBQs etc.

The project was delivered on programme, having successfully managing the challenges presented by COVID. The project came in below the contract budget ensuring the project produced excellent value for money especially given it was developed through the pandemic and significant construction cost increases.

## Outcomes and achievements

Our tenants are best able to provide commentary on outcomes and about how these new properties have positively impacted their lives and well being:

Jean

'Before moving to Moylinney I didn't leave my bedroom for two years, my mental health was poor and I struggled with PTSD. For me Moylinney was a new start, I participate in the events held in our communal area and I even organise many of them. My PTSD symptoms have reduced, my mental health has improved, I have made new friends and my medication has even been reduced.'

Heather

'One word to describe Moylinney Court is peaceful, my home is so quiet, it feels private. I am now getting excited about becoming involved in the tenant's group and joining in with the events.'

Roberta

'Moylinney feels like a safe and secure environment and always has people around. In the summer many people use their patios and balconies, we have BBQs together and most people join in. It's so lovely to sit outside on the patio and just watch the world. In the summer it feels like we are somewhere abroad because of the beautiful buildings with the sun shining.'

Sandra

'I don't go out much so Moylinney lets me experience socialising and being part of a community without going very far. I also have depression, however, living at Moylinney and having people around and seeing other faces really helps me.'

# Park West Plaza Office to Residential Conversion

**Lead organisation:** Tuath

**Partner organisations:** Dublin City Council



## Statement of support

Park West Plaza is a unique and innovative development that has provided much needed housing in one of the first large scale conversion projects of office accommodation to residential homes in the country. Tuath in partnership with Dublin City Council (DCC), delivered 86 social housing homes at the Plaza building in Park West business park. The former office block, which lay vacant for over 20 years, underwent a major redevelopment which included the conversion of two, four-storey office blocks into a five-storey development with 86 apartments. The office complex, which is now home to more than 200 people, is the result of an innovative €26 million office retrofit redevelopment.

The buildings are located in the 230-acre business and technology campus and were built, in their original office capacity, by Harcourt Developments in the late 1990s and early 2000s. While most of the buildings in the business park are occupied, the two adjoining blocks, known as 70 and 72 The Plaza, did not secure commercial tenants. Harcourt secured planning permission in 2018 to convert the two blocks into apartments. Two years later Tuath agreed to acquire and fund the conversion of the offices into homes using financing provided via a combination of the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage's (DHLGH) Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF), and private finance via AIB's Social Investment Fund. The two-year conversion project, undertaken by Harcourt on behalf of Tuath, resulted in an average cost of approximately €309k per apartment. Retrofitting for residential purposes is in line with Tuath's strategic objectives, particularly regarding sustainability. This represented excellent value for money for apartments in a high-cost, high demand area.

The project included the conversion of 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of existing commercial office space into residential use for more than 200 people who came from Dublin City Council's housing waiting list. Harcourt Developments received planning for the two office blocks, 70 and

72 The Plaza, to apartments with communal space in 2018. Further planning permission was obtained in April 2021 to make modifications to the permitted residential development, increasing from 84 to 86 units, for Blocks 70 and 72. Overall, plans were approved for 36 one-bed units and 50 two-bed units to include one parking space per apartment at basement level with the provision of 167 bicycle spaces. The construction of additional penthouse floors were added to each block which facilitated the delivery of 29 of the final 86 apartments.

As with refurbishment project, there were challenges; mainly around working within the existing fabric of the building. However, the project was well designed, and Harcourt has considerable experience in delivering complex building projects. Tuath's Development and Property Services team collaborated closely with the developer throughout the build and were happy with the quality of the product provided. The blocks have been fitted with Dimplex Q-Rad electric panel heaters, Dimplex Edel 200L Hot water Heat Pumps, Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery Units (MVHR) and photovoltaic solar panels. Each apartment is presented to an extremely high finish with blinds included. Tuath provides an onsite caretaker to ensure the smooth running of the development.

Tuath took handover of the project on 28th October 2022 with the tenants receiving keys to their new homes in November. Tuath Housing staff provided comprehensive pre-tenancy training to guide them on all aspects of the move in process and beyond. Tuath's Tenancy Engagement team is also currently devising initiatives and events to maximise the potential of the communal areas, fostering community spirit and providing tenants with the choice of engaging more with Tuath, and more importantly, their neighbours.

This innovative project saw Tuath work closely with Dublin City Council and the DHLGH, who were incredibly supportive of the project given the demand on the Council's waiting list, the location of the buildings and the innovative nature of this project for the conversion of unused office buildings to provide new homes.

## Funding Note:

CAS funding was approved by the Department for 43 out of 45 apartments in Block 70 in the sum of €13,985,938. CALF funding totalling 29% (circa €3.66m) was approved for the remaining 43 apartments totalling €12,621,327. Private finance was sourced from AIB PLC for the remainder of circa €9m, a clear example of Tuath's funding diversification strategy in action. Delivery of the homes was via Tuath's New Build Development Agreement, made with Harcourt, with the fixed price contract signed on the 30th of April 2021. All apartments were subsequently delivered at the price agreed.

## Outcomes and achievements

Sustainability is a core principle within Tuath's development strategy, and one of the most sustainable forms of housing provision is working with buildings that already exist. The Park West Plaza development is a perfect example of innovation, using the repurposing model, which has succeeded in converting office blocks to provide high quality residential apartments, in an area of high demand and high value.

Built to a high-quality standard by Harcourt Developments, 34% of apartments are A rated with 66% B rated (Building Energy Rating (BER))

Residents are extremely pleased with the quality of the homes and the overall building. Speaking at a pre-tenancy training held in Park West and delivered by

staff from Tuath, new resident Jacqueline McKenna, who had spent 11 years on the housing waiting list, noted "I'm over the moon today. I couldn't be happier. I just can't wait now to get ready and sort of move in... and get ready for Christmas,".

The fact that her new home was previously an office space does not bother her. "It's amazing, you wouldn't think looking at it. And it's just gorgeous, plenty of space." "It's an amazing idea," she said.

As a result of the success of Park West, Tuath and Local Authorities across Dublin are identifying additional conversion projects in the city. Tuath already have 2 more office conversions onsite in Cork and Dublin.

You can view a video on the development here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsYn4ePitBA>

## HomeHak

### HomeHak



### Statement of support

HomeHak was created on the premise that there must be a better way for people to rent a home. The innovative Cork-based start-up, which has just organically launched the Dublin and Limerick home rental markets. HomeHak flips the traditional property marketplace model on its head by prioritising tenants over property. Homeseekers showcase themselves by creating a beautifully laid out HomeHak Tenant CV which they can share with letting agents, landlords and their personal network when searching for a new place to live.

The platform allows tenants to organise all of their information such as their rental history, references, budget, requirements and so on in one organised profile. The tenant can create a ready-made household with other users on the platform with whom they wish to be cohabitants. Tenants can even make a pet CV where they can add tons of detailed information if they intend to live with a pet in their new home. The platform is designed to allow tenants to reveal the exact amount of information they are comfortable sharing. To increase trustability, all parties who use the site to communicate - tenants, agents, landlords, referees etc. are required to have their ID verified by Stripe.

Utilising HomeHak, letting agencies and landlords can effortlessly filter and select just a few well-fitted candidates to come to viewings. This reducing the amount of time wasted by the agent/landlord and potential tenants and also reducing the number of people in close contact at viewings, which has already been recommended by the PRSA in light of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Letting agents and landlords can receive hundreds, even thousands, of responses for properties advertised on traditional property websites. HomeHak will allow them to bypass advertising the property publicly and instead simply filter and select a pool of well-matched tenants to invite for a viewing. This new method also aids in hugely minimising the amount of personal data being received by letting agents and landlords when advertising a property online.

HomeHak recently launched an Employer page which allows companies like Cork University Hospital or TELUS International to create an Employer profile on HomeHak. Employers can support their staff from the organisation who are seeking to rent accommodation. Employees create a HomeHak Tenant CV and display it on their HomeHak Employer page. Local agents and landlords can select them easily for relevant homes in the vicinity of their workplaces. It is expected the new product will result in shorter commutes as tenants who work nearby to a property for rent will be prioritised.

HomeHak is designed to make the entire process so much easier for everyone involved. Landlords want to find a tenant quickly and efficiently who you can trust and who will be happy in their property. Tenants want to find a home in a good location that meets all of their requirements. The rationale behind the platform is that happy tenants will look after their homes and stay



longer – which leads to happy landlords and a more informed selection process means better matching of properties to people's needs.

Testimonials: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rka-Miwkry0>, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6KbDy0h\\_xA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6KbDy0h_xA), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msl15j8o\\_-A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msl15j8o_-A)

## Outcomes and achievements

Since the launch of HomeHak the platform has seen over 5,000 tenants create a Tenant CV in just over a year. Many of these tenants have been selected for homes.

Partners in letting agencies have confirmed that HomeHak is decreasing their overall workload and some agents have not advertised a property in favour of selecting qualified tenants.

The new recently launched Employer product is in Beta mode but has seen two hospitals, namely Cork University Hospital and St. Johns Hospital Limerick and a large Telecommunication company TELUS International join the platform. The hospitals recognise the challenges faced by frontline workers in securing

local accommodation and are taking proactive steps to promote HomeHak as a tool for their employees. Both industries, healthcare and telecommunications are facing challenges in hiring and keeping staff because of the challenges securing suitable accommodation in the areas where they work.

Homeowners who can rent their spare rooms on the platform to students and other tenants are earning extra income while helping to alleviate the problem with the lack of affordable student accommodation.

The new method of finding a home has had various benefits for tenants, landlords, letting agents, homeowners, local businesses and their employees and the community overall.

# MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR

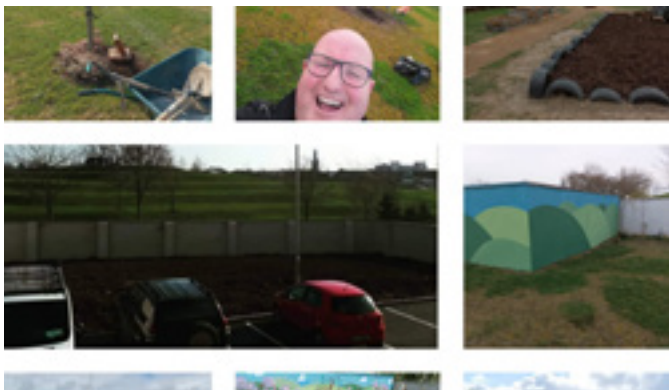


This award recognises organisations or projects that have demonstrated commitment to tenant involvement, to help improve services or neighbourhoods.

It celebrates organisations who are involved in empowering tenants or capacity building as catalysts for delivering real change within a community. Typically, these organisations will be at the forefront of delivering innovative and effective ideas for tenant involvement and strive to empower their tenants to be involved in both the management of their housing and the wider community.

## Park View Resident Association - Community Garden

### Cluid Housing Association



### Statement of support

Sleaty Park View residents came in early spring of 2020 to share ideas for a communal green area within our small community of 26 houses. The residents wanted to have an area that would bring all residents together to enjoy socially, but to create awareness around biodiversity. The feedback from residents was the commitment to creating a positive sustainable environment in the community. We all agreed that the plan to transform the communal green area into a thriving and engaging biodiversity area would not only benefit the environment, but would also enhance social inclusion and therefore create a stronger community. Each household received a proposed plan and a feedback form for residents to share ideas or

concerns. This gave residents the opportunity to have a voice and to feel included from the start.

Residents association was set up and registered with the local county council, this gave the residents the opportunity to qualify for environmental grants and discretionary funding from the local councilors. Unfortunately in 2020 when the country went into lockdown the residents' plans slowed down but they continued to raise funds in background. The association decided to have a tree planting ceremony to officially declare the start of our journey. With social distancing protocols in place we planted a sessile oak tree with a plaque stating "The Journey Begins 2020".

After a tough year due to lockdown restrictions the major work began in April 2022 when residents hired a mini digger and spent the weekend shaping the garden with pathways and a play area for the children. Residents helped in every way they could from getting stuck into the physical work, planting even to providing tea and homemade cakes. The community garden was furnished with tractor tyres in the play areas, granite seating for residents to enjoy and bird boxes and insect hotels commissioned by the local men sheds.

Chairperson Debbie stated: "The best part of this project was the inclusion of our young residents adding their hand prints on a tree instead of leaves. This came in the form of a mural designed with the help of a local artist. With biodiversity being important

to us we took a plain wall and transformed it into our communal garden focal point. Beautiful memories were created for our community on that special day."

With the help of Cluid's own horticulturist, residents planted raised beds that border pathways with scent smelling pollinating plants that attracted so much activity from bees and butterflies. The residents themselves water, weed and maintain the planting and fund this through local grants and Cluid's community grants. This brings residents closer together.

"From the smallest insect to the tallest tree, they're all important, that's Biodiversity" these words are on the mural in the residents community garden. As quoted by Jane Goodall "you cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make". Sleaty Park's vision is to have a thriving and engaging communal biodiversity area, which will encourage the community to stay involved and learn about the ever changing environment that surrounds them but most importantly help build and strengthen relationships. Sleaty park aim to create an exemplar project which other local communities can replicate and learn from. From the beginning they have kept a diary of how the garden took shape and what plants were introduced, the cost of materials and organisations they have been working with. With this in mind their aim is to promote their efforts to other community projects to help get them get started from the first grant to the first plant.

After a tough year due to lockdown restrictions the major work began in April 2022 when residents hired a mini digger and spent the weekend shaping the garden with pathways and a play area for the children. Residents helped in every way they could from getting stuck into the physical work, planting even to providing tea and homemade cakes. The community garden was furnished with tractor tyres in the play

areas, granite seating for residents to enjoy and bird boxes and insect hotels commissioned by the local men sheds.

Chairperson Debbie stated: "The best part of this project was the inclusion of our young residents adding their hand prints on a tree instead of leaves. This came in the form of a mural designed with the help of a local artist. With biodiversity being important to us we took a plain wall and transformed it into our communal garden focal point. Beautiful memories were created for our community on that special day."

With the help of Cluid's own horticulturist, residents planted raised beds that border pathways with scent smelling pollinating plants that attracted so much activity from bees and butterflies. The residents themselves water, weed and maintain the planting and fund this through local grants and Cluid's community grants. This brings residents closer together.

"From the smallest insect to the tallest tree, they're all important, that's Biodiversity" these words are on the mural in the residents community garden. As quoted by Jane Goodall "you cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make". Sleaty Park's vision is to have a thriving and engaging communal biodiversity area, which will encourage the community to stay involved and learn about the ever changing environment that surrounds them but most importantly help build and strengthen relationships. Sleaty park aim to create an exemplar project which other local communities can replicate and learn from. From the beginning they have kept a diary of how the garden took shape and what plants were introduced, the cost of materials and organisations they have been working with. With this in mind their aim is to promote their efforts to other community projects to help get them get started from the first grant to the first plant.

## Outcomes and achievements

Sleaty Park View Resident Association have been very lucky to win a number of awards for the hard work in their community:

Cluid Housing Association Great Places to Live Competition 2019 - Overall Estate Winner

Carlow Pride of Place Competition 2021 - Winner in small estate category

Cluid Housing Association Great Places to Live Competition 2022 - Runner up in the Biodiversity category and Runner up in Best Neighbourhood category

Carlow Pride of Place Competition 2022 - Winner in small estate category

Carlow Pride of Place Competition 2022 - Overall Winner

Carlow pride of Place Competition 2022 - Young person's award - 2 of Sleaty Park's younger residents received this.

Sleaty Park Resident Association have achieved a lot with regards to their success in securing funding. They have sourced and created relationships with local organisations, partners and council. They have secured funding of 5,000 plus from local councilors, HSE lottery fund, Local Community Development and various competitions.

However Sleaty Park Resident Association biggest achievement is creating a beautiful, safe and welcoming space for their community and bringing residents together. The Association has achieved a great deal since 2020 and transformed a blank canvas into a "great place to live".

# Ballygraigue Bio Diversity Project

## Cluid Housing association



### Statement of support

Ballygraigue Court is an estate of 81 houses with people of all ages and abilities and from diverse background's living there.

Following the easing of Covid restrictions in 2022, Ballygraigue Court embarked on a huge biodiversity project for their vast but bland green area. Residents wanted to enhance the communal spaces in the estate and make the areas more attractive and functional, creating an area where everyone can come together, as a community.

Residents approached Cluid with ideas on how to use the green space to create an

inclusive, biodiverse, sensory garden for community use.

A Residents Group of eight members called the Ballygraigue Residents Group was set up to drive the project. Housing Officer Sue Rowley reached out to Trees on the Land and the Silver Arch Family Resource Centre to ask if they'd like to collaborate on the project, which they were delighted to do.

Residents initially had a Zoom call a landscape designer, Silver Arch FRC funded the consultation with the designer. Housing Officer Sue Rowley and the residents also spoke with Environmental and Energy Manager, Susan Vickers, on how the blank green space could be developed.

Consultation forms were circulated to all residents and Susan Vickers designed drafted the design for the green area in line with resident consultation. Information boards on the suggested design were erected on the green for all to see and comment on.

Residents are supported by Clúid's Energy & Environmental Manager, Susan Vickers and Housing Officer, Sue Rowley, who praised the work to date;

"The residents have really come together to make this space something they can all enjoy and be proud of.

They are embodying the Clúid value of collaboration by not only working together but also engaging with Clúid residents in other schemes to see what work they have done and to get more ideas for Ballygraigue. They have been empowered to live green through these biodiversity and conservation initiatives

### Goal Posts

Goal Posts were purchased from the prize money from winning the Cluid Housing Association Great Place to Live competition and erected in the centre of the green creating a space where children (both young and old!) could play safely away from the road. The goal posts are transformational to the estate, bringing entire families out on to the green each evening thus creating a buoyancy and inclusivity on the estate.

Ballygraigue is bursting with beautiful flowers, herbs and wildlife. All plants have been planted by the residents. Two areas in particular the Wildflower Garden which was created by the children is home to 6000 bulbs including crocuses, daffodils, snowdrops, and bluebells and the Butterfly Garden which has a blanket of 88 lavender carpet the area, enticing plenty of butterflies to this pollen haven, the areas burst with colour and scent.

It is very important to the residents of Ballgraigue that children learn about the native butterflies and bumblebees, Residents have erected infographics which was designed by a local resident to teach the children.

Ballygraigue promotes an inclusive community where everyone has a space to enjoy in the garden. As 11 children on the estate has additional needs it was important for the residents to have a sensory garden that all children could enjoy. A tunnel, hopscotch, clock, and sandpit provide lots of sensory fun.

Two benches have been purchased for parents to supervise the play area.

9 concrete pipes were purchased and sank at various levels to provide an

aesthetically pleasing raised bed section. The older residents derive great pleasure from the raised beds and the herbs are put to good use by all Residents.

Cluid Horticulturalist Ingrid Swan designed the Herb Beds.

The Herb Beds host rhubarb, parsley, thyme, scallions, rosemary, mint, lettuce,

strawberries, nasturtium, chives, viola, lavender, artichoke, chamomile, dill, sea kale,

sage, oregano, lovage and is bordered by a wonderful rosemary hedge.



## Outcomes and achievements

### 2022 Great Place to Live Competition

Ballygraigue Court has won the Cluid Housing Association Great Place to Live Competition on 3 occasions. In 2022 Ballygraigue Court won the Biodiversity and Sustainability Section Nenagh Municipal District Awards Ceremony

On 6th December 2022 Nenagh Municipal District honoured Ballygraigue Court by awarding a certificate and cheque for €250 in recognition of their on-going work to enhance and maintain the presentation of their Estate to a very high standard, and in particular, their efforts in promoting sustainability and biodiversity. Ballygraigue Court was part of Tipperary County Council's Tidy Towns submission which received a bronze medal in the competition.

The aim of the project was to integrate the community, promote social inclusion and combat the isolation and loneliness experienced as a consequence of Covid19.

This project has been a great outlet to help combat this loneliness, and isolation, many people have felt during covid and has really brought the community together.

The children's socialization has improved, along with the quality of their play, relationships, and friendships.

The simplicity of the project makes it easily transferrable to other schemes.

The project has enhanced the estate aesthetically and promoted biodiversity in line with Cluid's National Cleaner Greener and Biodiversity Strategy and encourages families to come out and integrate with the wider community, with so much to see and do all around the area.

The residents of the estate will maintain the garden with the assistance of Cluid's Landscaping Contractor and Cluid's Community Development Fund will be available annually to support and maintain the garden.

## Empowering Tenant Engagement within Radius Housing and beyond

### Radius Housing



### Statement of support

Radius, along with our tenants, residents and service users are proud to have become the first and only Housing Association in Ireland to achieve the coveted Tenant Participation Standards Accreditation awarded by Supporting Communities gaining the Silver High Level Award.

The decision to submit ourselves to this rigorous assessment was taken as the whole organisation, from Board to the tenant representatives, committed to a journey of involving and empowering our tenants, residents and service users in the design, delivery and improvement of services through meaningful and effective engagement and collaboration, ensuring our tenants and residents have a strong voice and can influence decisions, helping to improve the standards and services Radius deliver.

An in-depth assessment and scrutiny of tenant engagement practices across the organisation was carried out by Supporting Communities, which included

363 pieces of submitted evidence demonstrating examples of tenant involvement, interviews with partners and staff and an independent panel holding assessment focus groups with tenants and staff hearing for themselves how Radius Tenant Engagement works in practice before issuing their report and final assessment.

Becoming accredited is only the beginning of the journey and has inspired us and our tenants, residents and service users to become leaders in Tenant Engagement and to challenge ourselves to work better together for continuous improvement.

Our tenants and service user representatives have been empowered and gained confidence through this process and have been instrumental in implementing change for improvement e.g. service improvement groups made up of staff, tenants and partners coming together to review how we can improve vital services like response repairs, complaints and dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Tenant panels meet quarterly with key staff reviewing performance and policy issues and agreeing key messages for circulation.

Consultation for the new Tenant Engagement and Digital Inclusion strategies involved 230 tenants, staff and stakeholders taking part in meetings, surveys and conversations ensuring a fully integrated approach. A working group involving 12 tenants and 10 Radius

staff took on board the feedback, comments, and suggestions from the consultation, working together to co-design, shape and “Tenant Approve” the new Strategy, updating the Tenant Approved Menu of Involvement setting out the range of options and commitment levels for tenants to get involved in a way which suits them. Radius’s approach to tenant engagement is therefore shaped by tenants who are central to service provision, review and decision making.

Tenants have been offered digital training and loan devices to remove barriers to inclusion and this has resulted in record numbers of tenants getting involved from across the province. Meetings and consultations are now held in a hybrid format with tenants and staff in the room and also joining digitally. We have trained 17 digital skills champions who support tenants and have started recruiting tenant volunteer digital champions to empower tenants and communities further.

Our first Annual Tenant Engagement Conference since the pandemic was held in October 2022 in Cookstown and streamed live on zoom for tenants to join us virtually. 180 attendees were transported to the venue and heard from speakers on relevant topics which had been agreed in advance with our tenant panels. They included

- Cost of Living support,
- Tenant Engagement and Partnerships
- Navigating the Sustainability Agenda.

After each session tenants had the opportunity to ask open mike questions on matters important to them with Senior Management including the CEO openly putting themselves on the podium to respond to tenant’s questions on issues which affect them.

The Radius Heroes Awards celebrated tenant’s achievements with Awards for Good Neighbour, Community Pride, Creativity, Healthy Living and Learning, Inspirational Young Person, and Best Kept Garden.

## Outcomes and achievements

- Tenant Participation Standards Accreditation High Silver Award
  - Tenant Engagement Strategy and Digital Inclusion Strategy 2022-25
  - 230 participants involved in consulting and co designing strategy
- Tenant Engagement Conference 2022 with 180 attendees
- 17 Digital Skills Champions, supporting 135 tenants to engage with us digitally
- 582 tenants on Register of Interest volunteering 706 hours
- 68 tenants regularly participate in meetings and have volunteered 205 hours
- 40 wifi enabled devices to support tenants
- Tenant Engagement structure including Area Panel, Tenant Executive Committee and a Board Member ensuring tenants voices heard from doorstep to Boardroom
- 15 Service Improvement groups held
- Bespoke Tenant Association/Group Guidebook with set up grant, support and training
- Monthly Newsletter promoting tenant engagement and translated into 6 languages at tenant’s request
- 34 community chest grants awarded in 21/22 totalling £19,503.52 to empower communities
- Estate Walkabouts covering 1250 properties engaging with 161 tenants, working together to find solutions on 166 issues raised
- 19 leaflets, publications and letters now have the “Tenant Approved” Logo ensuring tenant involvement in the production and co-design
- “Radius Housing have made significant strides in engaging with tenants with excellent examples of good practice that can be described as sector leading”

Head of Corporate Services, Supporting Communities

# Working Together to Make a Difference and Connect

**Lead organisation: Grove Community Housing Association**

**Partner organisations: Grove Community Housing Association**



## Statement of support

Where we started - 2019 - Re-set and Re-focus

It was recognised that there was a need to press the re-set and re-focus button in light of both a lack of current engagement and limited tenant participation activity for a number of years. Additionally the need for housing organisations to be more accountable to their tenants and ensure their voices were rightly amplified for safe and secure homes but also thriving communities was paramount.

Residents who called to the local office to give us feedback on services plans and their community. Grove hosted a summer residents BBQ in 2019. The typical Irish weather didn't dampen spirits or turnout and many residents became more involved from that day.

In Autumn 2019 the new 'Tenant Participation Vision Strategy' was launched alongside a wellbeing event. Feedback was given on a tenant survey and events. Deciding to commence with a 'Vision' strategy was purposeful. All worked in partnership to achieve the outcomes set out in the Vision Strategy and create the opportunities for residents to influence and shape the new 'Tenant Participation Strategy' and 'Community Investment Strategy'.

The Journey along the Way - 2020/21 Innovation, Support and Care

Like many organisations in 2020/21 there were impacts by Covid-19 restrictions. They navigated these in ways that residents stayed safe and postponed launch of until our 'Tenant Voice' Group were fully established and ready and delivered engagement and these services ;

- Launched first social media account in March 2020
- We re-distributed budgets for tenant participation events into competition prizes to alleviate financial hardship e.g. 'Draw your dream home for our new build scheme'
- Promotion of on-line learning
- 'Good Morning' calls and services e.g. prescriptions
- A gardening and afternoon tea event Sept 2021
- Christmas goodie sacks to every home

The Benefits On the Ground - 2022/23 - Connections

During a year that the cost of living has challenged tenants not only financially they several initiatives for residents and the wider community took place. The connections residents have made through activities have been motivational. It is through these human connections that natural support systems are made possible when others require encouragement, help and a sense of belonging and hope.

The office reception area was converted into a welcoming, warm and lounge with sofas, TV, board games, and a craft corner. Free hot drinks, food, WIFI but more importantly, company and love to welcome every residents that comes in and encourage them to make themselves at home. It's named 'Esther's Lounge' after our lovely resident who was the first to come in from the cold during some essential adaptation work to her home. She said she thoroughly enjoyed the days company and craic and enjoyed lattes and the Christmas chips lunch with staff and sharing of stories and is now a firm 'regular' with her friends and others.

A real sense of community resulted and alleviated both mental health and physical health concerns and provides opportunities to make and strengthen positive connections.

## Outcomes and achievements

### 2021/22 – Establishment of Tenant Voice Group

- Tenant Voice member awarded first formal qualification - OCN in Community Development through Supporting Communities training.
- Tenant Voice Group meetings and residents enjoyed an interactive tour at Clifton House.

### 2022/23 – Tenant Voice Group - shaping our services

- Tenant Voice group members were consulted in the recruitment of the Associations new management team.
- The Board approved a new management structure that would enable greater emphasis and time on delivering meaningful activities and partnerships
- Tenant Voice Group took part in Community Relations Week events and met residents at Newington HA.
- Tenant Voice group approved 'Thumbs Up' logo as an endorsement to work and policies they have been involved in developing and reviewing.
- Tenant Engagement Strategy 22-27 developed and presented by TVG members to Housing & Assets Committee
- July 2022 – Tenants organised solely their own summer Jubilee party part funded by Grove
- sponsorship of Grove United Youth Football Teams
- Attendance to award prizes at Annual Grove United Awards Night Sept 2022
- Community funding – support of a defibrillation machine in the Grove area
- Tenant Voice group consulted on a new Community Investment Strategy.

- New Benefits Advice Clinic for community set up at Grove's offices  
(Reduction in rental arrears noted)
- CLARE project – older persons support organisation set up at Grove's offices (further support for isolated older residents)
- Tenants supported to avail of fuel hardship vouchers and hampers from Grove Community HA and community groups
- Community Clean up Events
- Spring bulb planting
- Community Christmas tree and Santa's Sleigh event
- Christmas card design
- Community Christmas lunches
- Taxi service to older residents and fall prevention advice
- Partnerships new funders e.g. ASDA, Tesco, LIDL

All the above activity has resulted in very positive resident feedback.

"I joined the TVG because I wanted to be a voice in the community, I am passionate and I have enjoyed developing and shaping the Tenant Engagement Strategy for the present and future of the Association"

"Grove have presented a menu of involvement which is an excellent idea"

"I enjoy coming in to see everyone and had a great day treated like a Queen"



# PROMOTING SHARED COMMUNITIES

This award recognises housing and related initiatives that encourage the integration of people and communities from different backgrounds.

## Ark Creative Communities

### Ark Housing



### Statement of support

Ark Creative Communities achieves social integration through meaningful engagement with the arts. This National Lottery funded project hires freelance creatives and community arts groups for creative community engagement in housing, and the project has made local communities more welcoming by staging creative events that attract diverse audiences of all ages.

Creativity is a common denominator in humanity. Ark capitalizes on that impulse and pulls people together through our shared love of music, art, drama, and poetry. Ark Housing is leading the way in creative community engagement by organizing colourful, cultural events around the city and encouraging creatives to get invested in the social housing sector. These events introduce our residents to the dynamic world of the Belfast arts scene. A crucial objective is to establish a new financial ecology that brings the gig economy closer to social housing. Many freelancers were disadvantaged during the covid pandemic. This initiative aims to bring more financial security to the creative sector.

Ark manages two hostels for families experiencing homelessness. The Community Engagement programme strives for integration by our practice of outreach and partnership. Ark has forged strong connections with numerous community groups across

the city, including the Ballynafeigh Methodist Church and their Borderlands Collective. Ark encourages staff and tenants to come together and take to the stage at Borderlands to share experiences through story, music or poetry in this social forum, using art to enhance understandings of issues such as immigration, homelessness and displacement.

Ark strategically uses the arts for social integration and societal change. The children of Roseville house were encouraged to submit an entry to PPR's 'City of the Future' competition. All entries were featured at the MAC theatre in Belfast, and families were invited to see their artwork in a major metropolitan theatre.

Many families living in Roseville are Muslim. Ark met with the Belfast Islamic Centre to discuss how we can make creative events more culturally accessible. Halloween is an ancient Irish holiday, but the Muslim faith does not celebrate this 'pagan' event, so Ark invented 'Halal-o-ween.' All treats were halal, and stories and songs focussed on bats, black cats and the seasonal shift of the year, nothing that would contradict the Muslim religion. Halal-o-ween will be a recurring celebration at Ark Housing and is an innovative approach to integration and engagement. Many children who would not experience Halloween can now enjoy it in a culturally sensitive way.

Ark Creative Communities is a jewel in the crown of Ark's Community Engagement programme and is designed to promote and sustain creative community engagement within the social housing sector. This initiative invites freelance creatives and community arts groups to help the sector evolve by putting art at the heart of the community. Ark Creative Communities has delivered multiple events in 2022 and more are scheduled for 2023. Families living in Ark hostels have enjoyed traditional Irish workshops with the Glengormley School of Music; keyboard workshops with pop sensation Vokxen (Vokxen even donated three beginner keyboards to the hostel, so more workshops are in the calendar); poetry workshops, and drama sessions with children's theatre group Drama Time.

More creatives are turning to Ark housing and asking to be involved in Creative Communities. Ark does not want to give creatives a crumb from the table with the odd gig at social events. Ark is offering creatives a seat at our table. Together, we will move community

arts closer to community housing, and redefine the social housing experience. The gig economy will find a new home in the housing sector and the artistic arena will be the new shared space where we come together.

## Outcomes and achievements

- Launched Ark Creative Communities, a ground-breaking initiative that secures a permanent connection between housing and the arts.
- Established partnerships with major movers and shakers on the theatre circuit including Community Arts Partnership (Masque project); Terra Nova theatre (Roseville residents invited to contribute to their new Trumpet and the King project); Drama Time theatre (drama sessions designed to develop stronger cognitive, social and language skills for young children); Tinderbox Theatre Incubator project (a new forum for theatre makers). Young at Art (the company has expressed an interest in helping develop a short play and bringing it to a city centre stage).
- Coordinated the Giant Journey, bringing adults and children from all corners of the city together to journey through Belfast bog meadows and visit St James' Community Farm.
- Staged the world's first Halal-o-ween party, a celebration of Samhain that makes Halloween accessible to all cultures.
- Arranged music workshops with Glengormley School of music and received tin whistles at a special discounted price from Matchetts music to facilitate the sessions.
- Motivated hostel children to dream big by introducing them to a dynamic team of artists, poets, musicians, and actors!

# Great Communities

## Choice Housing Ireland Ltd.



### Statement of support

As a leader in the housing sector in Northern Ireland Choice is fully committed to creating inclusive welcoming shared communities. Choice is one of only 11 social landlords committed to and delivering a 'Housing for All programme'. This programme seeks to 'create communities 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.'

Choice currently has 6 shared housing schemes across Northern Ireland and intends to grow this provision year on year. Choice has experienced the benefits and richness inherent in diverse communities and has therefore adopted many of these principles into their community development work which reaches beyond the geographical limits of the Housing For All

Programme.

### Hard to reach Groups

Choice is aware of the challenges some groups face integrating with community /peers due to language barriers, cultural difference and or isolation. Choice has made concerted efforts to identify such groups to proactively help integration and build positive sustained communities so people feel welcomed and able to enrich the community.

Examples include:

**Chinese community-Belfast.** In South and East Belfast the Choice tenant population is culturally diverse, however the Chinese community was identified as isolated. Choice developed a range of practical outreach initiatives to promote integration; interpretation services, tailored support packages, inclusive tenants' groups and signposting tenants into existing community-based services.

Tin Chan, Chinese interpreter, "I commend Choice for their initiative in reaching out to their Chinese and Asian tenants in South Belfast, particularly those who face language and cultural issues to help break down barriers and to ensure all of their tenants have a voice and are supported."

**Ethnic minorities - Lisburn.** Choice jointly delivered refugee and asylum seeker awareness workshops with I Assist NI and St Patricks Academy. 300 young people from the wider Lisburn area attended, helping breakdown negative perceptions and misunderstandings that some young people may hold regarding ethnic minorities.

Roma Community - Ballymena. In Ballymena the strained relationships between the local community and members of the newly settled Roma community are well documented. Choice created a relationship building initiative, acknowledged by Community Relations Council as a model of best practice, bringing together stakeholders to identify and explore the challenges that integration and cohesion bring to Ballymena.

A series of workshops and discussions were facilitated for stakeholders focusing on the rich fabric of Northern Irish and Roma culture. A live video link up with Romanian missionaries from Ballymena working in Transylvania helped develop understanding on the cultural differences between the communities.

Cllr Rodney Quigley "The purpose of this project, supported by Choice, is to build a cohesive community in Ballymena, a place where, diversity is respected; co-operation between communities is encouraged; and good community relations and understanding exists

between local people."

Helping families - Choice's innovative integration approach also helps individual families, such as one South Belfast Somali family who were experiencing challenging social issues. A holistic approach to support the family was implemented taking into consideration the religious and cultural needs of the family.

The children were introduced to a BAME led Youth group (Diverse Youth NI (DYNi)) and the mother was introduced to various community services where she is now volunteering, thus reducing the impact of isolation and improving her mental and physical well-being.

The family now feels safe in their environment and continues to engage with the rest of the tenants in the scheme and wider community. The eldest son in the family has since developed more skills and now presents a Youth-led Radio (YNP) where he advocates for inclusion and mental health issues.

## Outcomes and achievements

Prioritising and extending community development brings positive outcomes. Choice have created informed practices, for example in Ballymena Choice broadened the range of stakeholders, enhancing co-operation on the ground. Members from the Roma community are involved in community development in Harryville as part of the local community.

Choice have committed to expanding community development activities, working with others to foster good relations, this is reflected in the Association's Strategy to 2024 with a specific strategic objective - Great Communities. The work Choice is undertaking

to create and promote shared communities is closely aligned to the Housing for All Programme but extends across Northern Ireland for all 14,000 households and the wider communities we share.

Sahara is a tenant who felt isolated and unaware of support,

"I am very grateful for all the help and support they gave to me and my family and for introducing me to iAssistNI - these people helped me a lot, they were just like me - African. My family are settled and have more confidence than before and I thank Choice for taking the time and for investing in me and my family."



# Droimnin Community Garden

## Clann Housing Residents



### Statement of support

#### Droimnin Stradbally Gardens

Droimnin is an age friendly housing scheme. It is located in the tranquil setting in the middle of Stradbally, surrounded by enclosed gardens and walkways. It is managed and owned by Clann housing who provide age friendly housing across Ireland. The six bungalows are part of a larger estate that is made up of mixed tenures and a nursing home.

The Droimnin scheme is one of the smaller Clann scheme's, made up of six two bedroom bungalows. Each resident has their own private garden and

a community garden. All the residents are keen gardeners. It might be one of the smaller schemes in Clann but it demonstrates the biggest community spirit. Clann has helped residents rejuvenate the communal garden by providing essential funding for residents to do planting and provide benches where residents can meet up for a chat and a coffee. The garden has a vast variety of plants, trees, shrubs and flowers. The communal garden has really helped the private and social residents bond, it really highlights how mixed tenure estates can come together and create a beautiful meeting space for residents. Having a community garden helps put focus on community sustainability and provides a social outlet and purpose for residents. One of our residents showed great hand craftsmanship by building a beautiful wishing well for the community garden which was greatly appreciated by everyone. The Droimnin residents are the driving force behind the community garden, the garden is a real testament of how a small community of residents can come together to build such a beautiful space.

Testimonials from residents " We have great plans for the garden in the summer to grow our own vegetables and share them with all residents "

" We all love contributing to the garden, looking out at such a lovely area where we can meet and enjoy the fruits of our labour "

### Outcomes and achievements

The community garden provides benefits to residents such as social, mental, and physical health and promotes sustainability. The work and the care that the Droimnin residents have put into the communal garden has contributed to the wider community by allowing all the residents in the estate to come together and reap the rewards of such as a beautiful communal space.

The residents want to build on their communal garden and purchase a polytunnel where they can grow their own vegetables further promoting sustainability. This communal garden has brought a mixed tenure community together and continues to grow in every aspect.



# Creating a Shared Community at Felden

## Clanmil Housing



### Statement of support

#### Creating a Shared Community at Felden

At Clanmil, we believe everyone should have a comfortable, safe, affordable home within a vibrant, supportive community where they can flourish and thrive. We also want to help make Northern Ireland a more shared place as we believe that shared communities have a lasting impact on people's lives.

Our Felden shared neighbourhood in Newtownabbey is viewed as a model of excellence and the learning from its delivery is being used to guide the development of future shared neighbourhoods.

Clanmil purchased the 8.97 acre site at Felden, Mill Road, Newtownabbey, in 2013, following a significant period of dereliction and set about delivering a 97 home shared neighbourhood at a cost of £11.5 million.

According to NISRA's NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (2010), Newtownabbey was ranked 8th out of the 26 most deprived districts. When Clanmil was progressing the scheme for construction, the area had a high level of housing need, with 1,125 households presenting as homeless.

The new scheme at Felden was welcome news for local families in need of a home, but Clanmil colleagues working on the ground faced significant challenges during the initial shared neighbourhood promotion stage.

This was because the site was adjacent to single identity communities burdened with a long history of conflict.

Colleagues endured countless threats including hostile graffiti naming individuals working at Clanmil and targeting future tenants. There was also an increase in the display of territorial flags next to the site, as well as local community opposition.

Despite this, Clanmil colleagues persevered and worked intensively, collaboratively, and innovatively to turn the situation around.

The following measures were implemented by Clanmil in partnership with stakeholders:

- Agreed a Felden Community Charter with local political and community representatives, facilitated by Professor John Brewer of the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at QUB.
- Partnered with Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, NI Housing Executive, Department for Communities (DfC) and The Executive Office to resolve issues around negative publicity and community safety, and to build relationships between Felden and neighbouring communities.
- Developed a Community Safety Action Plan including protocols for responding to graffiti, flags etc.
- Established close links with community organisations in the area by participating in inter-agency meetings and offering practical and financial support, e.g., funding diversionary summer youth activities.
- Provided employability training to Felden residents which, as well as offering new skills, helped them get to know their neighbours and supported development of the shared community ethos.
- Strengthened relationships through family-oriented community events.

Over the past seven years (bridging period extended by two years due to the Covid-19) Clanmil colleagues have worked tirelessly to develop and sustain a wealth of multi-agency community cohesion partnerships in the surrounding area. These include youth provision, community contacts, political representatives and other community, voluntary and statutory agencies.

Our collaborative approach has:

- Empowered the residents of Felden and surrounding communities by giving them a voice, and allowing them to express their opinions without fear of recrimination
- Provided access to mental health services
- Helped young people access education programmes dealing with hard-hitting issues such as bullying and social isolation
- Provided access to skills and employment opportunities
- Encouraged community participation in social and cultural events celebrating and respecting diversity

The determination, commitment and team effort between local community, Felden residents and Clanmil has resulted in the successful delivery of a shared neighbourhood that is fully embedded within the area.

Clanmil has delivered a further eight shared neighbourhoods over the past four years and a further two that are currently in the pipeline.

## Outcomes and achievements

Felden is a well-established integral part of the surrounding community, and 97 families are well settled within that community whilst being supported by Clanmil and our partners to live well in their homes.

Outcomes and achievements include:

- Development of over 50 collaborative partnerships with local voluntary and statutory organisations.
- Development of links with over 10 local schools
- More effective communication and interaction between groups
- Increased social mixing among people from different backgrounds, reducing isolation and building connections across communities
- Trust within the scheme and the local area between people from different backgrounds

- People working together across communities, regardless of background, to improve the local area
- Tenants have a sense of belonging to their local community
- Creation of a stronger and more resilient diverse community allowing tenants to live in a safe environment, free from hate crime
- Reduced disparities across groups in terms of educational and employment outcomes

Clanmil is continuing to work with DfC and NIHE to identify and develop more schemes across Northern Ireland with the potential to become shared neighbourhoods, giving people the choice to live in a community that is open and accessible to all and where division does not restrict the opportunities of individuals.

## Sharing similarities, celebrating differences

### Oaklee Housing



#### Statement of support

Comhar Housing is the consortium that delivered the first PPP Project for social housing in Ireland. 534 new homes delivered across 6 sites throughout the ROI. Oaklee Housing provides both Community Development and Housing Management services to the consortium.

Building inclusive, shared & empowered communities are at the heart of the Oaklee Housing's ethos when they're supporting their communities. A housing scheme at Eustace Demesne, Naas, Co. Kildare is a perfect example of that.

Eustace Demesne is a social housing estate that comprises of 74 new homes. Within the estate, there are over 18 different nationalities present. Using a consultative community development approach a range of initiatives and activities have taken place all aimed at bringing people together to celebrate the vibrant and wide-ranging diversity present in this new community.

There are a large number of young people living in Eustace Demesne. It was vital for Oaklee that good relationships were created between the young people and the Community guards for the area. Together with the local Foroige youth worker, the Housing team, and the Community Guards, a three-month personal development program was created to engage with the young people. The program centered around identity, inclusion, and integration.

This program saw huge barriers being broken down between Oaklee staff, the Community guards, and the young people with good relationships being formed. It was amazing to see young people who were initially reluctant to speak with the guards now devising a schedule of who got to sit up front with the community guard to attend youth group and day trips.

Community education is a vital part of ensuring that creating a shared community is sustainable. Through discussion with the community, Oaklee Housing has facilitated Autism Awareness training, Mental Health & well-being, Anti-racism, Diversity & Inclusion training. The different pieces of training have taken place with children and adults.

These different initiatives have encouraged the integration of people from different backgrounds to come together to celebrate the vibrant community that now exists in Eustace Demesne.

Through our Community Development engagement, we've helped residents make a positive contribution to social integration and cohesion.

Helen- 'I could never go out and play in my old estate, now I'm going to a youth group blaring music in Garda

Gary's bus with everyone singing songs with all my friends in the estate'.

Greg- 'The kids loved sharing the polish pancakes that I made with their friends at the family fun days. I have

shared recipes with some of the other people. I hope to try to make some Romanian bread from a recipe that I have picked up'.

## Outcomes and achievements

Community Food Sharing event- People were invited and encouraged to bring along a favourite home-cooked dish to share with the community that represented their cultural heritage. The sharing of food helped to break down barriers. People were proud to talk about the dishes and their backgrounds informally educating each other about different cultural customs and beliefs in a safe and enjoyable environment.

People who may not have spoken before have shared recipes following these events. Local key stakeholders have attended the events such as the Gardai who often sit and chat with the community trying the different food that has been produced. These

'Breaking of Bread' style events have helped support community cohesion creating a space where diversity is celebrated.

Seasonal events - To encourage community engagement and integration the Oaklee Housing team facilitated seasonal events that ensure that everyone is encouraged to participate. At Christmas time the community came together to plant a tree and share their individual hopes and dreams placing them on the tree for the year ahead. The community is creating its own traditions together that are inclusive of all cultures and religions by establishing such events.

# Knock Knock

## Radius Housing



## Statement of support

'Knock Knock' Ballymena Schools programme, funded by the TBUC Shared Housing Programme, provides a voice for young people around the theme of 'home'.

This project promotes the new 'Housing for All' development at the former St Patrick's Barracks site and facilitates important engagement with primary schools in the area. 'Knock Knock' demonstrates, in an inclusive way, the diversity and diverse voices already present in the community.

Radius worked in partnership with Nandi Jola, poet, and author, originally from South Africa, now calling Northern Ireland home. Nandi delivered workshops in twelve schools across Ballymena, mentoring young people to creatively write about what home means to them, what it looks like, who lives there and how they celebrate.

The outcome is a beautiful book written by the children, compiled and edited by Dr Cass North. It is

colourful, inclusive, fun, emotive and tells the story of Ballymena's rich and diverse community. The schools have representation from many different nations across the globe, 'Knock Knock' celebrates this diversity and how 'Home' can mean different things to different people, while maintaining a commonality.

Pupils participating visited Stormont, hosted by MLAs, to launch the book. At this event they penned postcards to prospective new tenants at the St Patrick's Barracks site to welcome them to their new homes.

One pupil wrote, "Hello, I hope this wonderful new home can be a way to help you smile. I also hope it brings you and everyone coming close together."

One of the teachers present, said of the event "well organised, informative, enriching, friendly and an excellent shared education and community project."

A student commented, "I think this event was an amazing experience to have. I would like to help people move into houses in the future." Another said, "It was great to actually take part in making a book."

Since the launch, Radius Housing have been delivering the books in the Ballymena area, in the schools, the local library, sheltered housing schemes and at events and information days sharing the inclusive ethos of the project in the community. The book will also be gifted to tenants when they move into their new homes. Additionally, schools and the wider community will be invited to attend an exhibition of the early community cohesion good relations work when the development is allocated alongside the new tenants. This will include the 'Knock Knock' programme, further sustaining the link with the new tenants and the wider community.

## Outcomes and achievements

This cross community, good relations programme included maintained, part maintained and integrated schools with a diverse body of pupils.

The primary schools participating are Ballykeel, Broughshane, Carniny, Gracehill, Kells & Connor, St Colmcille's, Braidside Integrated, Buick Memorial, Dunclug, Castle Tower School, Harryville, and St Paul's.

92.68% of participants evaluated stated they had met someone from a different background.

95% experienced the culture and traditions of different backgrounds.

97.4% felt the project had a role to play in bringing people from different community backgrounds together

85% felt more favourable towards people from a different background

90% said they were more likely to take part in shared groups/activities with people from a different background

82.5% felt that the culture and traditions of different backgrounds adds to the richness and diversity of society.

This programme allowed young people to reflect about home, its importance to them and others, to hear about shared housing and read the diverse stories in their book from their peers, to put themselves in the shoes of new tenants in writing postcards to them.

All enhancing acceptance, respect, and support in welcoming and creating a new inclusive community at St Patrick's Barracks site and in the wider Ballymena community.

### Working in partnership

This award commends collaboration between organisations or groups that achieves the best possible outcomes.

We are looking for organisations that have worked collaboratively to improve service delivery across geographical boundaries, sectors or client groups in order to benefit the people who use their services. The winning organisations will have evidenced good practice in setting up and managing the partnership, including establishing new ways of working.



# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Sponsored by:  **Ulster Bank**

This award commends collaboration between organisations or groups that achieves the best possible outcomes.

The winning organisations will have evidenced good practice in setting up and managing the partnership, including establishing new ways of working.

## 'One Safe Place' - Foyle Family Justice Centre

**Lead organisation:** Apex Housing Association

**Partner organisations:** Foyle Women's Aid



### Statement of support

Foyle Family Justice Centre in Derry/Londonderry was developed with the vision of provision of a 'One Safe Place' for victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse. The carefully considered design and layout of the buildings are the result of a successful partnership between Apex Housing Association (Apex) and Foyle Women's Aid (FWA). The centre was delivered by Apex through a development agreement with FWA and was officially opened in September 2022 by Justice Minister, Naomi Long and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales, Nicole Jacobs.

The first of its kind in the UK and Ireland, the centre transforms the way in which victims and survivors fleeing domestic abuse access support. Once through the door, victims and survivors have access to a range of onsite agencies working in partnership to provide support to families on their journey from terror to justice.

Located in the heart of the city centre, the core business of the centre takes place discretely on the upper floors, allowing families access to a full

spectrum of services including a direct and secure video link to the courtroom. The ground floor has a social enterprise café that is open to the public and will provide training and placement opportunities.

The nine supported housing apartments which sit adjacent to the Justice Centre are owned by Apex, managed by FWA and part-funded by the Supporting People Programme. The units have a common room and external play area which allow service users to socialise and connect with other families living in similar circumstances.

Foyle Family Justice Centre (FFJC) is the latest initiative developed by Apex and FWA; however, the two organisations have worked together for over twenty years in the Foyle area delivering new working models that serve victims and their families who are affected by domestic violence.

The FWA vision of 'One Safe Place' was made a reality by the team at Apex, who used their development knowledge to investigate sites, draw up a design brief and help put together a business case for the Justice Centre. This business case would ultimately gain FWA significant cross-departmental financial support from both the Department for Communities and the Department of Justice; and support from youth homelessness charity, LandAid.

Apex was a member of the FFJC Development Committee, chaired by Judge Barney McElholm who supported the initiative from the onset. During the development of FFJC, this committee facilitated collaborative planning to take place with key agencies to develop a joint mission, values and strategy to inform service delivery including the PSNI, Probation Services, Social Services, DHSS, Legal Services, NI Housing Executive and FWA.

Apex built the Justice Centre on land owned by FWA by way of a development agreement. The Department

for Communities (DfC) who administered the public monies on behalf of DfC and the Department of Justice attended monthly project management meetings with FWA, Apex and the design team during the construction period to ensure that the project's delivery met their expectations.

As a leading social housing provider, Apex has vast experience in building new communities. The development of FFJC involved joint input from both

Apex and FWA to ensure the design brief captured everything that both organisations expected from the building. The Justice Centre was constructed on a derelict city centre site, thereby repairing an important streetscape near to the city's courthouse. The supported housing units, built to the rear of the site also present a new vista from the city walls and this overall improvement to the urban fabric of this historic city has been welcomed by the planning service.

## Outcomes and achievements

Recent statistics have shown that in Northern Ireland a domestic abuse incident occurs every 16 minutes. Furthermore, on average, victims will have to tell their story 27 times and visit a range of different agencies before accessing key support. Foyle Family Justice Centre has created a revised trauma informed model that will improve the journey from hurt to hope for all victims.

Apex working in partnership with Foyle Women's Aid (FWA), has created a building that reflects the FWA vision of 'One Safe Place.' The vision will save lives and deliver bespoke, co-ordinated, victim-centred services to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse.

The development of the Justice Centre has facilitated

a new multi-agency approach, achieving better and swifter outcomes for families. The nine supported housing units also provide vulnerable service users with a safe place to call home.

Underpinning the rationale for the establishment of Foyle Family Justice Centre, are the outcomes achieved by Alliance for HOPE Justice Centre Network, based in the United States. Evidence has shown this support model results in a reduced number of murders and serious assaults; increased victim safety; the empowerment of victims; less homelessness; and a reduced fear and anxiety for all victims. Inevitably, the public purse will also gain from these outcomes, as one domestic murder alone costs upwards of £1.1 million in public monies.

# House 10, Enterprise Court

**Lead organisation: Choice Housing Ireland Ltd.**

**Partner organisations: Inspire Wellbeing, South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust**



## Statement of support

House 10 Enterprise Court, Bangor, is a shared Supported Housing service for adults with severe complex needs. The service is available for people aged 18+ and gives opportunities to change lives. House 10 is a bungalow that was extensively redeveloped by Choice in partnership with the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust and Inspire Wellbeing. The project was motivated by the need to create a service for a previously unmet need, a true collaboration. House 10 provides for a vulnerable client base who can now explore new skills and meet their personal potential.

The Trust had identified, in line with an RQIA requirement, the need for an intensive rehabilitation setting for six identified patients, who occupied beds on a long term basis on an acute ward setting. These patients were among the most complex and challenging of mental health service users outside of an institutional setting and it was therefore imperative that any agencies involved, worked cohesively to ensure that all risks were identified and assessed thoroughly. Classified as delayed discharges the Trust were faced with the challenge of identifying, against time constraints, appropriate accommodation within a community setting which met the needs of these highly complex individuals.

With Choice, Inspire Wellbeing and the South Eastern Trust in partnership the project was delivered through a highly successful collaboration. House 10 is now modern accommodation to 6 former patients, a bungalow which sits within an enclosed cul de sac of Choice accommodation in Bangor. The project achieved approval in April 2022 and works commenced to bring the property up to a high standard. The accommodation has been co-designed to meet the complex needs of the Service users as well as future Service Users.

Unlike the other properties at Enterprise Court, House 10 offers Service Users a Short Term License to Occupy. The service is a stepping stone on the path to more independent living, it is the first step down

from hospital and provides community rehabilitation, with intensive 24 hours support assisting Service Users with their continued recovery and supporting them to develop the skills required to live independently.

The lead partner agencies have a successful long standing relationship. Those on the working group were able to draw on their significant experience and knowledge to deliver a unique solution for the Service Users. The working group engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that the Service Users were not only safe in their new environment but that they thrive. With significant input from Occupational Therapy and the staff at Downshire Hospital, specialist works were commissioned, including an upgraded security system and the installation of a boundary fence which covers the perimeter of the property, offering greater privacy and mitigating risk. Within

this carefully designed space each Service User has a greater sense of dignity, independence and support, with access to a private bedroom with ensuite facilities as well as communal kitchen, lounge, activity spaces and a large private garden.

Lesley McPeak, Deputy Manager, House 10

"10 Enterprise Court is a one of a kind service in Northern Ireland that is enabling people with long and enduring mental ill health to move to the community while still ensuring the level of restrictions required are in place to allow them and others to live safely. In its nature EC10 is a truly bespoke service that is led by a team of value based driven staff who want to provide opportunities and promote recovery to the unique needs of each person we look after. This allows us to provide an innovative service that can be flexible, adaptive and responsive."

## Outcomes and achievements

House 10 provides a new option for people with severe mental health problems. With limited options for this client group, Choice, Inspire and the Trust have created a long term provision for this vulnerable group.

The property was completed and handed over in December 2022, in time for Service Users to spend Christmas in their new home.

It is expected that Service Users will be ready to move on within two years meaning House 10 has the potential to transform up to 30 peoples' lives within 10 years.

Yvonne Russell- Coyles Community Services Manager, SEHSCT-

"The newly established service has been a welcome addition to the existing supported living services at Enterprise Court. Through creative partnerships, ongoing commitment and engagement we have enabled the resettlement of six individuals who otherwise would continue to call the Downshire hospital their home. These Service Users now have a chance to experience life within the community, supported to develop their independence and to enjoy the life which they seek and deserve. The integration and inclusion in community everyday tasks such as shopping, eating out, cinema visits, joining a football team and having greater choice is proving to enhance the lives of the new residents."

# Multidisciplinary Homeless Support Team

**Lead organisation: Extern**

**Partner organisations: NI Housing Executive, PSNI, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust**



## Statement of support

The Extern Multi-Disciplinary Homeless Support Team (MDHST) was established in 1998 and continues to

support some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society, by delivering person-centred interventions to prevent homelessness, sustain tenancies and address the evolving complexities of chronic homelessness in Northern Ireland.

MDHST provides intensive assertive outreach support using a range of social work intervention including crisis intervention, harm reduction, motivational interviewing and brief interventions. These services are primarily funded by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) including the Supporting People programme, and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. Our aims and objectives align with the Northern Ireland strategy 'Ending Homelessness Together'.

Since its conception, the project has expanded beyond what is referred to as the MDHST core team to improve service delivery across geographical boundaries and specific client groups. The Refugee Floating Support Team, Complex Floating Support



Team and Homeless Traveller Project (HTP) have evolved in response to the differing needs identified from the original team. The team has also expanded across geographical locations, offering service provision in rural areas (known as our dispersed teams) or areas whereby there is limited access to relevant support services (MDHST regional). Internally, these teams will work in partnership to provide advice, guidance and exchange knowledge to enhance the practice and achieve better outcomes. We also work in partnership with hostel providers, including Extern's Ormeau Centre.

MDHST work exceptionally hard to support the homeless population that require their support. Working within the voluntary sector can often present challenges for staff, who may seek the more competitive salaries offered in statutory sector, or who may be concerned about the level of unpredictability within the voluntary sector. Despite this, the team has continued to develop and deliver successful outcomes that will help the economic pressures that Northern Ireland currently face.

MDHST have recently become involved in the 'Complex Lives' initiative, which involves working in partnership with colleagues from departments representing the statutory and voluntary sector, with the aim to address homelessness and the inter-related societal changes linked to drugs, alcohol and mental health in Belfast. The MDHST team of social workers, project workers and a mental health worker are expertly placed to offer evidenced-based interventions to clients who are more likely to be disaffected or

excluded from services, who have limited motivation, have distrust in services, face barriers due to offending behaviours, or have faced discrimination and feel marginalised. This multi-agency approach allows for co-ordinated wraparound services and improves access to accommodation and treatment. This collaborative model also supports learning and insights by identifying gaps in services.

MDHST also work in partnership with local universities and our internal practice development team to provide social work placements twice per year. This has enabled us to develop the future workforce of social work, whilst bringing the vital up-to-date knowledge that students obtain in university to the team.

MDHST operate an open-door policy which allows the client group to present to our office for face-to-face support and assessments. These assessments are often crucial in safeguarding the client group, who may experience barriers such as addictions, mental health concerns, exploitation or violence. The staff team are experienced and skilled in working in partnership with the wider statutory services such as PSNI and social services to alert any safeguarding concerns and minimise risk.

Although MDHST is primarily based in our Belfast city centre office, we also operate out of the regional NIHE office, offering social work assessment of need and support to housing advisors. This collaboration has been crucial to delivering quality services and achieving better outcomes.

## Outcomes and achievements

MDHST Core have supported the client group in excess of our target required by funders. In the past year, over 180 clients sustained their existing accommodation, over 200 clients felt more secure in their own home, and over 250 clients were supported to achieve independent living. In terms of health outcomes, 300 individuals were supported to manage their physical and/or mental health needs, and over 120 were supported to access addiction services via their dedicated keyworker.

In refugee and complex services, nearly 200 clients felt more secure in their home via support and intervention and over 160 maintained their tenancy as a result of support provided. The figures demonstrate

the success of the projects operating in Belfast and do not account for the outcomes from the dispersed teams previously mentioned.

MDHST has evidenced its achievements in the last year through the growth and development of flexible and creative services, that achieve positive outcomes in reducing the risks associated with homelessness, preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies. None of this could be achieved without the positive working relationships and partnerships that we have developed across the statutory and voluntary sector. We anticipate future growth and replication of our model of practice.



# Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid (New Beginnings, Railway House)

**Lead organisation:** Oaklee Housing

**Partner organisations:** HSE Donegal & Donegal County Council



## Statement of support

Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid (New Beginnings, Railway House)

Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid, Railway Park, Donegal Town, is the successful outcome of partnership working at its best. Oaklee Housing, the Health Service Executive Donegal and Donegal County Council successfully collaborated to create two x4 bedroom high quality purpose built, residential bungalows in the community for people with a disability. The key ethos being a home for life, enhanced quality of life and inclusion in the local community.

Owned by Oaklee Housing and run by the HSE's Intellectual Disability Service under a service level agreement it provides a secure home and support to enable the residents to live independent lives in heart of the community, with the resident's informing the day to day living of each bungalow.

HSE Donegal, Donegal County Council and Oaklee Housing embarked on this journey with one shared goal; putting the needs of 8 residents as their paramount objective. A formidable working group was formed to design and create bespoke, purpose built housing that would allow for security of tenure, disability access, a lifetime home that meets the current individual needs and the changing needs that may arise in the foreseeable for the 8 residents.

There was many aspects to be considered in this process, ultimately there was the needs of the residents at the forefront, but there was also the needs of each partner from a care, regulator, maintenance/management, legal and so forth perspective. This is a partnership that will continue for many years into the future, therefore the only option was to get it right.

Two bungalows were meticulously designed and thought out by all partners involved, which included regular consultation and participation with the 8 residents and their families to ensure the shared goal and ethos was achieved to create housing that would eventually be called home or Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid (New Beginnings, Railway House) that the 8 residents would soon rename the two bungalows to.

Each bungalow consist of 4 ensuite bedrooms, a large communal lounge, kitchen/dining room, utility room, assisted bathroom, quiet room, outdoor patio, alongside a staff office and sleepover room. The partnership provides the support to ensure that whilst the 8 residents are well placed to live as 4 person households, integrated within the local community, their individual support needs are also met by the HSE and Oaklee Housing. The 8 residents are supported to live as independently as possible in the undertaking of all aspects of daily living.

Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid are situated in the heart of the local community in Railway Park, Donegal Town, between a well-established and new build estate. The design of each bungalow has ensured integration into the surrounding environment and forming part of the current neighbourhood, which the 8 residents of Tus Nua and Teach Iarnoid are now the heart and soul of, if you ask any of the neighbours or local shop keepers.

Resident 1 "I moved into my new home in Summer in 2022, I am really happy living here, I have made new friends and our neighbours are really nice. I can walk to local shop and to get my nails done, also to go for a coffee. My family can visit me when they want and they all like my new home which is really nice and warm. I really like my new bedroom and I have my own bathroom. I really like my new home and I never want to leave".

This exemplifies a successful model of integrated community housing.

## Outcomes and achievements

The shared goal and ethos to relocate 8 residents with disabilities to ultimately enhance the quality of life for each resident was successfully achieved through the hard work and dedication of this partnership. A couple of residents took up their tenancy in November 2021, and throughout 2022 the remainder of the residents moved in and both bungalows were fully occupied. The residents took ownership of decorating, displaying their own individual styles and personalities.

All the residents have individual tenancies with Oaklee Housing. The tenancies provide each resident with security of tenure and the 24 hour onsite support for the provision of care from the HSE enables each to live independently as part of the local community in Donegal Town. They undertake normal daily household tasks with each resident having responsibility for particular tasks such as shopping, paying bills, cleaning, putting out bins, participating in courses in the local community.

Oaklee Housing and the HSE carryout regular performance meetings to ensure all required compliance is adhered to by all partners, to ensure this partnership continues to provide safe and secure housing for all involved well into the future.

Resident 2: "I helped pick curtains, blinds and pictures for the sitting room, I picked lamps for the hallway. I spent evenings visiting the house before we moved. Our families all came to the house on November 12th and we loved showing our new house and we enjoyed afternoon tea with everyone. My Mummy is very happy and she says she is jealous of my new home. I am really happy and want to stay in my new home with my friends forever. We planted loads of new flowers at my new house during the summer. I have planted a memory tree for my Daddy and I am able to see tree from my bedroom window which I like."

The result of a shared goal.

# Partnership is Key to Graham Gardens Turnaround

**Lead organisation: Clanmil Housing**

**Partner organisations: PSNI, City Church Community Trust, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and the NI Housing Executive**



## Statement of support

Clanmil's Graham Gardens and Wardsborough apartments are home to 67 people in Lisburn. These high-quality apartments were built to meet the growing need for affordable housing in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area.

Graham Gardens was handed over to tenants in July 2019 and unfortunately quickly became the focus of high-profile antisocial behaviour (ASB) including drug-related offences, violence and criminal behaviour.

An incident where a tenant threw a fridge freezer from the window of his top floor apartment was widely reported in the media and contributed to the stigmatisation of the scheme. Speaking about the

incident, District Judge Rosie Watters described the apartments as "lovely" and added, "but there's some people who live there who are far from lovely."

There was a significant challenge for Clanmil to resolve the issues at Graham Gardens and ensure that Wardsborough, a second phase of the development, did not have similar problems when it was completed in autumn 2020.

The impact on the wellbeing of people living in Graham Gardens and the surrounding area was significant and additional revenue costs related to Clanmil's management of the scheme reached £200,000 over the first two years.

Clanmil recognised the need to embrace intensive partnership working to resolve the multifaceted issues in Graham Gardens and transform it into a safe, secure place to live.

A partnership governance arrangement was established with the support of the Chief Executive of Lisburn and Castlereagh Council in November 2019.

The Chief Executive chaired a group comprising Clanmil colleagues, councillors, PSNI, NI Housing Executive (NIHE), and community and voluntary organisations. Two subgroups were established to address community safety and community development. Clanmil participated in the former and chaired the latter.

Actions included:

- Information sharing and partnership working with the PSNI and the establishment of trust with tenants.
- Clanmil focussed resources on a robust housing management team to deal with ASB incidents, with a manager providing ongoing guidance and support to colleagues.
- Clanmil took legal action on nine tenancies, resulting in an eviction order for one tenant.
- Clanmil ensured its security contractor, Insec, provided an overnight presence at Graham Gardens. This reassured tenants and made the process for dealing with ASB more efficient.
- The partnership funded the installation of CCTV at Graham Gardens. 24/7 monitoring of the feed by City Watch provided incident details directly to the PSNI ensuring a swift response.
- Clanmil worked with NIHE to establish a managed lettings strategy. When Wardsborough was complete it was allocated alongside voids in Graham Gardens on a gradual and managed basis. This helped reduce the likelihood of future ASB incidents.

- A Sustainable Tenancy Project in partnership with Clanmil's Money Advice Team, Lisburn City Church Community Trust (LCCCT) Social Supermarket and Lisburn Credit Union was set up to help new residents sustain their tenancies.

Feedback from some of those involved in the partnership:

Jon Wilson, Chief Inspector, PSNI (June 2021) -

"While some incidents in the area still occur, they are greatly reduced and as a result, community confidence within the area and the quality of life for residents has improved."

David Burns, Chief Executive, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council -

"The positives included the 'can do' attitude from all partners, resource commitment from partners (both staff time and money), a strong elected member presence meaning the wider community were kept informed, and positive outcomes both for our short life working group but more importantly, for the new residents within these homes. Shared learning on the project will hopefully assist all partners in the future."

Lisburn PSNI entered this partnership into the inaugural PSNI Problem Solving Awards in 2022 where it won the top award.

## Outcomes and achievements

The level of ASB at Grahams Gardens has reduced from ten incidents per month in the first six months of occupation to one incident in the past six months.

Survey results show that the percentage of residents who consider ASB levels to be high reduced from 80% in November 2019 to 31% in December 2021.

The Tenancy Sustainability Initiative established by Clanmil and partners has resulted in the following outcomes:

- 44 new tenants supported to achieve 16 successful referrals to support services including:
  - o Three successful referrals have been made to LCCCT's Social Supermarket
  - o Three successful referrals have been made to Lisburn Credit Union

- o Four tenants have been given advice on debt
- o Six tenants have completed Clanmil's 'We Are Digital' financial and digital inclusion training.
- o 33 tenants received help to furnish their homes by applying to Clanmil for starter packs and discretionary support grants
- o £160k of welfare benefits secured for tenants

- One Graham Gardens tenant who had previously been involved in ASB incidents, says this of the support he has received through the Tenancy Sustainability Initiative:

"If it wasn't for Eddie (Neighbourhood Services Officer) I don't know where I'd be now. But I wouldn't be here. He's helped me turn my life around."

# Community Transition and Reconnecting Project

**Lead organisation: Radius Housing**

**Partner organisations: Forward South Partnership**



## Statement of support

The South Belfast Community Transition and Reconnecting Project was a 3-year good relations project coordinated in partnership with Radius Housing and Forward South Partnership along with Inner City South Belfast Sure Start, Belfast South Community Resource (BSRCR), Sólás, Belfast Roma Support Hub, Barnardo's NI, Sure Start and supported by 14+ other organisations. It was delivered as part of the Together: Building United Communities (T:buc) and 'Housing for All' Shared Housing Programme which is supported by Department for Communities and Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

In 2020 partners were concerned about the detrimental impact of the virus on communities and looked at innovative ways to provide support to children and families across cultures, abilities and communities. The project's main target group were children and families from diverse community backgrounds including those from Protestant, Catholic, and ethnic-minority communities and refugee and asylum seeker children as well as those with learning disabilities and on the autism spectrum.

In 2020 the South Belfast Community Transition and Reconnecting Project was initially developed as result of a community response to research, published during covid lockdown and restrictions, highlighting the significant inequalities impacting on education and emotional wellbeing of children from disadvantaged backgrounds including refugee and asylum seekers and BME communities due to the impact of the pandemic.

The programme was such a success in Year 1, winning a Belfast Healthy Cities Award in 2020 under Mental Health: Children, Young People & Families (which is a good relations theme within the T:buc and Housing for All funding) that it was improved and delivered for a further 2 years.

Over the 3-year programme partners delivered 175 themed workshops and activities across 9 disadvantaged communities in South Belfast to promote the themes of Arts & Culture, Health & Wellbeing and Advice Advocacy. Activities included yoga, cultural awareness, cultural music, dance and storytelling, sensory activities, outdoor play, mindfulness, dealing with anxiety, personal development, skills and capacity building, befriending, support and signposting.

A total of 1035 children (aged between three- and twelve-years old) participated including 126 children on the autism spectrum.

Over 335 parents were supported and offered the opportunity to 'try something new and different' and connect with each other through a range of mediums making use of innovative delivery approaches.

Provided - 180+ signposting information and family support packs.

In the Children's Society briefing it stated "whilst impacting on every child in the country, COVID-19 is likely to have a particularly pernicious impact on children and young people already living in poverty in the UK".

The Community Transition and Reconnecting Project project was designed to improve life opportunities and to enable those impacted to make better informed choices, improve educational attainment and health & wellbeing outcomes and effectively connected families which in turn contributed to maintaining tenancies, more cohesive communities and healthier, happier tenants.

Radius and its partners believe that the South Belfast Transition and Reconnecting Project demonstrated the added value of collaboration, with the opportunity to work with experienced and committed people across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors to make a positive difference for children and families living in South Belfast.

Quote from staff "Children will always by nature be inquisitive, having the opportunity to witness customs or traditions from different cultures encourages them to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of these differences as they develop".

Quote from a Keyworker - "Sessions were delivered with children with additional needs (predominantly Autism). What we loved as Keyworkers was seeing the children participate in a new activity, which they enjoyed. Some of them especially loved the chance to move with the music".



## Outcomes and achievements

The South Belfast Community Transition and Reconnecting Project won a Belfast Healthy Cities Award in 2020 under Mental Health: Children, Young People & Families

Children and parents showed an increase in individual protective factors in managing emotional wellbeing through participating in this programme.

Parents stated that they had gained a sense of not being alone and felt it provided an opportunity for new relationships to be built between cultures and abilities. Parents felt upskilled in techniques to manage anxiety and emotional well-being, parenting, play and health & wellbeing for the benefit of themselves and their families.

### Evaluation

92.3% of children felt more favourable towards people of different backgrounds

86.1% of children are more likely to take part in future activities with people from a different background.

86.1% of children and parents saw how different cultures and traditions adds to the richness of diversity of society.

90.8% of parents strongly agreed that their children have developed more positive relationships.

100% felt that the project was positive for children's emotional wellbeing.

95.5% felt that children gained confidence and have reduced anxiety.

# NET ZERO IN HOUSING

Sponsored by:  Department for Communities |  An Roinn Pobal |  Department for Communities

This award celebrates organisations that can demonstrate they have overcome some of the significant challenges in cutting carbon emissions.

Applicants may consider new developments, retrofit projects or any other initiatives that have helped reduce carbon emissions.

## Laois County Council Retrofitting Programme

**Lead organisation:** Laois County Council

**Partner organisations:** BCD Energy, Retrofit Design, Finna Construction



### Statement of support

Laois County Council completed retrofitting of 159 local authority-owned houses in the county. The retrofitting of homes in Portlaoise, Rathdowney, Arles,

Mountmellick & Portarlinton resulted in warmer, more comfortable homes and benefit householders' health through improved air quality. After the works, the Building Energy Ratings (BER) of homes typically went from an E- or D- rating to a B2 and will be expected to be substantially cheaper to heat than similar homes heated by oil or gas.

The works, which were part of the Midlands Retrofit Programme were awarded to Retrofit Design Ltd. and Finna Construction who worked in conjunction with BCD Energy Consultants and Laois County Council.

Construction works begin in Q4 2021 and works will typically involved insulation, upgrades of windows and doors and installation of heat pumps (renewable energy heating systems), as committed to under the Programme for Government. This will help Ireland's efforts to combat climate change.

### Outcomes and achievements

The benefits of Retrofitting these 159 homes include:

- It becomes easier to heat all rooms in a house.
- There is improved comfort through greater insulation
- With no ash from solid fuel boilers, indoor air quality is improved. This benefits householders' health.
- Outdoor air quality is improved, benefiting the community's health.
- Efficient heating systems are more convenient to use. They end the need to remove ash from solid fuel fires. When warming a home, there is no longer the need to regularly feed a solid fuel boiler or open fireplace with fuel.
- Houses with heat pumps release less carbon dioxide from heating than those heated by fossil fuels (like peat, coal or oil). This helps combat climate change. About 40% of Ireland's energy-related carbon emissions are from buildings.

# Energy Efficiency in Social Housing project

## Northern Ireland Housing Executive



### Statement of support

The NIHE has a goal to improve thermal performance within our stock and address Fuel Poverty by reducing energy usage and costs, whilst also contributing to the UK's 2050 Net Zero Carbon target.

We have invested greatly by improving energy performance in nearly 1,900 homes across the region which is part of a wider vision to create "Affordable net zero carbon housing that helps sustain the environment for future generations".

The project has been made possible by funding of €23 million from the ERDF through its Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme for Northern Ireland. With a further €22 million invested by ourselves, the programme is expected to complete by September 2023 however we will continue works and develop our housing estates for future generations.

The schemes address the level of thermal efficiency to various types of properties with the provision of external wall insulation, double glazing and improved energy efficiency measures such as improved air tightness and mechanical ventilation. The works include two phases of projects to undertake External Wall Insulation to No Fines non-traditional housing stock, throughout region the work will continue into the future improving quality of life for our tenants whilst bettering the local environment.

Retrofitting has allowed tenants to live comfortably, with fuel efficiency high emissions low, this allows parties to save money whilst producing an ability to attain a high level of customer service and tenant retention establishing a prosperous future for all with tangible investment completed.

The programme is aimed at improving the thermal performance and desirability of the Housing Executive's non-traditionally constructed properties. This stock has been focused on as a result of a condition survey of The Housing Executive's stock showing that these homes typically suffer from poor airtightness and water penetration leading to a poor living environment and excessive heat loss.

To overcome these issues The Housing Executives Quality Improvement team focused on innovative and good quality external design solutions to create warmer and more desirable homes for our tenants without reducing the internal space of their homes. The Energy efficiency works align with the 'Fabric First' approach promoted by The Housing Executive as Northern Ireland's Home Energy Conservation Authority (HECA). A 'Fabric First' approach focuses first of all on improving a property's external envelope's performance in heat retention, air tightness and ventilation in order to prepare the property for decarbonised services and renewable technologies.

The scope of the works includes External wall insulation, loft insulation, windows, doors, airtightness works and de-centralised mechanical extract ventilation units. The works also included aesthetic features including K-rend external finishes, roof replacements and modern external fixtures and fittings including GRP canopies. We have also included a significant amount of roof replacement works to ensure that the lifespan of the homes are extended and they are futureproofed for years to come.

A lack of specialised workforce has led to an upskilling of the contracting workforce right across Northern Ireland who will now be able to carry out these specialised works in the years to come. This will have a positive impact for future retrofitting being carried out in Northern Ireland.

Finally a key impact is the customer satisfaction for our communities. From feedback to date the works have made important improvements to the health and wellbeing of our tenants within their homes. Tenants have been delighted with the works and they have noticed massive improvements in their homes holding in heat and that "in the mornings instead of turning on the heating they are opening windows".

## Outcomes and achievements

In summary, the analysis to date demonstrates average improvements per property of an increase of 13.35 points in SAP score from pre-works 57 to post-works 70. By the end of the programme it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in energy use of over 9.15 million kWh per year and a reduction in carbon emissions of over 3,051kg per year.

The average kWh saving per dwelling is 7,845 kWh/year – totalling 1,168,880 kWh energy saving which is being returned to our tenants and with the current increase in fuel costs the potential savings to our tenants increasing through the completion of this thermal improvement project with the works becoming more valuable and necessary in the future.

A key impact is the customer satisfaction within the communities. From initial feedback the works have made important improvements to the health and wellbeing of our tenants within the communities. Recent feedback has shown tenants have been delighted with the works and they have noticed massive improvements in their homes holding in heat and that “in the mornings instead of turning on the heating they are opening windows”. Creating warmer, healthier homes that are easier to run and save money for our tenants.

## Improving Warmth and Wellbeing

**Lead organisation: Co-operative Housing Ireland**

**Partner organisations: Kingdom Installation LTD.**



### Statement of support

In addition to only acquiring NZEB properties, CHI developed an 'Improving Warmth and Wellbeing' programme to upgrade 216 of its lowest energy performing homes and is currently halfway through. The upgrading of homes improves the overall standard of living for CHI Members (tenants) and may deliver financial savings to those at risk of fuel poverty. Retrofitting homes and buildings to minimum BER B2 is key to reducing national greenhouse gas emissions and reaching net zero targets outlined in the government's Climate Action Plan 2021. Retrofitting existing housing stock allows CHI to maintain homes and be exemplary providers of social housing.

Under Phase 1 of the Project, which took place in the first half of 2022, CHI upgraded 52 homes in South Earl Street and Sean MacDermott Street, both in Dublin city centre. CHI is well underway with Phase 2 of the Project in which 57 homes in Newcourt, Dublin 8, will receive upgrades.

CHI's Asset Management and Property Services Team identifies properties to retrofit by looking at the worst performing buildings in terms of Building Energy Ratings (BER). The Improving Warmth & Wellbeing

Project aims to bring properties up to a minimum of BER B2. In South Earl Street, most properties had a BER rating of D3, and several had a BER rating of E1-E2. As a result of extensive retrofit works, the BER ratings were brought up to an average of B2.

To deliver these Deep Energy Retrofit Upgrades, CHI engaged project management team Kingdom Installation Ltd. Kingdom Installation has been CHI's partner on previous Deep Retrofit Projects, which saw 140 homes upgraded in 2021. Kingdom Installation is mandated by SEAI as a one-stop shop for the delivery of retrofit projects.

Kingdom Installation's first step when preparing to retrofit a development is to verify the current BER rating of the property. Using specialised software, they then model the potential energy improvement for each retrofit action, for example, if pumping the cavity with insulation, installation of a heat pump, installing high output radiators, insulating the ceiling. In the deep energy upgrades of apartments at South Earl Street and Seán MacDermott street, the following works were carried out:

- Filling wall cavities with Energystore Cavity Wall Insulation. This reduced the U-value of external masonry cavity walls to U-value 0.31 W/m<sup>2</sup>k
- Replacing original windows with triple-glazed windows 1.2 W/m<sup>2</sup>k -1.4 W/m<sup>2</sup>k
- Replacing back doors with double-glazed uPVC doors with a 1.4 W/m<sup>2</sup>k and air leakage factor (L factor) 0.03 W/m<sup>2</sup>k
- Installing Mitsubishi Ecodan air-to-water heat pumps in every home
- Installing steel radiators
- Removing existing gas boilers
- Covering original steel roofs with plywood and PVC trocal covering.



- Adding external wall insulation Atlas Graphite Enhanced EPS. U-value 0.27 W/m<sup>2</sup>k to the underneath of exposed floor slabs of apartments in both Sean MacDermott and South Earl.
- Providing LED bulbs to all apartments

Communal/landlord areas:

- received composite doors (0.9 W/m<sup>2</sup>k U-Value) and also had windows replaced (1.2 W/m<sup>2</sup>k).
- smart electric radiators were installed.

Once the works were finished, Kingdom completed a post-upgrade BER to confirm each property achieved

a B2 rating. SEAI assessors also inspected a sample of the work and homes inspected received a pass rate of 100%.

All of the above was completed in a volatile construction climate with scarcity of raw materials, due to supply chain issues stemming from Brexit and the Russian-Ukraine war, and higher prices as a result of inflation. Work began while Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines were in place. Works were undertaken on 52 homes with the Members in situ in order to cause minimal disruption and ensure our Members could remain in the safety of their during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Outcomes and achievements

By incorporating lifecycle replacement work into a deep energy retrofit project CHI ensured that the properties' energy performance was greatly improved and futureproofed.

CHI's primary responsibility is to our Members, so the biggest benefit from retrofitting homes is ensuring their warmth and well-being, as well as reduced cost of living.

Members have benefited from warmer, more comfortable homes. Future maintenance works will be consolidated by the unification of energy provision, hot water and heating under one system. This will help Members manage their energy bills.

Maintenance callout costs in October and November 2022 in comparison to October and November 2021 dropped by almost 40% from €990 in 2021 to €720 in 2022. As Members become further acquainted with the system, these are expected to fall further. CHI is delighted by the positive impact on Members' morale. Resident, Emma Dillon, described the benefits of the retrofits in her home:

"We can moderate the temperature, we have it set to eighteen degrees every time. We always have hot water now, it's always set to the same temperature. It just feels healthier now. Kingdom came and gave us a tutorial [on the new heat pump]. It's a simple system but it's so effective."

# Retrofit Programme & EnergyCloud

**Lead organisation: Clúid Housing**

**Partner organisations: EnergyCloud**



## Statement of support

Clúid Housing acknowledges the contribution that the residential sector can make in reducing Ireland's climate impact. We are committed to implementing meaningful sustainability across our organisation; to creating sustainable homes and communities for our residents and playing our role in achieving Ireland's Climate Action Targets.

For the Net Zero in Housing award category, there are 2 particular projects that highlight the work that Clúid has been doing towards meeting some of the significant challenges in cutting carbon emissions.

## Retrofit

We are committed to delivering an ambitious retrofit programme to ensure that all Clúid owned properties meet a minimum Building Energy Rating of B2 by 2030.

Of course, not only are these retrofit works contributing to meeting vital climate action goals, they are also creating more comfortable and energy efficient homes which are less expensive for our residents to run.

Feedback from our residents has been extremely positive, as shown in the quote from a resident at a recently retrofitted property:

"I wanted to say we are getting good run now on new heating system of refurb and heating is amazing really and truly very very cosy. Way better than that storage heating. Can you pass on our big thank you to the person who set all this up. It's made my home and Joe's more cosy -exactly like they said. J.J the guy on

site was brilliant informing us also each time. The new windows are fabulous, losing the open fire was a shock but hand on heart this is great to be able to come in and switch on a button. The place is lovely and very very cheap to run. 100% very happy'

#### EnergyCloud

Clúid is keen to drive positive environmental initiatives where possible. Since 2020, Clúid has been working with \*EnergyCloud to create solutions to divert surplus renewable energy, which would otherwise be wasted, to Irish homes, with a primary focus on social housing and those in fuel poverty.

\* EnergyCloud is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and supported by EirGrid, ESB, Wind Energy Ireland, Climote, SSE Airtricity, Kingspan and Clúid Housing.

Clúid began Ireland's first pilot with EnergyCloud in 2022, with 40 of our properties. 44 additional Clúid homes were made EnergyCloud ready during December 2022 and 200 further homes are planned to be ready for Energy Cloud by the end of March 2023.

Feedback from our residents has been wonderful.

The quotes below from some of our residents who are EnergyCloud ready is typical of the feedback we receive.

"It's absolutely fantastic to wake up to a free full tank of hot water!"

"I woke early this morning and noticed that the tank was full, so I had a bath and managed to clean the fridge before getting ready for work. Distributing the hot water is a great idea."

"Thank you - a very dependable service that I can organise cleaning/ household chores around."

We believe that as the largest Approved Housing Body in Ireland and a key member of the Housing Alliance, Clúid Housing has a responsibility and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in driving the environmental agenda. We aim to do this by setting ambitious goals for ourselves, using our voice to raise awareness of the issues, convene debate and advocate for change.

We intend to continuously build on our climate action work.

## Outcomes and achievements

### Retrofit

So far, to the end of 2022, we have completed deep retrofit works on 1,417 properties at a total cost of over €20.5m (inclusive of grants). Over 13.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide were saved as a direct result of the retrofit works carried out in 2020 & 2021 alone.

While it is not possible to determine the exact cost savings that residents have made due to GDPR, based on SEAI BER cost comparison information it is anticipated that residents are achieving an average conservative saving of over €1,000 on their annual energy bills.

### Energy Cloud

Clúid began Ireland's first pilot with EnergyCloud in 2022, with 40 of our properties. The system went live in May 2022 and since then to the end of 2022, 2007 FREE tanks of hot water have been delivered over a total of 99 nights. This equates to 6,890kWh of energy delivered with a saving of 1,606kg/ CO2.

At an average unit rate of 27cent, this equates to overall savings of €1,860 for our residents so far.

# HOUSING ORGANISATION OF THE YEAR

This award will recognise organisations who are leading the way in driving professionalism, learning and development and inclusion while delivering a great service for tenants.

## Tuath Housing - Delivering Excellence

### Tuath Housing



### Statement of support

Tuath is the fastest growing AHB in Ireland with over 10,100 homes in management providing homes to over 26,000 people. 2022 was a record year for the organisation delivering over 1,900 homes to over 4,000 people. The organisation has also increased its staff complement from 80 in 2019 to over 170 in 2022 while maintaining a strong organisational culture and excellent services to our tenants.

Tuath Housing, as a professional housing organisation, recognise and encourage staff to complete CIH accredited courses with a high % of our staff now CIH members. We believe staff are Tuath's most valuable resource. The Association is committed to ensuring there is a clear alignment between new homes delivered, the services provided to tenants and the ongoing improvement of staff skills.

Tuath continue to prioritise learning and development for staff providing over 100 internal training courses in 2022, ensuring employees have the skills and expertise to deliver to the best of their ability, with health and safety at the forefront. Tuath supported over 20% of colleagues in completing external

educational courses through our study aids policy. The Associations continue to grow its talent and nurture new talent through the employment of seven graduates and trainees who partake in external graduate programmes; For Purpose and GEM, focus on careers with a purpose and providing CIH accreditation. Tuath is also delighted to be working in conjunction with the Housing Agency to bring forward the first Irish housing apprenticeship programme in 2023.

Tuath staff headcount increased by over 25% in the past year and the implementation of a new pay structure endeavors to improve retention with a commitment to growing existing skills collectively as an organisation allowing the organisation to recruit 15% of 2022's roles internally.

September 2022 saw the first companywide gathering since pre pandemic times and helped gain an insight into staff perspectives and provide feedback. This feedback led to the implementation of a wellbeing allowance of €500 per annum and life events leave up to a maximum of 5 days to include menopause, miscarriage etc. and our 360-wellbeing app Zevo Health, with access to Employee Assistance Programme, health blogs and webinars and exercise challenges. This is aimed at reducing burnout and increasing employee satisfaction and engagement. Recent surveys show that staff are benefiting from these new additional supports.

Operational Managers completed a recognised accreditation in managing people and remote working to ensure the necessary skills are available. The Irish Centre for Diversity & Inclusion provided training sessions for all staff and in September (the month of diversity and inclusion) and culture themed engagement and inclusive wellbeing initiatives were undertaken. We are currently working towards accreditation around this.



The core values of Tuath underpin engagement across the business whether an employee, a landlord or a partner. "Our vision is to invest in people and places by providing more homes and more choice" and in 2022 saw the launch of Tuath's Tenant Engagement Strategy. The Strategy entitled 'Your Voice, Your Home, Your Community,' was launched in July 2022 with 7 events held around the country. The nationwide network of events were held in Dublin, Louth, Kildare, Meath, and Westmeath, with the flagship event taking place in Bishop's Avenue in Cork City. Tuath's new publication sets out the approved housing body's vision in becoming a leader in tenant engagement in the social and affordable housing sector. It aims to achieve this by delivering first class services to tenants and empowering residents and staff to work together to strengthen community participation and engagement across communities. The detailed strategy also lays out a plan for how Tuath will involve tenants in the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of services over the next four years.

A vital part of the creation of the strategy was collaborating with residents through a tenant engagement working group which was set up in March 2020. One of the key decisions of the working group was to develop a survey, distributed to all Tuath households, in which residents were asked about their preferences and experiences in relation to communicating with Tuath, their view on the benefits of Tenant Engagement as well as what

they see as potential barriers to getting involved. Recommendations from a Tuath commissioned research paper released in March 2022, "Embedding a Culture of Tenant Engagement: Recommendations for Social Housing in the Irish Context", were also included in the new strategy.

Chair of Tuath's Voluntary Board of Directors, Prof. Paddy Gray, commented "The release of the strategy is an important step for Tuath Housing as we continue to grow and develop our resident-led approach. We truly believe that by listening to, working in partnership with, and providing valuable information for our residents, that we can offer excellent services."

This ethos reinforces the Association's commitment to do more, to do better, whether delivering more homes and delivering more services to tenants.

Tuath believe it fits the criteria of organisation of the year as a dynamic and evolving organisation and would be worthy winners as we continue on our journey to deliver new homes through innovative initiatives such as cost rental/affordable to rent (we delivered 250 in 2022 with over 300 in our pipeline) and in the conversion of unused offices in Dublin & Cork City where 120 new homes have been created repurposing existing unused offices.

Staff skills have been developed in all areas to ensure organisational objectives around choice, innovation, delivery, and sustainability are being met.

## Outcomes and achievements

2022 was a year of delivering not only a record number of homes but also high-quality services to tenants, support and upskilling for staff and building on relationships with our stakeholders.

Tuath will continue to work in partnership to deliver a further 1,800 plus homes in 2023. Tuath is continuing to achieve this high level of delivery year on year through the creation and maintaining of a cohesion forward thinking collective of people who have the skills, knowledge, leadership who want to deliver more homes to more people that need them. Our staff have a "can do" attitude and support each other to deliver more and to identify learning and wellbeing needs and adjust and adopt developmental training plans to create a successful platform to meet individual and organisations objectives in line with the company's Strategic Plan and core values. This

successful combination ensures year on year success where staff and residents are supported to achieve shared and focused objectives in line with the highest professional standards.

The Association continuously seeks to improve the lives of tenants and their communities while continuing to deliver new homes at record levels. By working with its nationwide network of stakeholders, forming new partnerships, and reinforcing old ones, Tuath remains focused on improving the services it delivers, building on its organisational capacity while fostering a culture of innovation, learning and development and inclusivity.

You may view a video of Tuath's 2022 Year in review here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GMrlsjoG7Q>



# Driving professionalism, learning and development, and inclusion

## Choice Housing



### Statement of support

Choice have a range of policies and procedures in place to guide and support staff in working to the highest professional standards across the organisation. These include a Declaration of Interest portal that staff complete on an annual basis; a Code of Conduct outlining the behaviours expected from colleagues; an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy setting out how we encourage and celebrate diversity in our workplace; and a process for Personal Development Reviews where staff, along with their manager, review their achievements against: KPI's, SMART objectives and Choice's values of being Caring, Committed and Creative. This process ensures that staff are fully engaged in the organisation's commitment to drive professional standards. Choice also holds quarterly and annual staff awards recognising those who have excelled in demonstrating its values.

Choice sets its people up for success with opportunities to complete external qualifications, training and continuous professional and personal development. To develop and nurture existing talent, Choice have developed the Choice Academy, an online learning tool that all staff can access and engage with. The resource is accessible and easy to navigate, providing clear information on how to work towards the different career pathways within Choice. A Choice employee said, "Choice Academy encouraged me to make the most of my role. I have completed levels 2 and 3 in Housing Management and am now studying Level 4. Choice Academy is a great asset for every member of staff".

As part of its Equality and Diversity Strategy, Choice have introduced a number of initiatives that help drive meaningful change in diversity and inclusion. For example, within Choice 54% of staff are women and 29% of those are in the 45-55 age range for peri-menopause and menopause. Their new Menopause Support Team are trained to provide support to female employees. Alongside this menopause support is included in their Health & Wellbeing strategy and managers have received training. A manager attending the recent training: "I found the training really useful, it gave me practical information I can apply to my team should they need support. I feel more confident that I can give informed support to any colleague experiencing difficulty in the work place as a result of menopause."

Recognising that one in every five adults in Northern Ireland have a mental health condition, Choice have also trained Mental Health First Aiders who operate across the organisation. Their role is to help colleagues to recognise the symptoms of some of the main mental health conditions, providing guidance and support, and signposting colleagues towards appropriate professional help.

Choice Pride Week took place this year to raise awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ staff members and tenants. Staff took part in awareness training provided by the Rainbow Project giving them a better understanding of how to relate to tenants and colleagues from the LGBTQ+ communities. The Choice Pride Committee produced a leaflet for staff and tenants on services and signposting available for those who are LGBTQ+. The committee also designed a new banner and t-shirts for Choice staff taking part in the annual Pride Parade. Choice also attended the first Mela parade in 2022 with over 20 members of staff walking in the parade, along with a banner to highlight their involvement and support.

Choice have signed up their two main office buildings to be Safe Places for staff, tenants or members of the public who may be affected by domestic violence. So far, over 125 staff members have received domestic violence awareness training and stickers are displayed on the windows of both buildings with posters on the walls and further information cards available.

## Outcomes and achievements

Choice believes every team member is integral to its success and contributes to achieving its mission of enriching lives through great homes, services and communities. Choice continually invests in its staff to drive professional standards, and ensure tenants can always receive quality services and support.

The health and wellbeing and equality and diversity initiatives that Choice have implemented demonstrate that Choice is committed to making a positive, meaningful impact within its organisation and the communities in which it works. The training delivered by Rainbow helped raise awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ staff members and

tenants, and the organisation's attendance at Pride and Mela demonstrate that Choice is inclusive to all sections of the community.

The Association's Environmental, Social and Governance Report is testament to the organisation driving professional standards across the organisation. The report details key targets and outcomes across a range of environmental, social and governance led commitments. Risk management, community investment, tenant engagement, and managing environmental impact all form part of commitments that are aimed at delivering great outcomes for tenants and contributing to a better society for all.

# HOUSING TEAM OF THE YEAR

This award is for teams that have made an outstanding contribution to their organisation and the delivery of its objectives.

We are looking for the achievement of something special as part of developing new services, improving existing ones or overcoming obstacles to achieve great results.

## Development Team

### Choice Housing



### Statement of support

For developing Associations in Northern Ireland, the annual new-build “starts” target continues to be the stand-out metric against which performance is judged.

Choice was formed in 2015 - a merger of four Associations. The rationale was a familiar one – “lets combine our resources and do more - build more houses and meet more need”. The reality has proven more difficult. Despite best efforts, in the years to follow, the Development Team was unable to deliver its annual target – 400 new homes “started” on site.

Something needed to change. In January 2021, the team embarked on a Strategic Review - a time out, bottom-up analysis over a 6 week period. Individual and team sessions were held, views collated and recommendations drawn. The pathway became clear. It needed a new Development Strategy, one where the size and scale of projects matched our ambition. And a new structure, in which a new team would be set up to identify and secure projects, in places where our Tenants needed them most.

With strategy and structures approved, by April 2021, the annual crusade would begin in earnest. The team needed to hit the ground running. And so it did.

By June, a programme of deliverable projects was starting to take shape. But what started with quantity (400 homes) soon became overshadowed by quality. These were some of Northern Ireland's best known landmarks. Could these projects really be delivered for social housing?

The team leaned into emerging DfC policy around mixed-tenure. First, it would secure an 81 unit scheme on the site of one of Northern Ireland's best known and most iconic landmarks; the Kings Hall. As the wider project now begins to gather pace, the social housing provision sits prominently at the entrance, shoulder to shoulder beside the Kings Hall itself.

A short distance away, on the corner of one of Belfast's best known junctions (Lisburn Road / Bates Avenue) another landmark project commenced. With wide ranging amenities on the doorstep, it's a fantastic place for our Tenants to live.

Looking to East Belfast, next would be the Park Avenue Hotel. With similar profile to Kings Hall, in the heart of the Belmont / Ballyhackamore area, people may have thought that this scheme would be out of reach (financially) for social housing providers and our Tenants. As they would do on countless other occasions, our Team found a way to make it work. The views over Belfast Lough are really special.

A short distance away, at Lewis Mews, an “NI first” incorporating all main tenures in one scheme – social rent, Category 1 (active elderly), private rent and affordable sale. This is a pilot scheme, with particular focus on the benefits of mixed tenure development. Now completed, this successful scheme is frequently visited with new Developers to show them that it can and does work!

On South Belfast's Lower Ormeau Road, our Team would commit to phase 2 of the highly prominent “Brickworks” project (former H&J Martin premises).

Other no less important regional schemes (including

Dungannon, Antrim, Carrickfergus and Coleraine) together brought an additional 250 new homes for social housing Tenants. An important part of this has been new relationships and a range of new developers, contractors and design teams entering our sector.

Alongside these successes, the Team also found time to acquire a site in Derry ~ Londonderry, close to Crescent Link Retail Park. With 800 homes planned over a 8-10 year period, its first phase will provide 190 new social homes “starting” in the 2022/2023 financial year. This is one of the largest social housing projects to be delivered in NI since the 1970’s.

## Outcomes and achievements

Across 14 projects, the team delivered 442 social housing starts, the highest in the sector by some margin. In a year ofprecedented inflation, the Team was often required to re-do the same work twice and three times.

In any other year, securing one of these projects would be considered a win for social housing. To deliver them all at one time is exceptional, unlikely to be repeated in the sector. It places social housing providers at the leading edge of the construction sector in NI but more importantly, makes a significant contribution towards ever-growing waiting lists.

The Team has shown sector-leadership around the delivery of mixed-tenure projects - a further 104 homes being delivered for private rent and affordable sale. Kings Hall, Park Avenue, Lewis Mews and Crescent Link may become pivotal “proof of concept” projects. Mixing tenures blurs the lines between social and private, creating mixed communities free from stigma and segregation.

In these difficult times, Choice has been buoyed and uplifted by seeing this team realise its full potential. With over 1,000 homes currently under construction, Choice staff don’t have to travel far before being able to point out “one of ours” to friends and family alike.

# Clanmil Money Advice Team

## Clanmil Housing



## Statement of support

Clanmil Money Advice Team

A theme within Clanmil’s Shaping Our Future 2026 strategy is to provide services that make life easier for our customers, with a key aim to help customers sustain their tenancies for as long as they choose. The work of our in-house Money Advice Team is essential to delivering this aim.

Clanmil’s Money Advice team has been operating since January 2014. To date, the team of five has generated over £12 million for Clanmil customers, helping more than 3,000 people improve their financial position.

The team provide Clanmil customers with a free, impartial and confidential service designed to help them manage their money and navigate the benefit system. They also work with customers who are unable to pay their rent and people experiencing

financial difficulty and debt.

Since 2020, Clanmil has seen an unprecedented rise in demand for financial advice and support, with many customers facing increased financial pressures due to the Covid pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

The Money Advice Team has shown outstanding and unwavering commitment during this difficult time. They have introduced innovative ways of working, expanding collaborative partnerships with other community and voluntary organisations and using technology to provide an uninterrupted service.

The team work tirelessly, over many late nights and weekends, supporting families from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. For many customers it is their first time dealing with the benefit system and many had no understanding of the application process. The team carry out financial health checks, submit benefit applications and connect customers with debt management services to ease the burden on families struggling financially.

It can be difficult for anyone to admit they are struggling financially and to reach out for help, but Clanmil’s Money Advice Team treat everyone with kindness and respect and are never judgemental. In addition, they take a holistic approach, offering support for a range of financial issues faced by a customer. The following example illustrates this approach:

A customer who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness, and who had no family support, was suffering with poor mental health. As a result, they stopped



engaging with their healthcare providers and were unable to reply to letters, resulting in their benefits being stopped.

A member of the Money Advice Team had several face-to-face meetings with this customer, building a supportive, trusting relationship with them. They worked to have their benefits reinstated, along with extra payments to help with care. The customer also reengaged with his medical treatment due to the team member's ongoing support.

The Money Advice Team demonstrate the core principles of excellent teamwork. They communicate well with each other, support each other, and focus on results. Above all, they share a passion for the welfare of the people who live in Clanmil homes.

Each member of the team continually goes over and above the requirements of their role to prioritise the needs of customers often making themselves available during evenings and weekends to help those in crisis.

One customer the team recently supported said:

"I would recommend Clanmil's Money Advice team to all tenants. I'm a pensioner and I'm sure there are others like me who are feeling the effects of the latest cost of living increases. When the gas, electricity and petrol increases were announced I decided to contact the Money Advice Team who were marvellous. After a home visit by one of the team, they helped me apply for a benefit that I didn't know I was entitled to. It was such a relief when I got the extra money! I can't thank them enough."

## Outcomes and achievements

Outcomes and Achievements:

- More than 3000 Clanmil customers supported since the Money Advice Team was established in 2014
- Over £12 million generated in income for customers
- In Clanmil's customer satisfaction survey 2021-22 90.2% of Clanmil customers surveyed said they were satisfied with the services provided by the Money Advice team
- The team has partnered with several private, voluntary and community sector organisations to identify money-saving opportunities including Johnsons Paint, who offer discount vouchers for customers to decorate their homes and Restore Charity, who offer furniture discount and a free delivery service.
- Most recently the team became Northern Ireland's first housing association member of the National Databank (similar to food bank for data) through a partnership with the Good Things Foundation, Three Mobile, o2 and Vodafone. This was set up to support people across the UK by offering free mobile internet data connectivity to people who cannot afford it.
- The team delivers financial capability programmes to educate customers about budgeting and empower them to become more financially resilient.

# CHI's Asset Management and Property Services (AMPS) Team

## Co-operative Housing Ireland



### Statement of support

CHI's Asset Management and Property Services (AMPS) Team became a standalone department in its own right in 2022. Originally a sub-section of the Customer Services Team, the new department became fully operational in Q3 2022. The department has now expanded comprising a national Admin Support Team and two Regional Asset Management Teams with their own organic maintenance managers and technicians.

Critical to the success of the new Department has been the establishment of the Admin Support Team, which is headed up by Michael Hopkins. This team also manages a National Member's Contact Centre which deals with all member repair requests and queries. The team receive and respond to Member's requests across a number of media including phone, webchat and e-mail. The Admin Support Team's first task was to physically establish a home for the AMPS Department and the National Contact Centre in CHI's Avondale Offices in Mulhuddart. The next step was to identify and procure the hardware and software required to run a national call centre. The procured system streamlined all incoming calls, meaning all calls were received by the National Contact Centre rather than their local office. This small but important change allowed the department to track data and produce metrics to optimise the services that we offer to our members. The goal is to continually improve the service making it more efficient and ensuring value for money is achieved. This data is also used to produce KPIs that are reported on to both the EMT and Board.

Most calls that the Contact Centre receives are from members requesting repairs. The repairs are categorised and resolved within our service level targets:

- Emergency: 24 hrs
- Urgent: 5 days
- Routine: 28 days

Members are also sent troubleshooting guides and 'how-to' videos to assist in diagnosing problems and mitigating unnecessary callouts.

On average, each agent receives 26 calls per day, average wait time is 20secs, and 98% are answered. 50% of calls end in Work Orders, there were 4562 work orders between July and November.

The next step for the National Contact Centre is to overhaul the surveying process which gathers feedback on customer satisfaction with the contact centre and the repair. Currently, the team is exploring the use of applications like Survey Monkey to send out feedback requests via text message for Members' convenience.

The Administration Support Manager has also created digital information sheets. These sheets provide practical information to Members on how to prepare of the different types of cyclical maintenance works that may happen in their homes. The sheets are shared with Members via a link to the CHI website in advance of the scheduled works, for example, chimney cleaning, boiler servicing, and periodic electrical inspections. There are also plans to share these sheets through the WhatsApp Communities function as the Team have discovered that this is the Member's preferred means of communication. Previously there was no standard procedure for communication before scheduled cyclical maintenance works.

The AMPS team are also collaborating with the IT/ Business Systems Manager to create Intranet sites for each CHI Estate, containing practical information like; number of households, housing officer, past cyclical repairs, Planned maintenance programmes, emergency contractor cover, and so on. These intranet sites will also be accessible to department across the organisation.

Prior to the establishment of AMPS, Members rang local housings officer about repairs. Local offices recorded information in different ways. This led to inconsistencies which was insufficient from an asset management and risk perspective. The establishment of the centralised National Contact Centre has been key to addressing these inconsistencies and critical to the early success of the Asset Management Department.

## Outcomes and achievements

Since establishing the call centre, repair costs have reduced, and the repair escalation process is clearer to Members. Previously, some Members waited until issues were at their worst and called the emergency repair number out of hours. There has been a significant reduction in emergency and after hour calls and repair callouts.

The addition of a Data Analyst to the AMPS means the team now generates its own data on operations and their successes. Having a Data Analyst has allowed CHI to gather the Eircodes of all properties which have been added to information sheets sent to contractors prior to work commencing.

CHI has centralised BERs data and now knows its energy profile to accurately identify properties to be retrofitted. The Data Analyst has mapped where current and future developments are. The AMPS Team oversaw the retrofit of more than 50 homes in 2022. Other large-scale projects have included replacing the windows in Newtown Court, a three-year project which will cost circa €1m. The physical stock survey also began in 2022 which will see 20% of CHI's housing stock surveyed a year from this year on.

# Housing Management Team

## Oaklee Housing



### Statement of support

Oaklee Housing, Housing Management Team manage over 2,000 tenancies across all aspects of Tenancy Management. At Oaklee Housing part of the vision and values are to be customer centred and dynamic.

Our Housing Team deal with various challenges on a regular basis. One particular challenge across 2022 was and still is the cost of living crisis that is facing most. The Housing staff have first-hand experience and insight into the impact the cost of living is currently having for many Oaklee Housing tenants.

With Tenant Engagement a firm objective for the Housing Team, regular discussions and activities take place to promote this. Through a brain storming exercise on tenant engagement at a team meeting late August 2022, the cost of living was top of the agenda, with the winter months fast approaching this would undoubtedly put further strains on those already feeling the effects of the cost of living. The cold months would mean an increase on many bills. On top of an already stressful time; with Christmas now approaching this would increase that strain much further.

The question was how could Oaklee Housing help with the cost of living this Christmas for as many

Oaklee Housing tenants as possible? The Housing Team came up with the idea of running a 12 days of Christmas draw to help with the cost of living.

The next question was how could this be funded? It was decided to ask suppliers and contractors that work directly with Oaklee Housing, to give back and make a donation if possible towards Oaklee Housing 12 days of Christmas. This appeal was welcomed with open arms by many suppliers and contractors of Oaklee Housing and with all due credit €5,100.00 was raised from Bayview Contracts, Byrne Wallace, O'Connor Solicitors, O'Reilly Surveyors, Distinctive People, Solo Protect, WKN Real Estate Advisors, Hays Recruitment, Dunnes Stores, MLCS, Dermott Gillespie. This amount way surpassed the initial thoughts that €1,200 could be raised to allow a value of €100 for each of the 12 days.

With €5,100.00 now in hand, this allowed for six draws per day, each day the six draws were designed to alleviate the cost of living this Christmas, therefore each daily draw included, x2 €50 Grocery vouchers, x2 €50 Food Hampers, a €75 Toy shop voucher and a €100 credit off a utility bill. The draws began on Monday the 05th December 2022, running each week morning and concluding on Tuesday the 20th December 2022, with some additional draws on the final day.

Each day five of the draws included all Oaklee Tenants, with the 6th daily draw being specific to a particular region or category, for example the west region or Oaklee Housing sheltered tenants, etc. This to was increase the geographical spread to reach as many different regions and categories of tenants as possible.

With the draws concluded on the mouth of Christmas, it was all hands on deck to get the prizes delivered before Christmas, staff drafted in from all departments in the organisation to ensure all was delivered, from Waterford to Dublin and beyond to the cliffs of Donegal.

## Outcomes and achievements

Through this innovative, responsive approach by the Housing Team at Oaklee Housing to the cost of living crisis, the 12 days of Christmas appeal reached an astonishing 79 Oaklee Housing Households, alleviating their cost of living at Christmas.

This could not have been made possible without the generosity of the donors and the outstanding contribution put in by the Housing Team to make this a success. The aim is to build on this success for many years to come.

As Senior Housing Officer Kieran McCann quotes:

"The positive effect the 12 days of Christmas draw has had on Oaklee tenants cannot be under estimated!

One tenant I spoke to in particular stands out in my mind. This tenant disclosed to me that she was very worried about heating her home and keeping her child with additional needs warm, especially with Christmas just around the corner. I could hear the anxiousness in her voice.

When I told her she won €100 gas credit, not only was the tenant extremely appreciative, but I sensed a massive relief in her voice. She said ' You've not only made my day, or made my week, but you've made my Christmas!''.

The 12 days of Christmas was something very special for Oaklee Housing!



# YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



This award recognises and celebrates the successes of housing professionals who have been working in the housing industry for less than three years.

The winner of this award will demonstrate that professional and personal success is not dependent on length of career. They will have demonstrated professional commitment to their organisation and/or the communities in which they work, as well as a commitment to their profession.

## Sarah Dunphy

**Clúid Housing Association**



### Statement of support

Sarah Dunphy joined Clúid as a Student Housing Officer in August 2021. This role involves learning the day-to-day role of a HO, along with completing studies for a PSRA. Sarah showed an immediate aptitude for the role, having previously been with Clúid during her transition year work experience some years previously. Social housing is in her blood, as her aunt Lisa Richardson has been a Housing Officer with Clúid for over 20 years!

While the Student HO contract is generally for two years, when Sarah interviewed for a permanent Housing Officer role with Clúid in March 2022 she was snapped up and stepped seamlessly into the increased responsibilities of this role, while keeping on her PSRA studies at night. Sarah covers Kildare which is a major area of focus for Clúid, with almost 700 homes in management there currently. At the

time Sarah came into the role, one of her schemes was under development, with a mix of social and Cost Rental units coming on stream. Sarah completed the allocation of our 119 social units on this development and then turned her attention to two blocks of Cost Rental apartments which were still underway there.

This was and is Clúid's largest Cost Rental scheme to date, with a total of 96 CR units. Anyone who has dealt with Cost Rental knows the process is extremely complex and labour intensive. Sarah threw herself into it, meeting with anyone who had expertise or experience with this model, and educating herself until she was a subject matter expert on all aspects of Cost Rental. When the first block of 46 apartments came in, they proved difficult to let for a number of reasons. Sarah dedicated herself to getting people into their new homes as efficiently as possible, always keeping the customer's needs at the centre of what she did. She worked weekends and evenings to facilitate viewings and interviews for those who were working, and was always available to answer questions from potential residents.

In the midst of this, Sarah was asked to take on a further role of Cost Rental Coordinator, to train and support colleagues who were bringing in their own Cost Rental developments, in Kildare, Meath and Cork. This involved Sarah creating a full training deck and delivering this training to groups of colleagues involved in CR. Sarah was the point of contact for all external organisations relating to CR, such as the Housing Agency, Daft.ie, etc. Sarah set up a helpdesk whereby colleagues could submit a request for

clarification to her, and where her responses were available for others to check. This allowed her to support her colleagues while still managing her own workload of both social housing and her additional 50 Cost Rental units which were due in October.

Sarah has excellent organisational skills and part of her initial remit in the Coordinator role was to map out the scheduled delivery of Clúid's Cost Rental schemes in 2022, including advertising dates, handovers, interviews etc. As we're all aware, site delays are the norm rather than the exception at the moment, and Sarah's planning was severely challenged when, due to delays, two large CR schemes had to be advertised back to back, with 7 days between the two. There was a major logistical challenge in organising the IT system, applications and customer queries which came with the launch of two large developments in such a short space of time. Sarah threw herself into

this, collaborating with colleagues across the business to ensure the application process worked smoothly and was a positive experience for applicants. Sarah somehow managed to balance this workload with still keeping on top of her social housing staples – rent arrears, ASB concerns, and supporting local residents in developing their communities.

Whenever I visited her large mixed social/CR estate with her, no matter how intense the demands on her were, she always had time for every tenant who approached her, asking after grandkids, other relatives etc. and showing genuine warmth in all of her interactions.

Sarah's kindness, professionalism and superb planning and organising abilities make her an incredible Housing Officer and a huge asset to both her colleagues and Clúid's residents.

## Outcomes and achievements

Sarah was involved in the successful launch and allocation of 207 Cost Rental homes for Clúid in 2022, allocating 96 of those directly herself. This was a huge year for Clúid in the Cost Rental sphere, bringing our total number of CR units to 272, and Sarah played a pivotal role in ensuring a smooth handover from developer to new Clúid resident.

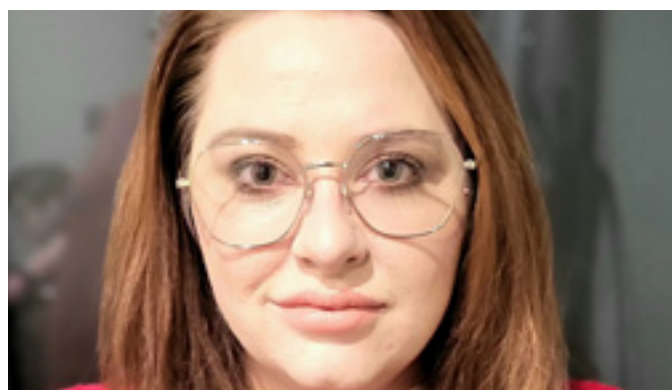
While carrying out the role of Cost Rental Coordinator and managing her own social housing patch, Sarah never hesitated to support her teammates in the South East region when needed, and has been a mentor for her replacement in the Student Housing Officer role,

sharing her experiences with him in both the work and college elements of the role.

It's a measure of the impact that Sarah has had across the organisation, that in Clúid's annual Values Awards, she was nominated by her colleagues for three of the four categories, and received her award in the category of Responsibility – reflecting the sense of responsibility Sarah brought to everything she was involved with this year, regardless of where a development was located or how much work was needed to get it across the line.

## Jade Bogle

### Radius Housing Association



### Statement of support

Jade joined Radius Housing Association in September 2020 as a housing officer based in Belfast. Having started during the covid-19 pandemic Jade from the off showed a positive attitude to learning the role and understanding the difficulties and challenges faced by the housing sector, overcoming challenges of completing her training during social distancing.

Having previously worked within hostels and support roles Jade has knowledge of supporting vulnerable client groups across a range of addiction and mental health issues. This experience was evident when from the beginning of her role she focused on these challenging client groups and positive attitude towards tenants with additional needs. Providing an excellent service of signposting the most vulnerable to correct service and feeding the outcomes back within the team for others to learn.

Jade's tenants have been impacted by the restrictions during the pandemic. Jade's determination to ensure her tenants were not disadvantaged by the change in local services allowed her to quickly establish links throughout the community within the statutory and voluntary sector and has worked in partnership with organisations to provide leaflet drops, referrals, housing surgeries and a voice for the tenants in the communities. Having links with these organisations Radius have been able to focus on the issues affecting these communities and provide referrals through to support funds such as the Radius Community Chest application.

Early in Jade's role as a housing officer she identified the rising use of substance abuse and addictions contributing to anti-social behaviour and tenancy failures within communities. Not content with the lack of support and the urge to sign-post and refer to beneficial addiction services Jade has enrolled in further education in the form of MSc Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders taking personal responsibility of her own career development. Identifying the issue that has become so prevalent in the housing association stock and the undertaking of this further education will certainly benefit the organisation and sector. From Jade's short time working in the sector, she has provided the following rationale for her undertaking further education,

"My most challenging tenants in Radius have presented with mental health issues and/or substance use- this for me is where I thrive and I would love the opportunity to build on my skills and bring back the knowledge gained to use with tenants in the future. At present my role is as a housing officer but in my future, I would like the opportunity to manage a tenancy sustainment team"

Jade showed great professionalism partaking in a small team tasked with the relocation of tenants from a tower block designated for redevelopment. Jade went above and beyond to seek the most suitable property that met the needs of the tenant as well meeting the tenant's customer service expectation through communication, listening, and showing empathy throughout. This was a sensitive task that involved communication with internal and external stakeholders and bringing onboard a small team to obtain the best outcome for the individual tenants.

At the heart of Jade's work ethic she is genuinely committed to helping every tenant within Radius and members of the surrounding communities. There is enthusiasm with Jade to go above and beyond for her tenants and as well as members of her own housing team. She has shown this by further developing her career in the fields of substance abuse and addictions as well as putting herself forward for training and workshops on cost-of-living crisis. For the short career within housing Jade has been able to identify the major challenges and take responsibility for her progression while making an immeasurable difference within Radius.

## Outcomes and achievements

Jade Bogle is under the age of thirty-five and has worked in the housing sector for less than three years.

# Cheryll Dillon

## Circle Voluntary Housing Association



## Statement of support

A Glittering Star within Circle

Like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, Circle were so lucky to find and attract Cheryll to the team. From her first moment, straight out of college, as an intern in late 2020 her glittering personality shone online through the mist of the pandemic, her enthusiasm in encouraging, guiding and cajoling even the most social media adverse into the edges of the PR and marketing sphere made such an impact on the Circle Team and its tenants, and in 2022 when she became the Marketing & Communications Officer for

Circle, the socials of the Housing Sector would never be the same again.

Cheryll is an empathic, joyful and dedicated professional, she brings fun to all that she touches and does so in a professional, respectful and caring way. New to the sector she has steadfastly navigated learning with relationship management and has formed and initiated contacts bringing education and information on the sector to a wider audience as well as exhibiting the work being undertaken and the challenges presented in a impactful way. Cheryll has connected with other professionals in the sector and wider afield to ensure her continued learning and to gain a deeper understanding of the issues within the sector, all done with the enthusiasm and spark of a bright rising star.

As a one woman band she has become the band leader and conductor all in one as she blazes a trail for Circle bringing us into the Social media arena. Camera Shy? No need Cheryll is here to coax, support and guide you through that media piece, unsure of what to post? No need Cheryll is here to suggest, Media knocking on the door, no worries Cheryll is here to assist and all this is done with a smile and a steadfast belief in the values of the sector, the staff and



tenants . She embodies the WE HEAR (Willingness, Empowerment, Honesty, Excellence, Accountability and Respect) values of Circle in everything she does.

Partners of Circle have commended and commented on the attention to detail she exhibits, always with the view that she is proudly showcasing the work of her colleagues and the sector. Her dedication to her field is second to none as she highlights the excellent work undertaken across the sector and at home in Circle. With housing being such a hot topic having a personality such as Cheryll really does ensure that a light is focused not just on the issues at play but the successes and wins that the sector attains.

The PR and Communications of the sector is aided greatly by having young professionals not afraid to

put themselves out there to educate, support and showcase the great work of their colleagues and the true honest stories of our tenants. Cheryll brings to the role, Circle and the wider sector a breath of fresh air, a sharp focus and a professionalism and dedication that embodies the fierceness of our people in what they do and how they do it.

Time and time again people are dazzled with her sparkling yet humble attitude, her professionalism is regularly applauded by stalwarts of the marketing world and partners alike. She sees the human element of housing , and diligently works to bring about the opportunity to bring the spotlight on the areas that will aid and educate the public on the fantastic work done with the wider sector and Circle.

## Outcomes and achievements

In 12 months Cheryll has tripled the social media presence of CVHA, leading on the initiative of webinar series which has improved collaboration within the sector and understanding in how we do our business, media relations and ensured that our communications are delivered in a format easily readable and understood by all our people, differing languages and formats.

Cheryll has redesigned our website and our web offering to ensure that it reflects ease of use for our tenants and the wider community while still giving all the information and data that communities need. Her introduction of video for the work we have done has

lifted the professionalism and the reach of the work that Circle and our teams do.

Cheryll ensures that all the various strands of Circle are expressed in one succinct voice. Cheryll engages with our tenants and is often seen mingling and chatting with our stakeholders at events, she delights in encouraging all to participate and engage on social media ensuring that the communications from Circle are inclusive, interesting and represent the sound, excellent and tenant first drive of Circle and the wider sector. All of this is done with the greatest of modesty and honesty.

## Ali Leech

### Tuath Housing



### Statement of support

Young Professional of the Year

Ali Leech joined Tuath Housing in December 2020, as an Administrator. She came from Homeless Services at the Peter Mc Verry Trust where she also volunteered with the drugs task force.

Ali has embraced every opportunity presented to her and her promotion to various roles and levels within

the company is testament to her determination and passion for progression in Housing. Ali is now a Senior Housing Services Coordinator, a role in which she has thrived on her own personal performance as well as assisting with her team's. Ali's success has proven that hard work and professionalism has set the way for a very prosperous career in Housing.

Ali is currently managing a portfolio of properties which include several different types of tenancies including cost rental, social leased and general needs. Ali manages tenancies in different local authorities showing great communication skills ensuring she builds and maintains good relationships with all. Ali works closely with the Housing Services Manager and the wider Housing team in Tuath to ensure a quality customer centred approach to Tenancy and Estate Management services. Her role involves working with a diverse range of tenants and she does so in a non-judgemental and flexible way allowing her to assist with their varying needs, always showing special compassion to the most vulnerable.

Ali has continuously progressed with her learning and development obtaining a Joint Honours in Sociology



and Human Geography from Maynooth University in 2021. She has continued to improve her knowledge and skillset by completing a Level 7 Certificate in Addiction Studies in 2022 and will finish the CIH Level 3 in Housing Practice in February 2023. Ali has demonstrated her understanding of how self-improvement ensures she has the attributes needed to deliver a high standard service which she has done throughout her Tuath journey.

Ali is diligent, affable and has quickly picked up how the Housing Services Department functions. She is assisting in tasks of monitoring staff performance and has taken a lead role in inducting new staff into the Housing team. It is a great reflection on Ali's qualities that she is now mentoring and supporting new team members. This is a remarkable achievement to have progressed so quickly from her entry role as an administrator to her current position of Senior Housing Coordinator.

In the last 12 months, Ali has been assigned various tasks to manage and she has proved herself very capable and able to take initiative in all aspects of her job. A great example of this has been the allocation and management of Ireland's first purpose-built Cost Rental scheme Woodside, Enniskerry Road in Dublin.

Throughout this process Ali successfully collaborated with many stakeholders and has gained the respect of many seasoned peers for her contribution. As part of the allocation of this high-profile award-winning development, Ali had to play a key role in meetings with the Local Authority and Developer pre-acquisition stage. The allocation of the 155 homes within the development has outlined Ali's ability to be organised and to work under pressure. These are key components that Ali possesses an abundance of and will help her grow even more as she embarks on a long and successful housing career.

Niall Duffy, Housing Services Manager describes Ali as "a revelation since joining the Housing Services Team in December 2020. In just two years Ali has developed and quickly climbed the Tuath ladder from Admin Officer to Housing Services Coordinator and most recently received promotion to Senior Housing Services Coordinator. This is even more impressive when you consider that she joined the organisation during the Pandemic, a time that posed difficult challenges for everyone, but especially on newly inducted staff. Ali has embodied and added to the hardworking culture within Tuath. She is now not only a key member of the Housing Department, but a major contributor to Tuath Housing as an association."

## Outcomes and achievements

Alison O'Gorman, Director of Housing Service stated "I was delighted with the announcement shortlisting Ali Leech for CIH young professional of the year. Ali Leech joined the housing department in December 2020 as a Housing Administrator. Due to her diligence and hard work, coupled with on-the-job training and upskilling, Ali quickly established herself as an intrinsic part of the team with knowledge and capacity beyond her position and within a short period of time was promoted to a trainee Housing Coordinator. As a trainee Housing Coordinator Ali commenced the CIH Level 3 in Housing Studies and when an opportunity for a Housing Services Coordinator position was advertised Ali was successful in her application and interview. Ali's strong work ethic as a Housing Services

Coordinator earned her the respect of not only her departmental colleagues, but also colleagues from other departments as well as external stakeholders. In late 2022 an opportunity for further progression presented itself and Ali applied for the position of Senior Housing Coordinator and was successful fending off external competition. Whilst working fulltime Ali also managed to complete a bachelor's degree, joint honours in Sociology and Human Geography, a level 7 certificate in addiction studies and in her spare time coaches a junior female football team. Ali is an excellent example of professional progression based on hard work, dedication and a drive to make a difference. Ali would be a worthy recipient of the young professional of the Year award."

# Aoife O'Fearthail

## Circle Voluntary Housing Association



### Statement of support

Aoife O'Fearthail has been our Housing Services Administrator for the 18 months, and in January 2023 she was promoted to a new role in Circle VHA as Housing Insights and Policy Officer, having previously worked as a Tenancy Administrator with a small AHB for approximately 2 years. Aoife is valued member of the Circle Services team, she is helpful, caring, resourceful and happy to offer support and assistance no matter the task. This is echoed by the managers in services and all of her Circle colleagues. This shows how she embodies the organisational values and behaviours; she seeks to deliver excellence, seeing organisational projects tasks through, and helping, supporting, and developing others. She sees how effective teamwork makes a difference, notices when people need extra support and can be relied upon at all times. She notices when the team needs a boost and acts upon it with her unstinting enthusiasm. She is highly professional, makes suggestions for improvement, but never forgets the importance of fun. At an individual level Aoife makes life easier for her colleagues, through delivering 1:1 training to her peers in front line services, she has enabled them to develop new skills and confidence in their roles.

She leads our customer satisfaction project, has undertaken project lead positions on measuring social impact, auditing our policy frameworks and services against best practice and regulatory standards and making significant improvements in all of these areas. She is a great role model for our Tenant First

Approach. One could say Aoife is "doing her job" but what makes her stand out to everyone is the way she does it; the compassion she shows for others and her commitment and attitude.

She discerns quickly our teams and employees' individual needs and moves efficiently to provide key information, recommendations, or direction. "Can we clone her" is a regular comment made by the services managers and her colleagues. As another example, Aoife undertook to provide individualised 1:1 training to a peer who wanted to develop their IT and systems skills, this was well beyond Aoife's role description, however every Thursday for a year she met with her colleague. "Aoife is probably one of the most understanding and supportive people I've ever worked with. She drives from Kildare to Tallaght every week to support me with my IT skills, the only thing she has ever asked for in return is to put the kettle on! She is patient and understanding to the way I needed to learn. She's a beautiful person who is willing to do anything to help anybody"

Beyond the unsolicited and appreciated mentoring, Aoife epitomizes leadership qualities and inspires others. Aoife provides support and administration to our Strategic Purpose Group, our Board committee tasked with reviewing, supporting, and managing the delivery of Circles strategic plan. She makes meaning of our customer satisfaction results and data bringing the voice of our tenants to life, monitoring trends and providing insight and reporting using data sets from multiple sources internally and externally to help shape and build Circles understanding of our tenant's experience, improve it, and drive service improvement. She delivers reports that provide insights and makes effective evidence-based recommendations to support Leadership Team and Board decision making. In the last year she has undertaken CIH level 4 certificate through the GEM Programme, showing her commitment to her own personal and professional development.

Aoife has made a difference at Circle, exemplified our vision and values, and has positively impacted our tenants and staff. Her skills, knowledge, willingness to help others, and dedication make her an excellent nominee for this award.

## Outcomes and achievements

We all know the benefit of engaged staff on tenants housing, services and lives. Aoife's positive outlook and attitude has a direct impact on the team around her and the staff she supports, enabling them to deliver excellent services to our tenants. In the short 18 months that Aoife has been with us she has:

Led the Social Impact measurement project within Circle

Developed policy framework for services

Driven quality, regulatory and data audits making recommendations to all services

Monitored allocations data ensuring empty homes are managed in line with our policy and sector standards

Developed key tenant satisfaction reports,

disseminating to teams to improve our services performance to tenants

Led best practice learning sessions and developed key policies such as Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Complaints & Feedback Policy, Responsive Repairs Policy, Income Management Policies.

Developed our Complaints Policy, reporting log and monitor and evaluated Circle's response to all complaints and feedback

Provided administration and support to the Strategic Purpose Group Board Committee

Provided peer support and training as evidenced in the statement of support to a number of colleagues and teams.

## Ben Conway

### Radius Housing



### Statement of support

Ben Conway is a Procurement Officer with Radius Housing. Ben's first engagement with Radius / Fold started in 2017 when he undertook a student placement in the communications and marketing team.

After completing his studies, travelling and working in the procurement team in an international law firm Ben returned to Social Housing by joining the newly established central procurement team at Radius in March 2021. Ben made his move while NI was still under various degrees of COVID 19 related restrictions and indeed these would get worse before they got better.

Despite the restrictions on face to face and in person interactions with colleagues Ben quickly established himself as an important member of the team. Ben quickly picked up the nuances in the differences of approaches between private sector and public sector procurement.

Ben has continued his Professional Development studying for his professional procurement qualifications while carrying out his role to a very high

standard. Ben's role as Procurement Officer means that he engages with colleagues throughout the organisation and is well placed to identify common issues and requirements across directorates. One such example was Ben led the procurement of a new Security Services provider which came into operation in April 2022. Primarily this contract was let on behalf of Radius' Communities Team and plays a key role in the organisations efforts to prevent and deal with Anti Social Behaviour. However, Ben identified the commonality of these services across other areas of the Association and led a project team to expand the scope of services so this contract can be used by Development, Corporate Services and Assets. This approach "enlarged the pie" to use procurement parlance making the contract more attractive for bidders and securing more competitive pricing for Radius as well as generating administrative efficiencies.

Ben has also been responsible for putting contracts in place which have lessened the financial burden on tenants who rent their home from Radius. Ben was procurement lead on a project to secure a contractor for the cleaning of gutters and windows at Radius developments a service which our tenants pay for through a service charge. The result of Ben's work was that Radius entered into a new contract which provided average savings of 60% on historic costs which could be passed onto tenants via a reduced window cleaning element of the service charge.

Ben is also a key member of the wider development team and has assisted new tenants in moving into their homes in Cappagh Green Portstewart by being on hand to assist colleagues with the scheme handover.

Ben has not only demonstrated his commitment to ensuring best practice procurement is carried out within Radius but has shared his skills with other Associations by contributing to collaborative

procurements with other Associations such as Habinteg and Triangle with appointments for Professional Consultant Services in the fields of Property and Land Valuations, Quantity Surveying and Architectural Design.

Within Social Housing delivery, procurement is not the most glamorous or visible of roles and much of the time it doesn't get the recognition for its function being fundamental to delivery of core works and

services across the Social Housing spectrum.

In his short time in Radius Ben has made a big impact within and outside the procurement team and displays a nothing is too much trouble attitude for all colleagues whether those who he interacts with on a daily basis or those whom he is meeting for the first time. It is this 'can-do' attitude that has contributed to many successful procurements for the positive delivery of social housing developments and services.

## Outcomes and achievements

Ben has been assigned to a number of projects across the entire organisation, and through this has established great working relationships with other colleagues. Ben has been able to take the initiative and taken the lead on a number of projects, including the security services contract for Radius schemes, numerous design & build projects for the Development Department, and assisting on the new professional services frameworks for Radius Housing and other Housing Associations. Ben continually shows a customer focused mindset, embracing Radius's culture and values, and has been a key contact for internal stakeholders to rely on.

This year, Ben has proven his ability to successfully project manage tenders from initial identification of

the requirement of the business until project delivery. He has provided guidance and clarity to colleagues to help them with their procurement needs which has led to cost savings for the organisation and most importantly Radius's customers.

Alongside strong competency skills, Ben has continually demonstrated his desire to continual his own personal development having already successfully completed his level 4 & 5 Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) since joining Radius. Ben is currently completing his level 6 CIPS and upon doing so will become a Member of the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (MCIPS).



# BEST HOUSING STORY

Sponsored by: **apex**

This award celebrates contributions that have made a positive difference to the lives of tenants, residents or communities.

## Magic in the Mansions

**Cluid Housing association**



### Statement of support

his project was described in its original proposal as 'a magical storytelling adventure with children in St Mary's Mansions' and was delivered via a partnership between the NEIC Community Arts Coordinator and Clúid's Housing Officer in St Mary's Mansions in Northeast Inner-City Dublin from November 2021 to July 2022 and offered to every child in the complex. The project was designed and facilitated by lead artist Orla Kelly, an community artist with experience of working with children across a range of settings.

This partnership began in Autumn 2021 and developed into a unique and highly successful community arts initiative. From the outset, consultation with residents was central to this project, and through this process, three key aims were identified:

Support the development of a community by providing children with an opportunity to reflect and respond to their new environment

Build a relationship between an artist and a community and support the creative development of residents.

Create/deliver work that would seek to strengthen the bonds of community and deepen relationships,

sustained over a period of time with an artist who understands the fundamentals of community development

In November and December 2021, two taster creative workshops were held in the complex to gauge the interest of local families in engaging in community-based arts activities. It was clear from these workshops, in which 25 children participated in total, that there was an appetite from both children and parents to participate in creative activities in the communal areas of the complex.

Artist Orla Kelly was invited to join the Housing Officer and Coordinator to further develop the project. As well as factoring in the three key objectives and the results of the taster workshops, there were also challenges to be considered, such as the Irish winter weather and the worsening Covid19 situation. The resulting project was called Magic in the Mansions and proposed three phases of creative engagement with the children in the complex.

Phase 1 began in February 2022, with a mysterious weekly delivery of a small parcel to each child's door, where Orla took the time to explore the magic of the parcel's contents with each child. Each unique parcel contained torches, shadow cut-out figures, scissors etc. to allow each child to begin developing stories and characters in their own homes. Nothing was asked or required of the children or their families; all they had to do to access a one-on-one, bespoke interaction with a highly skilled community artist was to answer their front door.

As we moved into the spring, and an easing of Covid19 restrictions, Phase 2 focused more on interaction, bringing the children together in small groups or individually as needed, to develop and bring their stories and characters to life. This phase was an opportunity for children to use the quiet space of the sessions to chat to each other and the artist

while focused on their work, and provided older children with opportunities to develop leadership skills by working with their younger neighbours. This was time away from the complications of other aspects of their lives, time when they could “just be kids”, and their wonderful stories were played out with the shadow shapes and figures provided in the previous phase and recorded for a standing room only film night showcasing the children’s stories, held at The Lab Art Gallery in Dublin 1.

Phase 3, in July 2022 took the form of a summer camp, with five open air creative workshops allowing the children to work together in larger groups on bigger projects. This included a site visit to The Lab to see the artists at work there, with the Residents Association holding a Family Fun Day on the last day of the summer camp. These workshops filled the central courtyard with noise and colour, accompanied by bunting, laughing and chatting which created a positive atmosphere throughout the development.

The project took a considered, responsive and flexible approach throughout, always keeping the interests of the children at its heart. It provided a consistent creative opportunity for each child in St. Mary’s, and showed a positive dimension to community life, providing a non-judgmental space where all children regardless of ability or background, could participate on an equal footing. As the project progressed, there was an increased ability on behalf of the children to get lost in their work, to practice skills such as turn-taking and patience, and to have both shared and individual interaction with the artist. The programme’s direction was left loose and flexible, and was shaped throughout by the children themselves.

The result was a low-pressure, inclusive, sustained programme of community development through the creative arts which brought together the AHB, local authority, children, parents and Residents Association in a mutually supportive environment. Agreement has already been reached and funding allocated to further developing this unique programme in 2023.

## Outcomes and achievements

At the end of the 2022 phase of the project, an independent assessor was asked to evaluate the programme and its outcomes. The result was a detailed, 35-page assessment of the project, under six evaluation objectives, with a further section of recommendations for embedding and developing the project into the future. The report also highlighted potential threats and weaknesses to address in order to ensure the project’s longevity. The summary concluded that the project had achieved “considerable success” in achieving the objectives outlined above and that “this view is shared by all stakeholders and parents...and is a model of excellence...for which few similar models can be found nationally or internationally”.

Magic in the Mansions, as described by artist Orla Kelly, is ‘an artistically rich engagement that aims to manifest a magical and creative relationship with children that will allow them to engage creatively with others in their new community, building relationships using their imagination as a scaffold for new shared creative experiences’.

It has been an incredible journey with the children of St. Mary’s Mansions, and while the independent evaluation clearly and systematically identifies the numerous positive outcomes of the project, the most important measure of the project’s success has been the increased confidence, openness and engagement of the participating children, and the new friendships, skills and understandings which have been generated.

# Belmayne Community Hub

## Clúid Housing Association



### Statement of support

On the 10th of February 2022, Clúid Housing opened a Community Hub in Belmayne. The Hub, located on Main Street, houses a newly refurbished community space available to all residents in Belmayne. The Hub will be used for training programmes, community initiatives, events, afterschool projects and youth work programmes.

Through Clúid's work with the Belmayne Residents' Association, we identified the need for a communal space where people could interact as a community and develop new skills. Clúid developed relationships with community development organisations and youth work projects in North Dublin that will assist in running different training and initiatives. We are confident this Hub will become a thriving part of Belmayne.

Clúid Housing's vision is a society where everyone has a great place to live. Clúid, a not-for-profit organisation, manages over 10,000 affordable, high-quality homes and provides housing management services to over 23,530 residents across 31 Local Authorities, 1,127 of which are in the Dublin City area. Clúid aims to achieve its vision by providing quality housing and services that enable people to create homes and thriving communities.

The Hub is the result of collaboration between Clúid Housing, the Northside Partnership, Edenmore Drug Intervention Team (EDIT), Community Law and Mediation, Doras Bui, the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) and Belmayne residents.

Over the last two years, several local service providers have used the Belmayne Community Hub. One of the organisations is Preparing for Life. Preparing for Life is a prevention and early intervention project based in north Dublin. It improves children's lives by supporting parents, early years practitioners and teachers to use proven approaches to help children achieve their full potential. This has been an excellent resource and support in the local area with the high level of one-parent families in the estate. A group of residents recently set up a parent-led Autism Network facilitated by PLAN.

The Belmayne Community Group was set up around two years ago. The group continues using the Belmayne Community Hub to host community events and groups such as a knitting group, art classes and sewing classes. The Belmayne Community Group also use the Hub to meet regularly as part of the Belmayne Residents Association. The Belmayne Community Group received €15,000 from Dublin City Council Community Activities Grant this year. They purchased tablets and sports equipment, and outdoor games for the local area. Next year they plan to launch a project called "LET'S PLAY BELMAYNE". This is a community project to help engage and improve the local community. The Belmayne Community Group funded the installation of a community Christmas tree in Belmayne. On Friday, the 23rd of December, Santa came to The Belmayne Community Hub. This event was hosted and funded by the Belmayne Community Group. Over 100 kids got to visit Santa and get a gift.

The big plan for the Belmayne Community Hub in 2023 is Kilmore Youth Project will start using The Belmayne Community Hub as part of the new Belmayne and Clongriffin Youth Diversion Project. This diversion project will be under the governance of the Kilmore West Youth Diversion. Jennifer Gibson, the Chairperson for the Belmayne Community Group and Clúid tenant, was asked to sit on the board for the Belmayne and Clongriffin Youth Diversion Project. The appointment of this project was due to the Collaboration of the Belmayne Community Group, Clongriffin Residents Association, Northside Partnership, CDYSB and Clúid Housing.

### Outcomes and achievements

The lack of community facilities and services at Belmayne has resulted in all sorts of barriers and complications in the way of community growth. The Belmayne Community Hub has improved community and resident engagement since its opening in 2022. This has empowered residents to get involved with their community by hosting events and starting group activities. Since the hub's opening, a group of residents have started the Belmayne Community Group. The Belmayne Community Group is focused on making Belmayne a Great place live.

Several local service providers provided their services through The Belmayne Community Hub. These services provided much need support and help the Belmayne community. These service providers include Northside Partnership, Edenmore Drug Intervention Team (EDIT), Community Law and Mediation, Doras Bui and the City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB). If it weren't for The Belmayne Community Hub, it would be challenging for these service providers to offer their services to the Belmayne community.



# Drumellan Park, transforming the lives of its residents

## Choice Housing



### Statement of support

For those involved in the delivery of social housing, Complex Needs projects can be something of a double-edged sword. At one level, complex and protracted but at another, by far the most rewarding. Since accommodation is designed around specific family circumstances, relationships are formed and even friendships made over long periods. Nothing comes close to that moment when keys are handed over for the very first time. A life changing moment for long suffering families. Hope and optimism fill the air. Things will get better now..

And so it was with five freshly completed Complex Needs bungalows in Drumellan Park, Craigavon in the spring of 2022. For Sandra Gregg, Development Officer at Choice, all memory of complication and obstacle quickly faded as Donna Green and her family were handed the keys to their new purpose built bungalow.

Ryan, Donna's 13-year old son, suffers from Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus. Their previous home was unable to meet his needs and provide the independence he needed to thrive. The Greens are one of five similar families now living in Drumellan Park. Every one of these bespoke "forever homes" was painstakingly designed to meet the acute Complex Needs of each family.

In the beginning, the Housing Executive and Choice had worked hard to find a suitable site. After numerous false starts and dead ends, a small (but perfectly formed) site was discovered at Drumellan Park. With the families on board, design work got underway.

But just as momentum started to build, along came Covid-19. For the families living in unsuitable accommodation elsewhere, the heart wrenching prospect that the world, never mind the project, looked set to grind to a halt.

Other schemes maybe, but not Drumellan. This was too important. As Planning Applications go, things got off to a reasonable start. Early optimism however turned out to be short lived: a flood plain. This unforeseen issue had the potential to wreak havoc with the proposed scheme. The team quickly ensured that a creative and viable drainage solution was found. Everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief.

With a little help from one MLA in particular, impossibly tight timeframes were met. For all those involved, far too many to list, this was the one scheme where nothing was going to get in the way.

Sandra:

"At midday on 31st March 2021, I received a phone call from our planning consultant to say we had got the green light. I was delighted! NIHE confirmed the funding and construction contracts were signed on the same day. Everyone involved with this scheme has gone above and beyond for the families who were waiting on these bespoke homes."

Other complications arose. Each time, in the face of adversity, strong relationships and a common goal prevailed. The families provided the glue that would time and again, hold everything together.

Donna's new home has had a significant positive impact on their quality of life as a family, particularly for Ryan who now has his own bedroom and washroom / shower facilities, giving him more independence and freedom.

"My son Ryan now has his own space, allowing him to get the care he needs in his own room without the worry of friends or family walking in. With our previous property he didn't have this, he didn't have the privacy he needed, and it was difficult for him particularly as he moves into his teenage years".

"Our new home has given us a future, something we never really had renting, that peace of mind cannot be bought. It has made a real difference to the family knowing where our long-term future is".



## Outcomes and achievements

Delivering homes tailored to diverse and acute need is vital. We are delighted to have played a part in a system that ensures that energy and resources are directed towards those who need it most. It is difficult to imagine a more impactful and life-affirming scheme.

Drumellan Park will transform the lives of its residents. Normal family life can begin to replace lives previously defined by adversity. Young people can use technology and adaptations to lead more independent lives, less reliant on loved ones for help. Relationships, put on hold by circumstance, can once again find space to grow.

The Housing Executive's Sinead Collins: "We're so delighted to see local families benefit from this type of housing development at Drumellan Park. We hope that each family will be very happy in their new homes."

Sandra and indeed the Project Team would, in the end, get back far more than they put in. And to her, commended by the families in a letter to Senior Management, the final word:

"Not long after handover, I received a picture from one of the families of their freshly cut lawn - this made me smile, it showed how proud they are of their new home."

## Oriel Lodge Residents

### Clann Housing



### Statement of support

Oriel Lodge is owned and managed by Clann Housing. Oriel Lodge is in a rural border village Belturbet in Co Cavan. Clann provides age-friendly social housing. Oriel Lodge is home to 42 residents living in 34 apartments with one and two bedrooms. Covid-19 has significantly impacted everyone's lives, but no demographic has been more affected than the older population. Many of the residents in Oriel Lodge live alone. So, during the dark times, residents turn to each other and the communal spaces within Oriel Lodge to provide relief and distraction during difficult times. Over the past 2 years, Oriel Lodge residents have looked for new ideas and projects to help navigate the lockdowns, learn new skills, and remain connected. Residents have partnered with external organisations such as Cavan Artist Jackie O'Neill and Belturbet Men's Shed and received funding support from Cavan County Council, National Lottery, and Clann to achieve their aims.

During the earliest lockdown, residents spent much time reflecting on their past lives and experiences, which they communicated to their scheme manager during well-being calls. With National Lottery funding secured in 2020, Cavan artist Jackie O'Neill was invited to speak to residents of Oriel Lodge about their

reflections on Covid 19 and Lockdown. It was only a few months after the vaccine had been introduced and as the nation had emerged from the shocking global pandemic that had shaken everyone's spirits. The workshop allowed residents to reflect on their experiences and share their thoughts in a safe and friendly space.

One of the residents, Freddie Stewart, said that in all his 87 years on earth, he had never seen anything like it, and he reflected fondly on the simpler times of his childhood growing up in Milltown. Other residents spoke about particularly missing family, dancing, hugging, going to football matches, and traveling the world. Residents reflected on positive things during this time: video calls with family, reading, listening to sports and music on the radio, praying, and walking in nature. Many spoke about enjoying the slow pace of the pandemic and finding hope and restoration in the power of nature. The local nature is one thing that they always had access to at this difficult time.

With the thoughts and experiences of the residents, Jackie produced a piece of art reflecting the time Jackie picked many wildflowers around Belturbet to bring back to her studio and paint. Jackie used an original pen and watercolour study digitally printed onto calico fabric and hand embroidered in selected parts with a locally-made frame.

Also, during this time, as residents spent more time on the scheme, an unused and unloved area at the side of Oriel Lodge gave resident Ida an idea. The space had a large polytunnel, and Ida felt it was the perfect area for a sensory garden. With funding secured from National Lottery and Cavan Co Council, residents worked with Belturbet Men's Shed to transform the area by adding a patio and seating area that overlooks the river, Erne. They used their creative skills to build planters and source old railway sleepers from Dromond Railway Station, which provided spaces for the wildflowers and plants. They added high-waisted planters to ensure all residents could use the space.

During Bealtaine Festival, they invited Shane Rooney, a local horticulturist, to set up the polytunnel to maximize what they could grow and help them better understand what they could achieve. The advice that Shane gave them helped them to produce corn, herbs, lettuces, and tomatoes, which all residents could enjoy

The sensory garden project not only helped residents work together to transform an unused area, but they worked together to learn new skills and use skills from their life experiences. It helped to keep them connected, engaged, and together.

## Outcomes and achievements

While the pandemic was a traumatic time for residents in Oriel Lodge, they turned to each other within the scheme to get support. They bonded as a community which is reflected in both projects. While the artwork allowed them to remember their lives and experiences of Covid, the piece gave them hope, growth, and achievement, coming through such an unprecedented time and coming out stronger and more positive than ever. The sensory garden adds a new area to enjoy with each other and their families. They also had an

opportunity to use skills that they had in their working lives, and others got to learn new skills.

While both projects produced something physical that will stand the test of time, it was the support system the projects offered to the residents at a difficult time that is the greatest achievement. The residents of Oriel Lodge have shown themselves to be resilient and, most importantly, be there for each other.

Clann is Irish for family, and residents in Oriel Lodge are truly a Clann

# Churchwell Gardens Residents Association

## Oaklee Housing



### Statement of support

Comhar Housing is the consortium that delivered the first PPP Project for social housing in Ireland. 534 new homes delivered across 6 sites throughout the ROI. Oaklee Housing provides both Community Development and Housing Management services to the consortium.

Churchwell Gardens comprises 150 new apartments built around a communal courtyard located in the Belmayne/Coolock area. 50 of the apartments are specifically for Older persons. The area where Churchwell Gardens is situated is an area of high deprivation. The Pobal indices show that 48% of the wider population is unemployed.

People began moving into Churchwell Gardens in 2021 and in a relatively short period of time some 16 weeks, all the new apartments were occupied. The resident's demographic is hugely diverse.

Security and safety was key concern for many people moving in from surrounding estates and

neighbourhoods with mixed reputations. The tenants were very proud of their new homes and it became clear it was very important to the majority of these new residents that the area didn't become known for negative reasons. They wanted to create a safe and cohesive community that everyone could feel a part of. Early community development meetings identified Community Champions who were clear people had to get to know one another. They wanted an informal activity that would require people to interact with each other.

The Residents Association formed in the last 12 months is something to be admired. They are a very diverse group incorporating residents of different ethnicities, those with intellectual and physical disabilities, and active teenagers present and taking roles at the meetings. Many people who may be identified as 'Others' or 'outsiders' are actively welcomed and involved with the Churchwell Gardens Residents Association.

The overriding sentiment of those that live here is Churchwell is a place where they have felt valued and accepted. That's down to the hard work of the Churchwell Gardens Residents Association.

Pat- 'This is my first time living on my own and independently, as I have a disability. It gives my mother comfort and a piece of mind that the community is there to look out for me and everyone else. I am not just known as the man with a disability, I am known as Pat'.

Rosie - 'I am a proud Traveller young woman, I love being a part of the community events and mixing with everyone. We all help out and look after each other and have a bit of craic along the way'

## Outcomes and achievements

For one or two young people who had previously been involved in low-level ASB the resident's committee has taken them under their wing and the young people are active volunteers at community events and are now youth leaders in their Kids club.

They have set up monthly litter picks, and family meets, and keep the place looking tidy and well. They check in and keep an eye on known vulnerable older people.

We worked with them on gardening days and other communal activities, inviting people out to help plant daffodil bulbs, followed by friendly informal meetings with a cuppa rounding off the experience. People bring along different baked goods.

Residents also have the ability to re-set the mag locks on entrances to stairwells on the rare occasions when the 'break glass' fire safety release button is pressed rather than the exit! They have arranged a rota to open and shut the MUGA pitch to ensure its upkeep and to deter anti-social behaviour occurring at night time.

Given the diversity of residents inclusion was key, communications flyers, and posters were always in many languages to ensure everyone could attend and feel included.

The tenant champions are always mindful of the day-to-day goings on in the scheme and look out for all residents and the area.

# HOUSING HERO



This award celebrates the outstanding achievements of housing professionals, committee members and tenants, who have used new approaches to help solve housing problems they see around them.

## Tara Hughes

### Cluid Housing



### Statement of support

Tara Hughes has been a Cluid resident in White Oaks estate in Newbridge since February 2020. Tara is a very active member in her estate and her local community. Tara takes great pride in the difference she makes in her estate and always does everything with a smile and a positive attitude.

Tara is the Chairperson of White oaks Resident Association. Tara explained that she took on the role as she wanted to give back to her community as she was so grateful for the beautiful home her family had been given. Tara could see that the estate had alot of children and in particular bored teenagers; Tara also noticed that her community had a mix of cultures and nationalities who weren't mixing.

Tara wanted to give the youth in the estate a sense of responsibility and ownership of their estate; Tara set up a Youth resident committee who run and organise events alongside the White oaks Resident Association. Tara stated: At all events we have the children work and help out as it is important for them to feel they are contributing too. I want the kids of White Oaks to have good memories of growing up and look back on their childhood with a positive experience.

Tara has been the driving force behind many of the events in White Oaks and put so much energy, enthusiasm and love into organising each event, ensuring everyone is involved. Some of the events Tara has organised are:

- Multicultural day which included food, dance and songs from Ireland, Poland, Czechia, Malaysia, Brazil, Chile and Africa. Tara's local line dancing club gave a performance ,a Ukrainian dance group of children performed and 2 African teenagers performed amazing dances.
- Easter Bunny - In 2022 organised an Easter event where she dressed as the Easter Bunny and cycled into the estate on an electric bike. Tara then danced with the children, gave out the eggs and left the estate with the children never knowing it was Tara.
- Christmas - Tara has organised two events each Christmas for her estate. Her first one she does carols with the children for the turning on of the lights. Her second event draws alot of attention from local media and neighbouring estate as she organises for Santa and Mrs Claus to arrive by horse and carriage and Garda escort into the estate. The Christmas event bring alot of excitement to the estate and is alot of work. Each year Tara enlists the help of the children of the estate to do be security complete with name badge, sunglasses and moustache.

Tara stated: These events have created a sense of excitement and pride within our estate for our residents. I have other estate asking me to help and advise them which I am more than willing to do.

Tara's will to make her area a great place to live does not stop at White Oaks. Tara has done outstanding work in the wider community of Newbridge.



In 2022 Tara helped five local families get Christmas gifts and clothes through the Secret Santa Scheme. The scheme is run by Kildare County Council and families can be nominated for the donation, thanks to Tara five families benefitted from the scheme.

In April 2022 Tara became the Chairperson of the Women's sheds group in Newbridge. The Women's shed started as 20 interested ladies at a meeting in town hall with a staff member from the Kildare County Council. Since April Tara has grown the Women's shed to 100 members and has had to stop taking on new members. Under the direction of Tara the

Women's Shed has accomplished such as an invitation to the Dail, Certification in DIY skills, plans to climb a mountain, Martial Arts, exercise classes to name just a few. When starting a new project Tara will ask if a member has done it before or has an interest in it and she will then task that member in leading that project.

Tara has used the skills, contacts and relationships that she has gained through the Women's Shed to benefit the residents of White Oaks and surrounding estates.

Tara states: I love what I do and enjoy helping others to feel a part of their community through positive experiences and I will help anyone in need if I can.

## Outcomes and achievements

Winner of Cluid Housing Association Great place to Live in 2021 and 2022.

Tara helped initiate the establishment of a youth program for the young teens of White Oaks estate with Insync and Foroige.

Tara is a member of the Newbridge tidy towns and does a weekly litter pick around the estate and the wider community which has encouraged the children of White oaks to take part and be more aware.

Tara's enthusiasm and hard work organising event for her estate has brought a mixed community together and has enabled them to learn about different nationalities and cultures.

Tara is the Chairperson of the Newbridge Women's shed and this position has helped benefit her community through her contacts with the Kildare county council enabling Tara to avail of grants for events.

## Linda Watson

### Northern Ireland Housing Executive



### Statement of support

Linda Watson has been the co-ordinator of Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group a community group in the Waterside area of Derry/Londonderry since 2006. Through this role she has been involved in the local Waterside Housing Community Network (HCN) since 2007, which she has also chaired for the past 4 years. During this time, she has represented the local community and advocated on their behalf in terms of delivery of service at a local office level.

Linda also joined the Housing Executive's Central Housing Forum (CHF) in 2008 as the appointed representative from West Area and she has been the Chairperson of the forum for the past 6 years.

Four years ago, Linda became a member of the DfC

Housing Policy Panel as a tenant representative. This provides the opportunity to articulate on behalf of Housing Executive tenants and particularly when engaging with Government Departments and especially the Dept. for Communities. This has involved being consulted on and to help inform and shape DfC policies affecting tenants and residents including; the development of the Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland and other consultative initiatives such as Shared Housing for NI and Housing Supply Strategy.

As Linda's work throughout the HCN has been so successful, she has just recently taken up the position of independent member on the Housing Executive's Tenant & Customer Services Committee and is the first tenant to do so. A massive achievement to date. Lynda has also been instrumental in helping shape and influence service design in the following areas: Housing Executive's Homeless Strategy, Housing Executive's Corporate Plan, Housing Executive's Community Safety Strategy and the Housing Executive's Community Involvement Strategy.

Linda is a member on many other boards and forums both locally and regionally including chairperson of the Waterside Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board, vice-chair of Supporting Communities, member of council's Strategic Growth Partnership, and is an independent member on the local Policing & Community Safety Partnership and a board of governor of Lisneal College. Linda is also on the

board of Apex Housing Association where she is the chairperson of their Housing Management Committee.

Through the various roles and board positions, Linda is continually reviewing tenant feedback and taking on board their comments. Linda believes that the 'lived experience' is the most important feedback any landlord can receive and as a tenant of the Housing

Executive for over 35 years feels that it is an excellent position to relay and advocate on behalf of all tenants.

Linda is very proud to be a social tenant and also a tenant of the Housing Executive and she has said "I wish to see it (NIHE) be sustained and flourish as an organisation for another 50 years."

## Outcomes and achievements

Linda is a Housing Executive Tenant and has achieved the following:

- Chair of the Housing Executive Central Housing Forum (CHF)
- Previous Chair of the DfC Policy Panel on Tenant Participation
- Tenant representative on the Tenant & Customer subcommittee of the Housing Executive
- Took a lead role in the consultation process and shaping the Housing Executive's Community Involvement Strategy 2015-2020.
- Is the voice of her community on the local Area Housing Community Network
- Secured funding from a number of bodies including the National Lottery for her work with older people in the CAW area, delivering a meals on wheels project which is a life line for people living in her community.
- Has been instrumental with her Caw/Nelson Drive Action Group in obtaining and helping manage a Housing Executive community let which is the hub of the community and is used for training and community connections.
- Secured funding for a digital training suite, in order to engage younger people in the community and enhance their skills.
- Developed community growing space.
- Networks and hosts best practice visits from groups across NI.
- Reimagined paramilitary murals across the estate.
- Developed the concept of a community fun day in July as opposed to a bonfire.

## David Kortukohun

### Circle Voluntary Housing Association



### Statement of support

David Kortukohun has been a tenant of Circle Housing since February 2019. He lives in the Dublin 8 area now but is originally from Sierra Leone.

Since becoming a tenant of Circle VHA David has always warmly and positively engaged with staff and has such a warm manner and way of being that staff always look forward to dealing with him no matter what the issue.

David has been an active member of the Tenant Advisory Group with Circle VHA since it's establishment in April 2021, David gives freely of his time as a volunteer group member, showing up regularly for meetings and events, participating in a very real way to the important work of the Tenant Advisory Group and having a strong impact on the work.

Since the introduction of the partnership project "Quality in our diversity" David enthusiastically became involved bringing his unique and positive perspective to all interactions and has generously shared his own personal insights so that others can understand, learn and implement that learning in their everyday lives and work.

In addition to the volunteer work David does with Circle he is also an advocate with the National Council for the Blind and has been a spokesperson for the NCBI on their recently launched #clearourpaths campaign where he has featured in media articles and written blogs articulately highlighting the concerns and needs of people with a visual impairment.

Here are some of the things that Circle's team have to say about David:

"Many local heroes go unnoticed. Here's CIH's chance to do something lovely! David is a tenant who has enthusiastically changed how we think, work, and understand the impact we, as social landlords, can have on our tenants' lives. He has raised our awareness of the challenges of people who are blind or have impaired vision - he has opened his home to us and taught our teams about the small changes that we can make to our homes that can enable and support independence. He has played a key role in our Tenant Advisory Group and Tenant Engagement Strategy as well our Intercultural Diversity project. He's an active member of both groups, has played a significant role in bringing about real change in how we deliver our services to tenants and has done this by sharing his experiences directly with our staff through meetings and joint tenant and staff training. He brings a positive attitude and the perspective of our tenants, which has been invaluable to the team in Circle."

Liz Clarke - Director of Services

"David has been an integral part of the tenant engagement process from its inception. Throughout the journey he has brought energy to the group with his balanced and intelligent approach. Everyone is listened to and encouraged to participate and supported by David. The road has not always been smooth and when friction arises, David always demonstrates empathy and kindness. One of his great strengths is to question areas to seek clarification and offer solution focused hints and ideas to help guide the engagement strategy."

Gavin Connolly - Housing Services Manager

"It has been a pleasure working along-side David. He is the type of person you would want on your team as he is very positive but also is able to identify problems along with possible solutions. David has great people

skills, in that he can engage everyone in the session and makes people come together with the task in hand to achieve the best possible outcome, for all Circle tenants."

Claire McDonnell - Tenant Engagement Officer

"From my first meeting with David, his positive attitude in the face of his everyday challenges, put a smile on your face. He is a very warm and positive person and a real example of a person who doesn't let his disability impede anything he wishes to achieve.

David, is someone who you look forward to dealing with even if there's a problem, he always looks on the positive side of everything and you will always walk away benefitting from spending time with him having a chat.

He has a contagious positivity and warmth about him in spite of the additional challenges he has in life and this is a breath of fresh air in our busy world today."

Noelle Finn - Asset & Repairs Officer

David has all the necessary qualities and so much more to make an excellent volunteer, he is passionate, reliable, a team player, patient, creative, energetic, compassionate and positive. He is extremely resourceful and always takes the time to reflect and hear others, to quote the man himself from the NCBI website

"There are people who have other disabilities and achieve great things so why can't blind people. What we need is public and political support, if the resources are there we can achieve anything we want to do. It is society that is making us more disabled because they are not giving us the resources we need. If the resources are there we can achieve anything"

David Korukohun - Circle's Housing Hero.

## Outcomes and achievements

The above testimonies and stories about David and his interaction across the board with tenants and staff alike clearly demonstrate how he has made a hugely positive contribution to Circle VHA and the work that Circle does.

He has been instrumental in the delivery of the new and ground-breaking initiatives that Circle VHA has undertaken and has shown outstanding commitment and dedication during his involvement.

# Ger Corkey

## Oaklee Housing



### Statement of support

#### Hawthorn Court's Hero

Hawthorn Court, Celbridge, Co. Kildare is a sheltered scheme for persons over 55 and people with a disability. Hawthorn Court is a diverse community with people from all walks of life and different ethnic backgrounds. Owned and managed by Oaklee Housing, over 45 residents reside in self-contained apartments within Hawthorn Court, living independently through the assistance of the wonderful scheme coordinator, Gerardine Corkey who enables all this to happen. Ger has worked with Oaklee Housing for over 10 years now.

Throughout Ger's time, she has and continues to have a significant impact on the lives of the tenants in Hawthorn Court. She goes above and beyond for any resident, there isn't a day goes by that she hasn't helped or supported a residents and their family in some way, shape or form. Ger wholeheartedly deserves to be recognised for her positive contributions to the residents, their families and the community in Hawthorn Court and Celbridge Town. She has spent years empowering the tenants to have their voices heard and ensure that they are receiving the best possible care when and if required.

Some of the tenants in Hawthorn Court are considered vulnerable and with Ger's commitment and dedication, she gets to know each individual on a one-to-one professional basis. For many she is the only person they may have spoken to on any given day and because of the trusting professional relationships she has built with resident, she is often a point of contact in their hour of need. Ger is often the first to recognise

a change in tenants whether that be physically or mentally and over the years she has left no stone unturned in her efforts to support the residents in getting the appropriate support and care required.

Ger is proactive and always seeking new ways to improve the lives of the residents in Hawthorn Court. The pandemic had such a negative impact on the community, residents became isolated and for some it saw a decline in their physical and mental health. Ger is a frontline worker and was aware of the impact her support would mean to the community of Hawthorn Court. She wasted no time in ensuring that Oaklee Housing implemented the relevant measures, allowing Ger to continue providing the best possible support safely through such difficult times.

Following the pandemic and over the past year, Ger has been actively exploring ways to support residents in reintegrating into society and set out to look at possible funding streams that could be applied for on behalf of Hawthorn Court. A working group was set up and Ger played a significant role in identifying The Housing Finance Agencies Social Investment Fund, this being a potential key to assisting Ger to enable reintegrating the residents of Hawthorn Court post pandemic. It was decided that an application would be submitted on behalf of three Oaklee Housing sheltered schemes. We are delighted to say substantial funding was secured and Ger was the driving force in securing this funding that has supported several activities and purchases of equipment to support residents in their daily lives.

#### Hawthorn Court Resident comments:

Betty Joyce - "Ger is the GLUE that holds Hawthorn Court together, she goes the whole NINE MILES to make our lives here safe, happy, comfortable and enjoyable. Her integrity is unquestionable."

Maureen Lawler - "We have a GEM in Ger, her encouragement, support and organisation skills are invaluable to the tenants in Hawthorn Court. She is passionate about her work and always looking for new ways to support us in thriving. We currently have Gong Oi classes in the scheme with upcoming courses in communication and technology to further support us in connecting with the world as we know it today. She has made such an enormous impact on my life and has empowered me to live my life to the full."



## Outcomes and achievements

One of the most significant achievements in the past 12 months was securing funding from the Social Investment Fund. This has a key contributor to enable Ger's efforts in reintegrating tenants in to the community. The following achievements and outcomes are the reason we are putting Ger forward as our Housing Hero:

- Digital exclusion and poverty became very evident during the pandemic. The fund has supported the purchasing of a new computer and printer so that computer classes arranged by Ger can be facilitated. Hawthorn Court residents are learning how to use a computer, send emails, access the Tenants Portal on Oaklee Housing's website and search the web safely.
- Ger identified the need for tenants to become more active and went about sourcing age appropriate exercise classes (Gong Oi) which started in January 2023.
- Ger works with residents on their fears of socialising again following the pandemic by arranging activities such as trips to the cinema, Bord Gais Theatre and The National Ploughing Championships 2022.
- Some of the activities being co-ordinated and arranged for 2023 include- Line Dancing Classes, a Flower Arranging Workshop, a Self-Care Session and a host of other activities she has planned.

# OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO HOUSING

This award is for an individual who has consistently gone the extra mile during their career in housing.

## Janet Hunter

Northern Ireland Housing Executive/Housing Rights



### Statement of support

Janet has dedicated her career to working in housing. Janet is currently CEO of Housing Rights and has been since 1994. An ambassador for improving outcomes for others, her passion for housing, and belief in the ability of housing to transform lives has driven her determination to work to ensure everyone has a home.

Janet began her career as an advice volunteer with Citizens Advice Bureau in 1982. She spent 7 years in the Housing Executive in a variety of roles before moving to Scotland where she had responsibility for housing services in Kilmarnock.

By her retirement in March 2023, Janet will have led Housing Rights' delivery of services to people in housing need for 29 years. Her leadership ensured the organisation was best placed to respond to people experiencing difficulties finding and keeping a home. She oversaw the organisation's response at times of unprecedented demand; following the boom and bust of the housing market in the early noughties and more recently during the covid pandemic. The nature

of service delivery also expanded during the period of Janet's leadership. Core advice delivery was enhanced with additional peer advice models developed in the prisons and with minority ethnic communities; better serving communities through empowerment.

As CEO Janet has been a tenacious ambassador for tenants' rights. Her expert knowledge about the impact that problems of access, affordability, insecurity and poor housing standards have on people who are vulnerable and low-income households, has shaped the development of policy and practice in NI.

In her role at Housing Rights, Janet has been a key driver in the development of strategies on homelessness, the reform of the private rented sector as well as influencing landmark housing legislation passed in the last 29 years. Janet ensured the organisation's experience of tenant issues, legal knowledge and expertise influenced and shaped legislation to regulate Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and to improve the standard of living through The Private Tenancies NI Order.

Whilst Janet is characteristically modest about her achievements, she has championed tenant-focused services and her contributions have been recognised at a national level with frequent invitations to contribute to sectoral initiatives and conferences in Great Britain.

She has been an exemplar of generous and collaborative leadership, acting as a Board member supporting the work of other organisations outside of Housing Rights, including the Law Centre NI and Ulidia and Choice Housing Associations.

Niall Sheridan - Chair NI Advisory Board- 'Janet is a longstanding chartered member of the CIH in NI. She previously served for a number of years as a

committee member and office bearer of the N Ireland Branch at a time when CIH did not have an office/ staff presence in N Ireland; playing a leading role in promoting the work of CIH.'

Grainia Long – Chief Executive NIHE - 'I was privileged to work with Janet in my first job in housing. Janet showed empathy, kindness and a willingness to teach me the core principles of being a housing professional. Janet has vastly improved the lives of so many people here.'

Kate McCauley incoming Chief Executive Housing Rights – 'Janet has fundamentally shaped and enriched the work to ensure everyone has a home in Northern Ireland. She is a much loved and respected leader whose career has been at the service of others.'

David Polley Director – Housing Supply Policy | DFC - As CX of Housing Rights Janet has led an extremely important and highly valued delivery partner. Janet sought constant improvement and found numerous new ways to stretch the reach of her advisors, including to the doors of courts, into prisons, with new comer communities.

## Outcomes and achievements

Exemplary Housing Professional award at the Women in Housing Awards, 2015. Janet won this award which recognises individuals, with a professional qualification in their field, who demonstrate an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the sector and whose input has a positive impact for clients.

OBE for services to the community. Janet was awarded an OBE for her services to the community in the New Year's Honours list in 2015

Key project achievements:

Janet's knowledge and expertise in housing law and policy are particularly notable. She has led Housing Rights' work to influence legislation to improve the private rented sector and influenced strategies on the private rented sector and homelessness particularly.

Through Janet's leadership Housing Rights expanded the reach of housing advice services to people and communities whose needs were unmet. She championed a belief in models of advice delivery which empowered communities to become peer advisers. A prison peer model has existed since 2009 and in 2017 a 'Housing Champions' peer advice model in minority ethnic communities was established.

Janet was intrinsically involved in the development of the Housing Advice in Prisons Protocol and securing effective inter agency cooperation to maximise positive housing outcomes for people entering and leaving custody.

# Edward Allingham

EHA Group



## Statement of support

Since 1993 Edward Allingham, Owner and CEO EHA Group, has been building houses across Northern Ireland, ROI and the UK, both in the private and social sectors. Housing has been part of the Allingham family. Edward had helped to build houses with his family's business since he left school at an early age, and was at one time the youngest Site Supervisor or Foreman in NI at an age of 19. He executed 63 Private Houses in 12 months in Coleraine, at the time before

site supervisors had help from Quantity Surveyors, Buyers etc. This gave Edward experience within all elements of the build. Edward's first solo project was the conversion of an old stately home into a 40 bed nursing home in the late 80s. Then Edward moved onto a Commercial build which he liked and found easy. However he found the construction of Housing to be the more rewarding sector as he felt he was serving a need for the community. At that time the main focus was social housing especially as the majority of his work was in his own home city of Derry.

Edward's passion for housing progressed from here. Never wanting or intending to run a big business, it grew faster than he anticipated. At one stage Edward and the team he built; EHA Group, were building between 350-400 houses per year for various Housing associations in NI and the ROI.

Edward's passion developed into a commitment to building long-term relationships with Housing Associations to deliver Social Housing. With each project Edward would remind the team of this; "If there are extras needed, we need to find the solution and make it work.". There can be a tendency to get too contractual rather than doing whatever it took. Edward

firmly believes if there is no flexibility, it's not going to work. Edward still drives that in his own organisation, to collaboratively work together with the client for the most satisfactory result for everyone involved.

This was the biggest change that Edward worked on in the housing sector; long-term relationship building, as well as pushing new products such as timber frame back in the mid 1980's and delivering an excellent product in new, quicker time frames. In Galliagh, Derry Edward delivered 150 homes from Green Field in one day less than 12 months. For the sector, this meant delivery of more houses that people needed sooner. Still today Edward sources new products and finds new service delivery methods to bring benefits to the sector, and is now about to construct his first house in ICF ( Insulated Concrete Forms).

Edward also diversifies how the business operates and began to take on the delivery of the complete project. In this way, everything is prepared for the client, from finding the land to delivering the houses. This has

been implemented throughout the past 30 years if it suits the client. Edward believes this is the best process as the developer is in control of their element of the process while it reduces the risk for the Housing Associations as they need delivered houses, not left with the risk of Planning and holding Land Banks.

James Wright, Development Director, Alpha Housing said, "What a dedicated, talented, and passionate builder Edward is, always delivering first class homes. He is the consummate professional who is dedicated to improving the quality of life of our tenants and a real leader to his team."

Recently winning two awards at the 2022 National Building and Construction Awards in London, Damian Cummins Awards Director said, "After a very challenging operating year in a very competitive sector, we were delighted to celebrate EHA Group as Contractor of the Year and as our Health and Safety Gold winner."

## Outcomes and achievements

Edward has delivered circa 5,000 houses if not more over the past 30 years across Ireland and England putting housing on the map in many towns. He has consistently contributed to housing with easily a few hundred handovers per year. Through EHA Group, 300-400 houses will be delivered in the next 18 months over 6 sites across NI and one in the UK.

Edward has a "never say no" approach, if the client wants something he ensures the team will go out of their way to make it work. Even more now than ever due to uncontrollable difficulties such as COVID, Brexit and labour and supply shortages. This is the most important time to have great relationships and

for Edward, communication is key. Edward empowers the team and their partners, suppliers and clients to collaborate. Relationships have naturally broken down at times over the decades, however Edward will always return to rebuild those and would still work with each past client to date.

Edward has kept this longstanding commitment to housing, clients and his team. The head office is still located in Edward's home area on the outskirts of the maiden City of Derry, hiring local people and still building locally; currently constructing 200 houses for the city.





Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing

024 7685 1700  
customer@cih.org

**www.cih.org**



March 2023 0223© Chartered Institute of Housing