

# Annual Output Report 2015-2016



**Supporting  
Communities™**  
Empowering Society

## Our Services



Community  
Development



Training



Funding  
Support



Tenant  
Participation



Business/Admin  
Support



Digital Inclusion



Information Services



[supportingcommunities.org](http://supportingcommunities.org)

# Group Work

We Promoted, Encouraged and Supported Meaningful Community Participation

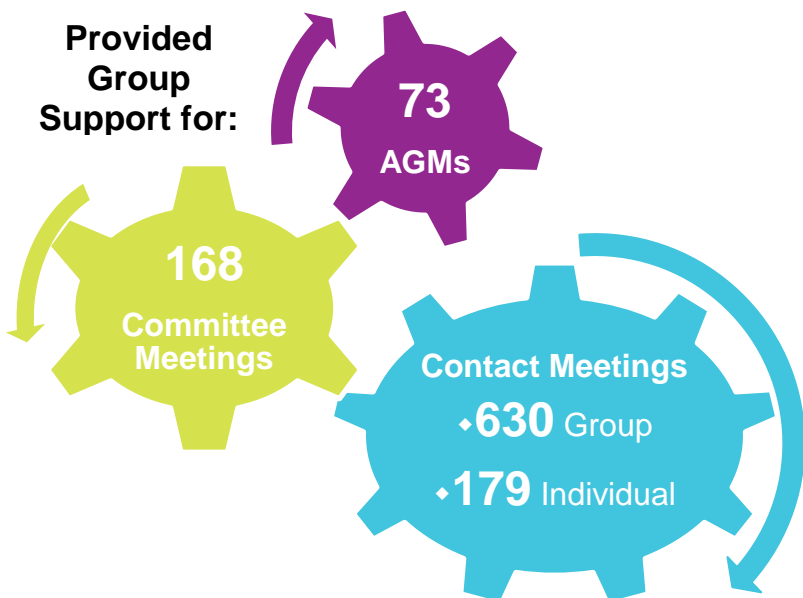
**21** New Referrals received

**511** Active Groups supported

Meetings we Attended:	<b>192</b>	Inter-Agencies
	<b>43</b>	Housing Forums
	<b>123</b>	Housing Community Networks

## How we performed

- Of the **192** Inter-Agency Meetings held – **497** external agencies and **97** MLAs/Cllrs were in attendance



**167** meetings with Housing Executive (including CLOs)

**42** Groups assisted with registering online with Charity Commission NI

- Prepared and carried out **76** Estate Inspections province wide

**TOTAL OF 1,897 INTERACTIONS**



# Funding Services

We provided an effective Funding Support Service to Staff, Communities and other Stakeholders

## FUNDING ENQUIRIES

**101** formal and informal enquiries completed for funding assistance

## FUNDING SECURED

by those groups who we helped

**£1,066,445.67**

**Supporting Communities Funding Bulletin** available online, providing regular updates on Funding Opportunities

## 5 Funding Workshops/Clinics organised in:

Newtownards/Cookstown/Ballymena/  
Mid Ulster/Lisburn

Benefiting **25** Groups with 1 to 1 Funding Advice

## Attended Funding Fairs

in: Ballymena, Castlereagh and Enniskillen

## One to One Funding Support

**101** Groups throughout the province have been provided with one to one support from our Funding Officer/Liaison Officers



## How we performed

- Provided advice to Community Groups and Individuals around funding opportunities.
- Funding information incorporated within Supporting Communities E-Zine publication which is made available to **545** Community Groups fortnightly who we support.

*"Supporting Communities funding service has been invaluable to our organisation. It has provided our group with guidance and assistance to source potential funding revenues"*

**Greysteel Community Association  
Office Administrator Support**

*"The workshops highlighted the unique funding resource provided by Supporting Communities that we will be able to avail of in the future"*

*"The funding surgery was very useful in terms of identifying new sources of funding that we did not know existed"*



# Policy/Information Services

## We provided an Efficient Information, Research and Policy Support Service to Staff, Communities and other Stakeholders

### E-Zine

Welcome to Supporting Communities 51st Edition of E-Zine, bringing you Best Practice from the Community Sector, Funding and Training Updates and Policy Developments in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Republic of Ireland.

#### CIH NI & ROI Awards 2016 Congratulations!

Supporting Communities had a very successful evening at the Chartered Institute of Housing NI & ROI Awards held on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

Our very own Laura O'Dowd won the very prestigious CIH Professional of the Year Award and will go on to represent CIH NI at the UK Awards in Manchester at the end of June.

It is a great honour to receive this Award and it is wonderful that the Judging Panel recognised all the work that Laura does, not only in her role as Support Services Manager with Supporting Communities but for the social housing world in general.

I am sure you will join with us in offering our congratulations to Laura & wish her the very best as she represents Supporting Communities and CIH NI at an even bigger stage in June!

Supporting Communities was also shortlisted in two other categories (Working Together & More Than Bricks & Mortar) so it was a very proud night for us indeed!

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Laura delighted to have won this Award



Supporting Communities Senior Management Team and Board Members

#### SCENE

Supporting Communities is delighted to be associated with his great achievement. Cecil has given so much of his life to representing his community, he follows in the footsteps of past winners of this Award, all of whom have been nominated by Supporting Communities including Michael Kelly and Bernie Burns.

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### Factsheets

607 'Customer Friendly' factsheets circulated throughout the year

### Support Services/ Editorial Team

Meet bi-monthly Plan of Action put into operation to review E-Zine; Website; SCENE; Community Impact; New Research

New SCENE Magazine introduced with new format and style E-Biz and E-Zine amalgamated into refreshed E-Zine publications

### How we performed

- Produced **22** Editions of our E-Zine publication circulated twice a month to a mail shot of **1,200** bringing Best Practice from the Community Sector; Funding and Training Updates and Policy Developments in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Republic of Ireland.
- **2** Editions of SCENE circulated in June 2015 and January 2016 sharing information and best practice.

### Website

supportingcommunities.org  
A new improved website was launched in October 2015. Over the past 6 months (Oct - March) we have had an average of:

- **693** visits per month
- **2135** page views per month
- **541** average audience size per month

### Supporting Communities

Our Facebook page has been converted to an Organisational page as opposed to an individual page. As of April 2016 we have **567** 'likes' or people who are following the page.

### SuppCommunities

We now have **669** twitter followers as of April 2016



# Training Services

We provided a Tailored Training Service to Support Staff, Communities and Other Stakeholders

## Accredited Training

- **107** individuals received
- **49** groups participated
- **98%** satisfaction rate for training delivered

## Individual Group Training

- **330** individuals participated
- **155** groups participated
- **98%** satisfaction rate for training delivered

### Two new courses were written and developed in-house:

'Understanding Social Enterprise' and 'Tenant Participation and Community Development' were passed and accredited by OCN NI at Level 2

*"I found the overall course great for progressing further in community development work and learned a lot around good practice and governance that we will use within our own group. Our course tutor took the time to ensure people understood the subjects before moving on and offered their time after each session for anyone who had queries or questions."*

**David McPhillips**  
**Killynure Community Association**



*"As Community Development Officer with Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council, one of my main aims is to help build capacity within local communities. In order to do this, I regularly work in partnership with other agencies to deliver a tailored training package to local community/voluntary groups to equip their staff and volunteers to develop the skills required to best represent their own areas. Supporting Communities has been helping me to achieve this for over 15 years! In particular, the hugely successful OCN Community Capacity Building programme (Level 1, 2 and 3), delivered by Supporting Communities in the Lisburn & Castlereagh area, has seen hundreds of local people skilled in the area of community development. This training provided to local people has helped to develop and change groups, individuals and local communities alike!*

*Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is regularly building on the service we provide to local communities in order to meet changing needs. Therefore, we have more recently availed of Supporting Communities to deliver new training courses to our community/voluntary sector, including Facilities Management, Financial Management and Understanding Social Enterprise. All of this training is relevant, accessible and affordable and the facilitators are approachable, professional and experienced.*

*I am looking forward to many more years of working in partnership with Supporting Communities and, in particular, to seeing the fruit of their labour within the local communities we are supporting."*

**Rhonda Frew, Community Development Officer**  
**Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council**



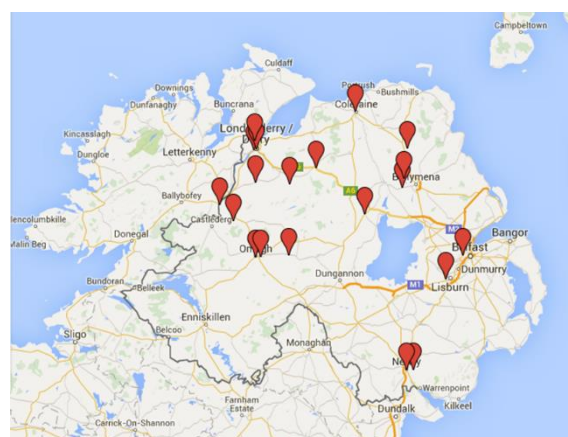
# Digital Inclusion



Overall benefit rating for OCN Level 1 & 2 in Computer Essentials is **98%** on average with **93%** participants reporting they had gained confidence

## ➤ Within the Digital Champion Initiative we have:

- Supported the existing network of **665** Champions and trained a further **188** Champions
- Pilots were tailored to address the needs of various participants
- 'Spring Online Week' - 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> April



Training Locations for 2015/2016

38 Mi-Fi Routers distributed by Supporting Communities throughout N Ireland



*"I was a bit apprehensive at my age in case I would feel lost. I have learned more about sending emails, sending on photos etc. and although haven't actually shopped yet on line, I now know how to do it. I was keen to learn how to crochet and since last week I have watched the videos on YouTube and I have now mastered a scalloped edge for a quilt I had knit."*

**Mary Reid, Participant**

*"I now have Facebook and have the skills to use it, it's great being able to keep in touch with my grandchildren."*

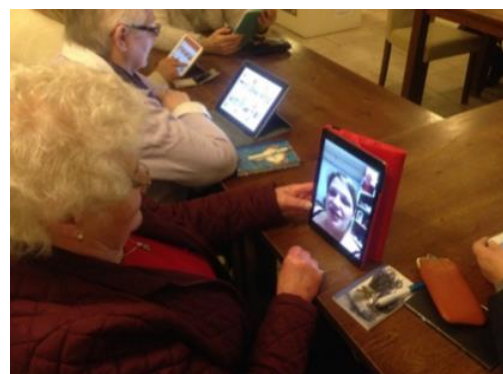
**Maud Donnell,  
Bessie Bell Court HA**

*"I have downloaded YouTube onto my phone, I love being able to listen to all my favourite bands."*

**Bernard Smith,  
Strabane Unemployed  
Community Group**

*"I have just ordered digital photographs online for the first time, I can't wait to show my daughter."*

**Elaine McIntyre, Cathedral YC**



## 'Bridging the Digital Divide'



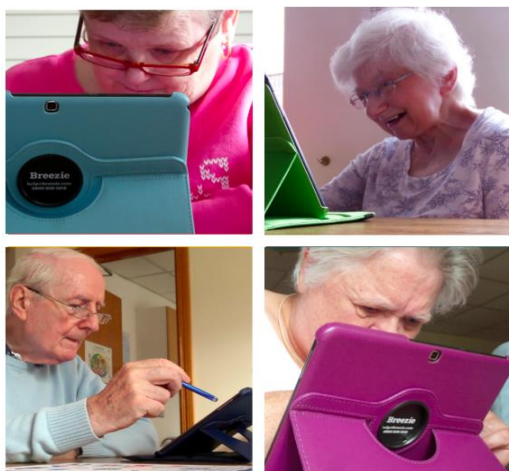
In 2015, Supporting Communities piloted an innovative digital inclusion project in a cross-sectoral partnership with Clanmil Housing, Go ON NI, and Breezie, a software company.

Working with two groups of older people in supported and independent housing, we developed a new model of engagement to successfully encourage tenants' use of the internet, especially for those who are most unlikely to go online without significant levels of support.

As a result of this work, Supporting Communities can now roll this model out to other digitally excluded "hard to engage" groups to ensure that the digital and social inclusion benefits that come from going online are truly available to everyone.

Being digitally competent is now a necessary part of modern life and no one can afford to be left behind.

Regardless of age or ability, we believe going online has digital and social inclusion benefits for everyone.



"This is a must because of the way the government is going and the way technology is going. There will be no such thing as ringing up and making an appointment. I'm pleased that we've had this opportunity because it's the way the future is going."

*Project Participant, Gloonan House*

"Our group values being included in the way the world functions now. Keeping up and feeling that you are a part of the world and to know what email and facebook etc. is. **You are never too old to learn something new.** As our next generation comes along we are going to have to be prepared for more digitally able tenants. There are no older people now because we are all engaged with technology. Everything is achievable even for people with dementia."

*Scheme Co-ordinator, Mullan Mews*





# Administrative Services

We provided a Comprehensive, Efficient, Administrative Service to Staff, Communities and Other Stakeholders

## PAYE Service

- Provided for **39** Groups
- **91** Individual Workers

## Financial Assessments

- Carried out **118** assessments - saving Groups **££s**

## Financial Management Support

- Assistance provided to various Groups with Projects under Restricted Funding eg Neighbourhood Renewal and SPOD

*“We received a prompt and professional service in carrying out our independent financial assessment which was excellent value for money.”*

## Other Administrative Services

Keep updated database of Mailing Lists which comprise of **1,836** individuals

Analysing and compiling **20** Community Surveys with **957** respondents

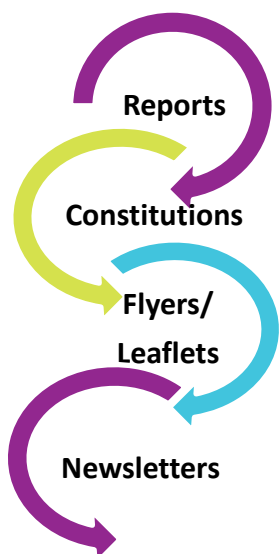


Table below shows figures per Region for Period April 2015 - March 2016

REGION	MINS		MEMOS/AGENDAS		LETTERS
	Sets Typed	Mail Shot Figure	Number Typed	Mail Shot Figure	
BELFAST	63	644	34	809	8
NORTH	118	1,512	107	2,404	55
SOUTH	263	4,307	252	6,220	16
GENERAL	20	391	6	179	13



# Community Participation in Housing

We have acted as a 'Champion' for Community Participation in Housing

## Service Level Agreements

- **13** Area SLAs signed with Housing Executive Area Managers
- **1** SLA signed with Housing Centre for 2015/16

## Compacts

- **253** Group Compacts in place
- Supporting Communities facilitated process

## How we performed



- **3** Regional sessions held involving Central and Area Scrutiny Panel members
- **60** participants involved in Regional Events

Supported the new Community Chair and Vice-Chair and provided administrative support to **10** Central HF Meetings held during the year



CENTRAL  
housing forum



## Consultations

- Tenant Participation Strategy; Housing Executive Corporate and Business Plans; Housing Executive Rural and Community Cohesion Strategies; Charity Commission Accounting and Reporting; SHRP Regulatory Framework for NI Consultation

## COMMUNITY CONFERENCE 2015 FEEDBACK

- Very inspiring
- Excellent day with very good presentations
- Fabulous conference
- Great chance to meet people from the community that are the same as ourselves
- Enjoyed listening to real examples of 'making a difference'
- Friendly atmosphere
- Keep up the good work
- We learn more from these events

### AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE MET

The following were the aims we had for the conference with the table showing the percentage of respondents who felt we achieved them:

- Empower and Inspire **95%**
- Networking Opportunities **97%**
- Showing the difference and impact that these projects have made **97%**
- Giving relevant information and signposting **93%**



# Housing Association Engagement

**3** Training Sessions held for Housing Association Tenants on Mystery Shopping

**5** Mystery Shopping Exercises developed, delivered and reports compiled

**11** Housing Associations provided with advice, support and training on Tenant and Customer Involvement

➤ **Review of Tenant Engagement and Governance in 2015/2016 involving:**

- Tenant Questionnaires
- Tenant Focus Groups x **19** sessions
- Staff Focus Groups x **6** sessions

➤ **Networking Conferences/Events**

- Facilitated workshops at conferences
- Provided presentations at conferences
- Chaired panel discussions
- Provided information stands

➤ **Training**

- Tenant Participation and Community Development Accredited OCN Level 2
  - **1** Housing Association completed x **29** staff members
- Tenant Participation and Community Development (Non Accredited)
  - **2** Housing Associations completed x **60** staff and board members
- **45** Tenant Forum members received training on terms of reference, their role and responsibilities
- **10** Tenant Forum Members completed Effective Meetings training

*"I wish to express my sincere thanks for the effort and commitment that you, your staff and the Mystery Shoppers put into the recent exercise.*

*The MSE has been produced to a very high standard. The information it contains is well presented, concise, easy to read and extremely useful in highlighting areas where we are performing well and areas where we could do better.*

*The report is extremely worthwhile and is an essential tool needed to facilitate continuous improvement and enhanced service delivery."*

**Maurice Millar, Housing Manager,  
Triangle Housing Association Ltd**



**Choice Tenants Forum**

# Partnership Working

We maximised Opportunities for Partnership Working

## Neighbourhood Renewal

- Continued to support and be represented on 6 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships across Northern Ireland, including Office Bearer Roles
- Provided support to Housing Executive in relation to SPOD Project in Ballymoney

Supporting Communities continued to work at Board Level in a number of partnerships including:

**NIEL**  
**Housing Rights**  
**Community Places**

**CIH**  
**Choice Tenant & Client Services Committee**

Very successful joint conference organised with Housing Rights Service entitled: 'Tenant Participation - From Strategy to Implementation'



Colm pictured with Janet Hunter, Housing Rights at the joint conference

CO3 Leadership Awards 2016 for 'Celebrating Champions' held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016



Colm pictured with Lorraine Campbell, Chair of Supporting Communities Board of Directors after receiving a 'Highly Commended Award' for Best Newcomer of the Year

Chartered Institute of Housing NI & ROI Conference Awards held on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016



Recognised for his huge contribution to his community was Cecil Lemon, Highfield RA & West Belfast Scrutiny Panel Rep pictured with Murray Watt, Supporting Communities



Laura delighted to have won the very prestigious CIH Professional of the Year Award.

She will now go on to represent CIH NI at the UK Awards in Manchester

# Our Impact

Although this Report mainly focuses on our **Outputs** for the past financial year, we realise that this only tells part of the story. Over recent years, Supporting Communities has realised the importance of asking ourselves the difference that we, as an organisation, are making to those who we provide a service to ie **Our Impact**.

Supporting Communities engaged the services of Gauge NI who worked with us to produce an independent assessment of the social impact created by the services provided to our member groups and experienced by a wide range of our stakeholders and in particular the Housing Executive, as our key stakeholder.

The study covered the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 and the methodology used was the Social Return on Investment (SROI) which uses monetary value to reflect the social costs and benefits of our work. The study used a clear logic model to identify Supporting Communities' main inputs, outputs and outcomes as they related to the identified stakeholders.

**Some of the key results from the study are as follows:**

An SROI Ratio of 8:1 which means that for every £1 invested in our services, approximately £8 of social and economic value was returned. The outcome is that tangible benefits are received by our stakeholders including; Community Groups, Local Communities, Individual Group Members, Digital Trainees, Housing Executive and other Inter-Agency Partners.



## Local Communities:

- Improved physical environment
- Improved sense of belonging
- Improved social environment
- Improved sense of wellbeing

## Individuals:

- Increased knowledge
- Increased skills
- Increased self confidence
- Employment opportunities

## Housing Executive and Inter-Agency Partners:

- Improved levels of community engagement
- Improved tenant stability
- Reduction in potential voids and anti-social activity
- Access to network of community groups
- Access to well-established communications network
- Links with communities across N Ireland

**If you would like to see a full Summary of our Impact Report, please contact: [info@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunities.org)**