

2019 | Supporting Communities



**Supporting
Communities**
Empowering Society

Annual Report

Housing Policy Panel

2019 Annual Report

Background to the Housing Policy Panel

As part of its role as the appointed Independent Tenant Organisation for Northern Ireland, Supporting Communities has been tasked by the Department for Communities (DfC) to develop a Housing Policy Panel (HPP) made up of tenants/residents living within the social housing sector in Northern Ireland.

The Housing Policy Panel's role is to act as a consultative body for DfC, with a focus on social housing related matters. The Panel also represents the interests of social housing tenants in the development of Departmental policies and provides a voice to ensure that tenants' rights and concerns are represented and considered at a strategic level.

The Panel, which held its inaugural meeting in September 2017, was made up of tenant/resident representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Choice Housing, Rural Housing Association, South Ulster Housing Association, Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd, and the Central Housing Forum's Rural Residents Forum and Disability Forum. At their inaugural meeting, the members agreed their Terms of Reference and developed an action plan to take forward.



“The Housing Policy Panel is a clear example of how tenants can influence housing related matters at a strategic level. Supporting Communities is delighted with the commitment of the Department in working alongside this Panel to make important changes and improvements to housing services in Northern Ireland.”

~ Colm McDaid,
CEO Supporting Communities

Achievements to Date

With 13 meetings in its first year, the Panel has been provided with presentations on the Departmental process in developing policies as well as an overview of the structure of the DfC's Housing Division. The Panel has also provided input into several consultations, participated in training, and visited two housing associations.

The Housing Policy Panel's activities to date include:

1. **Submitted a formal response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations**

The Panel received a presentation from Heloise Brown and Ciara Lynch from the Department for Communities Social Housing Policy Team on 23rd October 2017. Members' feedback on the key proposals contained within the consultation were collated to shape a formal response.

2. **Conducted a workshop with CaCHE Knowledge Exchange Hub (NI) to add to evidence to improve housing policy and practice in the UK**

Stanley McGreal and Joe Frey from CaCHE (UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence) attended the Housing Policy Panel meeting on 17th September 2018. CaCHE is a multidisciplinary partnership between academics, policymakers and practitioners which aims to produce evidence and new research to improve housing policy and practice in the UK. Members' individual priorities were pooled together under three common themes: tenant engagement/voice, quality of housing, and poverty/availability. The discussion adds to evidence that will improve housing policy.

3. **Responded to a Consultation on the Future of House Sales Scheme**

The Department of Communities Shane Clements provided a briefing on the future of the House Sales Scheme in Northern Ireland on 17th September 2018. Member's views expressed in relation to the consultation questions were used to respond to the consultation before its closing date on 24th September 2018.

4. **Participated in Tenant Participation Training**

Head of Corporate Services, Sheenagh McNally, delivered training on tenant participation to the Housing Policy Panel members on 22nd October 2018.

5. **DfC Key Performance Report**

The Department for Communities Housing Regulation Branch Team members Kevin McCarney and Neil Bradbury presented the Housing Policy Panel with a draft Key Performance Report, a document to illustrate the performance of individual Housing Associations. Following input from the Panel, the final version incorporated many of its comments.

6. **Visited Clanmil Housing Association (21.05.18)**

7. **Visited Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd (17.09.18)**



The Housing Policy Panel Action Plan

A SOUNDING BOARD

for the DfC

Tenant Participation Strategy (NI) 2015-2020

- Monitor Implementation
- Review TP Guidance
- Regulation & Standards
- TP Strategies (Good Practice/Minimum Standards)

Empowerment Models

- Research
- Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)
- Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMOs)
- Community Land Trusts/Community Asset Transfer
- Influence, Encourage and Shape Empowerment
- Community Planning (Housing)

Scrutiny

- Policies/Legislation (DfC)
- Hold Department to Account

Lobbying Role

- Welfare Reform
- Design Standards
- Land & Planning
- TBUC/Housing for All
- Developer Contributions
- Produce Position Papers

Good Practice

- Identify Good Practice (Locally/UK)
- Encourage Good Practice
- Visit to Housing Associations and Housing Executive

Raise Profile

- Attend Events
- Launch Action Plan
- Social Media
- PR
- Elect Chair/Vice Chair
- Tenant Advocate

Representation

- Recruit New Members (HAs)
- Build Core Team
- Special Interest Groups
- Team Building

Training

- Tenant Participation

Make a Difference

- 'Value' of HPP
- Measure Impact
- Outcomes/OBA
- Capture Information

Independent
Tenant
Organisation

Members

Thank you to all the Housing Policy Panel members.

Past members:

Carly O’Kane, Rural Housing Association

Isobelle Hamilton, Housing Executive, Central Housing Forum, Disability Forum

Ian McLaughlin, Housing Executive, Central Housing Forum, West Belfast and Shankill Area

Faye Aiken, South Ulster Housing Association

Present members:

Teresa McDonough, Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

Gordon Blevins, Housing Executive, South Area

Linda Watson, Housing Executive, Central Housing Forum

Jack Close, Clanmil Housing Association

Patricia McQuillan, Housing Executive, Rural Residents Forum

Sylvia Connachan, Choice Housing

Shane Clements, Department for Communities



Housing Policy Panel Members L-R: Teresa McDonough (Habinteg Housing Association Ulster Ltd), Sheenagh McNally (Empowering Communities), Gordon Blevins (Housing Executive - South Area), Sylvia Connachan (Choice Housing), Siobhan O’Neill (Empowering Communities), Linda Watson (Central Housing Forum), Jack Close (Clanmil Housing Association), Patricia McQuillan (Rural Residents Forum)

