



Strategic Plan 2019-2022

March 2019

INTRODUCTION

Having started out in small porta-cabins as a single estate-based project in 1979, Supporting Communities (SC) has since grown to become the key tenant support organisation in Northern Ireland, trusted by government departments and public agencies. It is now one of the larger VCSE organisations in Northern Ireland employing 26 permanent staff.

Supporting Communities has worked closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) for over three decades with a key joint achievement being the establishment of the Housing Community Network in 1993, the key tenant engagement structure in Northern Ireland that the CSE Assessor called the “*jewel in the Housing Executive’s crown*”.

In 2017, Supporting Communities was appointed the Independent Tenant Organisation for Northern Ireland by the Department for Communities, tasked with the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy for NI 2015-2020 and to support all social housing tenants and staff to develop the skills needed for effective participation.

Supporting Communities is now celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2019 as a confident and ambitious organisation seeking to proactively further its ambitions for tenant participation and community engagement in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This strategy has been developed by the Board and staff of Supporting Communities, in partnership with the organisation’s key stakeholders and member groups. The strategy is rooted in the needs of people and communities and in helping Supporting Communities’ partner organisations deliver on their own priorities and policy goals.

The strategy is designed to complement and enhance the policy direction of central government through the Northern Ireland Executive and its departments and local government through their community planning focus and in community and social development strategies.

Supporting Communities prides itself in working collaboratively with public, private and the voluntary and community sectors.



DRIVERS FOR THE STRATEGY

This strategy builds on the progress made in the previous strategy and the important work in reorganising Supporting Communities by making a structural change to the organisation over the last 3-5 years.

The drivers therefore include:

- > Continuing to be the market leader in providing independent advice and support to tenants and social landlords in Northern Ireland and starting to be recognised in the Republic of Ireland by providing advice, research, policy and advocacy work
- > Focus on rejuvenating and further building the member groups within communities including added focus on services and products for the private sector
- > Further diversifying the Supporting Communities product and income base
- > Continuing to develop the staff and the efficiency of the services delivered
- > Recognising the value of the outcomes of the work of Supporting Communities including policy areas not traditionally associated with tenant participation



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Supporting Communities will:

- > **Be ambitious and innovative in its approach and delivery of services**
Continue to review, innovate and improve its services with the community at the core, whether it is in delivering independent support to tenants and social landlords or developing a trading subsidiary.
- > **Empower staff, empower people, empower communities and empower this society**
Recognise that building capacity and empowering communities and leaders is an important part of the Supporting Communities process that is delivered by an empowered staff team and driven on-the-ground by empowered people and communities.
- > **Share good practice, knowledge, learning and resources**
Make use of the existing good practice, knowledge and skills of all within communities, sharing common aims to develop better services for local communities and promote community-based leaders and influencers.
- > **Be open and inclusive, understanding and responding to need**
Be open, transparent and accountable in its working with all tenants and landlords, communities and organisations; with funders and public agencies; with elected representatives; and in its dealings with representatives of community-based organisations working for the common good of all communities.

MISSION AND VISION

“Empowering staff, empowering communities, empowering society”

Our Vision:

Empowered, diverse and inclusive communities that are engaged, confident and sustainable.

Our Mission:

Supporting Communities will deliver independent, high quality, flexible and innovative support to communities, stakeholders and public agencies.

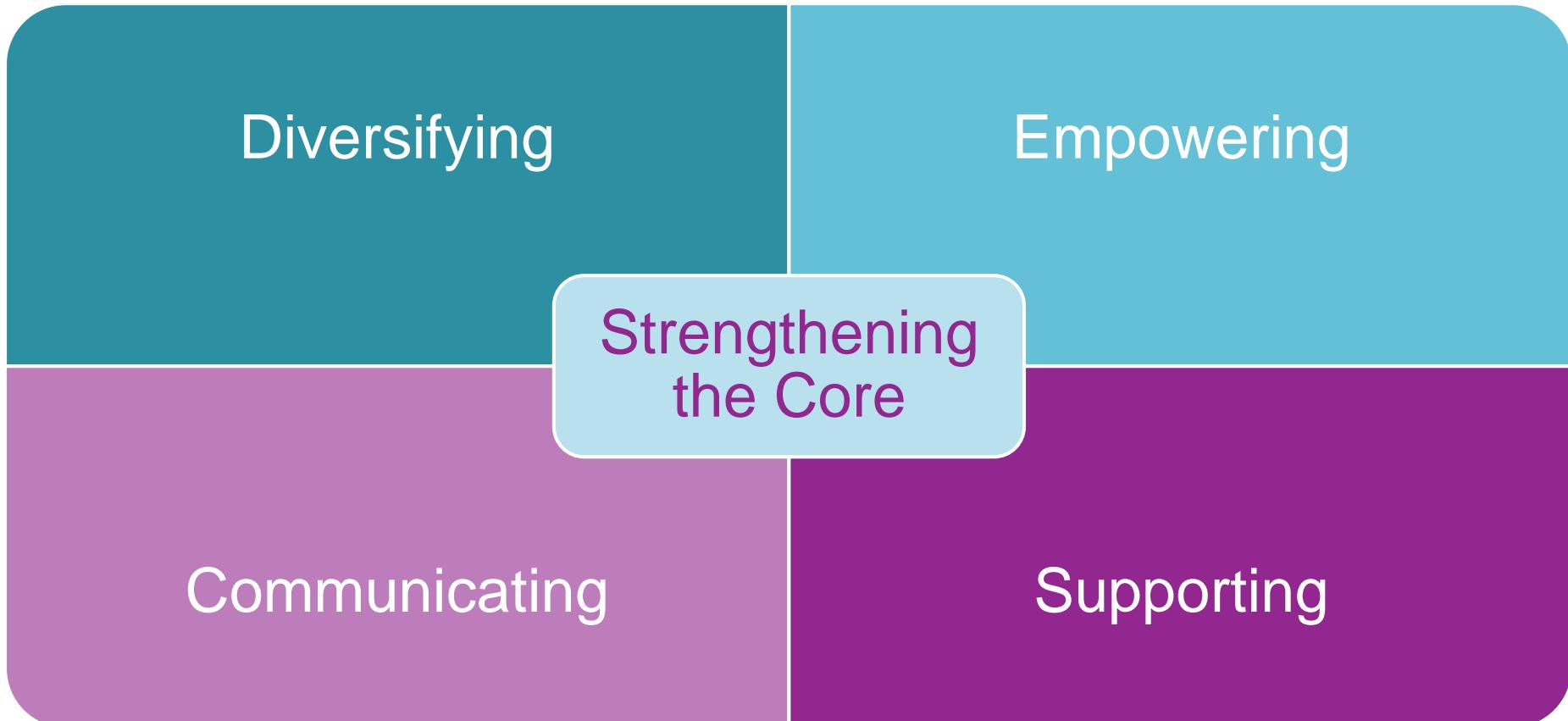
Our Values:

- > Ambition
- > Excellence
- > Inclusion
- > Openness
- > Understanding

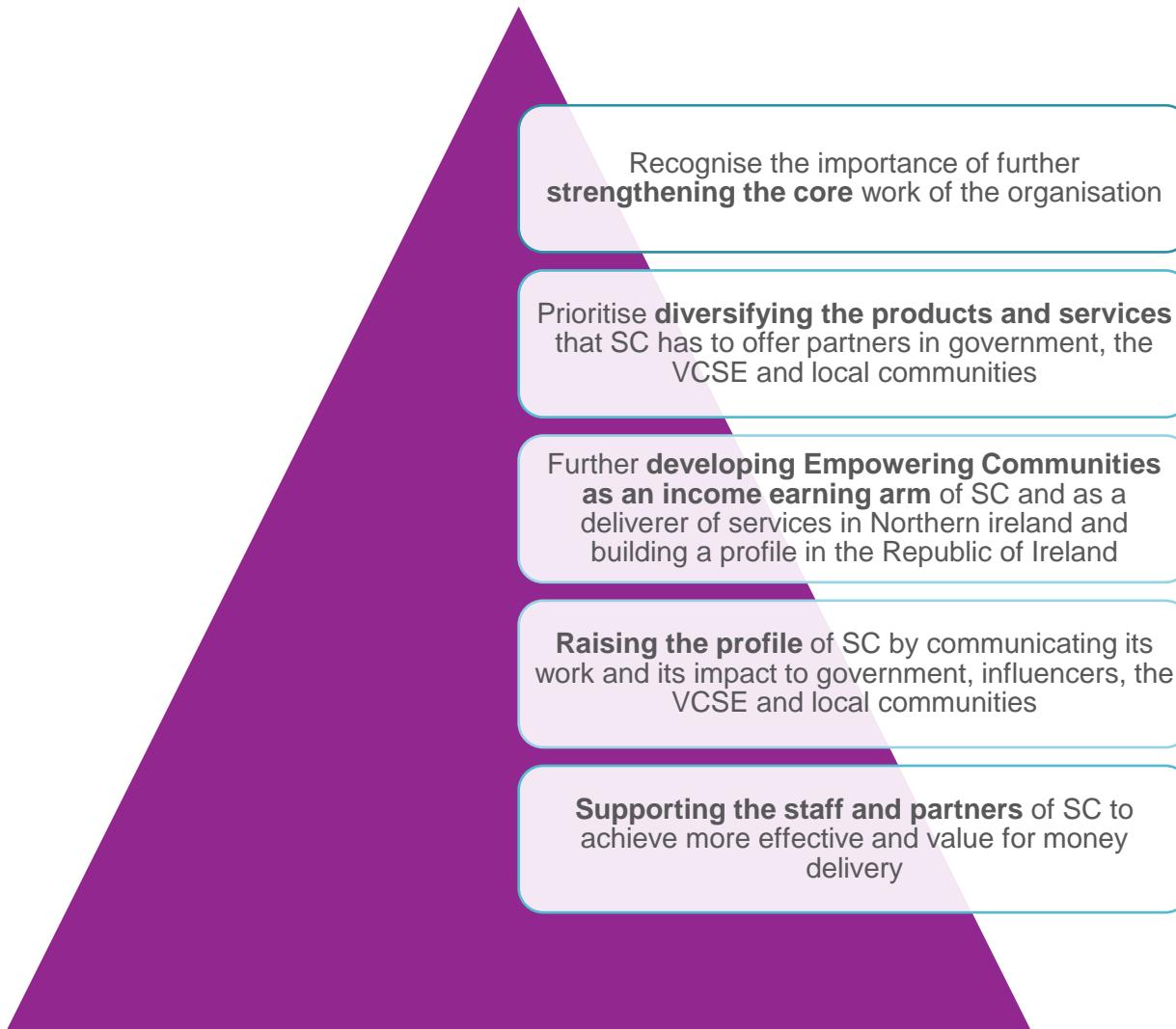


STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Supporting Communities has five long-term strategic priorities:



The strategic priorities over the next three years of this new strategy, 2019-2022, are:



Results or Outcomes

The strategy is written for use over the next three years but with long term ambition in mind for the organisation.

Strategic Priorities	Long Term Results	Short Term Results - in three years
Strengthening the Core – Improve and Renew	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Recognition as the leading specialist organisation in tenant participation and representation for social and private rented sectors in Northern Ireland> Recognition as a leading advice, policy and advocacy organisation on the island of Ireland, North and South> Healthy, sustainable, succession-planned cohort of member groups in Northern Ireland> Strong relationship with government and government agencies in Ireland, North and South, as a trusted deliverer of services, research and advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Continued recognition as market leader for working with tenants and social landlords in Northern Ireland> Satisfactory delivery of the three-year NIHE contract and the Department for Communities ITO contract and agreement on next phases post 2021> Delivery of development training and mentoring to member groups and others including on Standards, succession planning and the role of community organisations in community planning> Known by the relevant departments and government agencies in the Republic of Ireland, and by all relevant agencies and all local authorities in Northern Ireland
Diversify and Grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> More income is generated from other income than from the core NIHE contract> SC undertakes as much business in the Republic of Ireland as Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> At least three new major funding sources are successfully brought in to support activities> At least one major research, advice or/and advocacy project supported including in the Republic of Ireland

Strategic Priorities	Long Term Results	Short Term Results - in three years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Supporting Communities is recognised as a centre of excellence or academy for community development work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Identification of innovative programmes for participation of under-represented groups in participation > Development of a Standards Model for community engagement in tenant participation
Empowering Communities (EC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Empowering Communities (EC) is well-known, respected and a provider of paid services of choice to public agencies and government > EC generates as much income for SCNI as any other aspect of the organisations business > EC is recognised as a major source of on-the-ground delivery, and advice, policy analysis in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Has developed from low-level income generation in Northern Ireland to 2/3 major contracts in Northern Ireland > Membership of all housing associations > Non-core business (including EC) accounts for 20% of income generated > Delivery of 2/3 major events in the Republic of Ireland that start to develop the reputation of SC and EC
Raising the Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Recognition in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as a leading organisation in the VCSE sector > Considerable social media and mainstream media outreach throughout the island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Client base in Northern Ireland that includes all relevant public agencies and all housing association, and in the Republic of Ireland a client base including 2/3 public agencies, housing associations or local authorities > Growth of social media engagement and appearance in specialist and general media outlets

Strategic Priorities	Long Term Results	Short Term Results - in three years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Able to influence policy and public perception of issues in social and privately-rented sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Invited to lead and influence in areas of policy and tenant participation in social housing and privately-rented housing
Resourcing and Supporting the Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Perceived within the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector as an employer of choice > Qualified, happy and productive staff team > Recognition as a provider of island-wide services with office facilities that are fit for that purpose > Led by a Board and staff representative of the communities within which SC works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > High staff satisfaction and retention of staff > Staff development programmes and new employees adding to the mix of experience > Recognition as a regional provider with office facilities that are fit for that purpose including new HQ premises by 2021 > Open recruitment process for new Board members with a focus on getting more balanced Board membership from currently under-represented backgrounds including BME and youth, and financial and legal skills

MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

Supporting Communities will produce an agreed monitoring and evaluation template in the first months including critical targets, timeframes and monitoring information.

Key monitoring and evaluation themes during the three-year strategy will include:

- > Tenants being more engaged and feeling they have a say in what happens to and within their own community
- > Awareness of others and improved attitude and behaviour of tenants toward others and towards public agencies and government
- > Improved sense of belonging of participants in their own communities
- > Further enhanced trust of public agencies across the community
- > Work with the private sector and housing associations
- > Improving relationships within the general population, and people from different political, religious and ethnic backgrounds
- > Support for tenant participation work
- > Positive impact of tenant participation work
- > Engagement in the Republic of Ireland
- > Raised profile of Supporting Communities

Monitoring will be built into the planning stages of all activities to facilitate baseline measurement, the agreement of indicators, and agreement on how the information is collected by the staff or strategic partners.

