

# Supporting Communities NI

## Annual Report

2013-2014



**'Helping Communities Help Themselves'**

## Chairman's Foreword

SCNI's Vision Statement expresses the aim of creating 'Confident, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities' and I believe that during 2013/14 SCNI, as an organisation, has achieved this Vision. All SCNI members of staff have played their individual roles in helping to meet many of the objectives as set out in the Annual Business Plan. However, it is as a Collective Staff Team that the majority of targets set for 2013/14 were not only achieved but surpassed.

Among the standout results for 2013/14 are:

- The assistance provided by SCNI Staff in helping Community Groups, who we work with, source almost £2.5m in funding support. This reflects tremendous 'value for money' for our funders and much needed funds for the community sector.
- Support to over 550 Community Groups across NI with SCNI's Liaison Officers providing a vital support service in ensuring that these Groups continue to play an active role within their own communities.
- Providing an independent facilitation role in over 200 Inter-Agency meetings across NI bringing statutory agencies and Community Groups together so that real issues of concern to communities were addressed by the statutory sector in a co-ordinated manner.
- Providing essential administrative support in the form of minute-taking, pay roll and financial assessments, all of which provide a substantial saving to the Community Groups SCNI work with.
- Excellent satisfaction rates (98% on average) across all training courses delivered by SCNI Staff; any organisation would be proud of these figures and SCNI rightly is.
- The creation of 500+ Digital Champions across NI providing basic online skills so that participants can access statutory services online as well as being able to browse the internet.

(Please see SCNI's separate Impact Report 2013/14 for a full breakdown of the difference SCNI has made)

From a housing perspective, 2013/14 was an extremely busy and crucial year for SCNI and the Community Groups that the organisation supports. SCNI's staff continued to provide an important service to the Housing Executive's Area Managers through individual SLA's - helping to support and facilitate both Area and Local Office meetings across the Housing Executive's 12 Areas. This year also saw the compilation of a 3 year Draft Community Involvement Strategy with SCNI Staff enabling feedback from across the HCN membership. The contents of the finalised Strategy will prove to be important for SCNI as it moves forward in its relationship with the Housing Executive over the next 3 years.

SCNI Staff also continued to deliver an important service to a number of Housing Associations across NI, from carrying out Mystery Shopping and Customer Journey Mapping exercises to the provision of training to Tenant Forums and Committees. We hope to consolidate this support to the voluntary housing sector in the year ahead and hopefully build on it further.

From a strategic point, 2013/14 marked the beginning of the Social Housing Reform Programme (SHRP) with SCNI playing a vital role in enabling the community's voice to be heard during Tranche 1. I, along with other Executive Committee Members and Officers, presented to the Social Development Committee in July 2013 thereby reaffirming the important position SCNI has as the SHRP develops over the coming years.

Finally, like many organisations at the moment, SCNI's Executive Committee made a decision towards the end of 2013/14 that SCNI needed to restructure in light of the changing environment in housing and council reform. As a result of this restructuring, Brian Holmes, who had guided SCNI through all of its phases of development during the past 34 years left SCNI in March 2014. I, as Chairman and on behalf of the other members of the Executive Committee, wish to pay thanks for the dedication, commitment and service which Brian provided to SCNI since its formation in 1979 and we wish him every best wish in the future.

However, as part of this new restructuring, Colm McDaid, who has been with SCNI for 20 years himself, was appointed the new role of Chief Officer along with a new Senior Management Team consisting of: Theresa Patton, Administration Manager; Laura O'Dowd, Support Services Manager and Conor Flanagan, Operational Services Manager. I have no doubt that the new SMT will continue to provide an excellent service on behalf of SCNI in the years ahead and I, on behalf of the Executive Committee, wish them continued success in their new roles.

***Michael Kelly***  
***Chairman***

## **Vision Statement**

### **Confident, Sustainable and Inclusive Communities**

## **Mission Statement**

### **Building Strong Cohesive Communities**

## **Principles**

- We will support Communities and Active Citizens to develop and achieve their objects.
- We will work in Partnership with other agencies to achieve agreed objectives.
- We will deliver our services in a consistent and equitable way throughout Northern Ireland.
- Our Services will reflect the priorities of Stakeholders.
- We value contribution made to our work by Staff, Communities and Stakeholders.
- We will strive for Excellence in all we do.
- SCNI values its staff as the key resource of the organisation.
- Strengthening our role as the key agency in maintaining Community Involvement support and helping to build capacity to Communities, Community Groups and Individuals.
- SCNI adheres to the principle of Good Governance in all its work and activities.
- We will promote equality, cohesion and sharing.

## **AIM 1 To Promote, Encourage and Support Meaningful Community Participation**

### **Group Work**

- Group Assessment process in place for both new referrals and annual assessments  
**21** New Referrals received from April - March 2014 and **1** c/f from previous year - totalling **22**, **13** of these referrals are new to SCNI  
**8** assessed as Category 2; **1** assessed as Category 3; **7** assessed as Category 4.  
**5** no longer require assistance and **1** o/s
- **551** active Groups of which the breakdown is:  
**3** Category 1 (Developmental);  
**105** Category 2 (Advice 'On Regular');  
**45** Category 3 (Facilitation only eg I. Agency, Housing Fora etc.);  
**391** Category 4 (Advice 'On Request').

Additionally, there are **7** Category 5 (Community Champions/Village Voices)

- From **April - March 2014**: - **Outputs**:  
**209** Inter-Agency meetings attended;  
**50** Housing Forum meetings attended;  
**141** HCN meetings attended (includes support meetings with HCN members);  
**408** Individual support sessions provided;  
Group Support eg AGMs **60**;  
Committee Meetings **113**;  
Minutes **53**;  
Contact Meetings **307**;  
**159** Meetings with Other Agencies;  
**139** NIHE Meetings.  
Total of **1,639** interactions

### **Models of Participation**

#### (i) Good Practice Sharing

- SCNI's E-Biz, E-Zine and SCNI News are used to share Best Practice

#### (ii) Community Planning

- Community Planning – transitional committees established
- SCNI's Awareness Course to be revisited
- Community Places Toolkit – new website launched during the year

#### (iii) Social Enterprise Projects

- Provide varying support to a number of existing projects (Kilmacormick and Strathroy Enterprises)
- Tie in with NIHE's Community Grant Scheme – encouragement of new Projects
- Member of staff attending UJJ course - sharing with all staff key learning outcomes – potential for networking also

## **AIM 2 Provide an Effective Funding Support Service to Staff, Communities and Other Stakeholders**

### **Funding Enquiries**

- 13 detailed funding enquiries completed up to March 2014
- Need for capture of informal enquiries also

### **Funding Secured**

- Total of **£2,458,309.59** secured – across a variety of headings
- Running total highlighted on SCNI website

### **Funding Bulletin**

- Funding Bulletin fully incorporated within new SCNI publication – E-Biz which is distributed on fortnightly basis to HCN members
  - Positive feedback throughout the year from community reps/other agencies as well as staff on content and layout
  - Funding Bulletin still available via SCNI website to those Groups on HCN via a Password provided to them annually
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## **AIM 3 To Provide an efficient Information, Research and Policy Support Service to Staff, Communities and other Stakeholders**

### **Factsheets**

- **768** Factsheets circulated April 2013 – March 2014
- New layout developed for SCNI Factsheets – more ‘customer friendly’
- Each Factsheet reviewed at least annually on a rolling basis via Staff Work Programme

### **Communication**

- Communication Strategy reviewed during Summer 2013 by Communications Team – being implemented as per Plan of Action
- New structure – overseen by Support Services Manager
- **20 editions** of E-Biz publication have been compiled from April 2013 - March 2014 circulated fortnightly (**50<sup>th</sup> Edition circulated in Jan**)
- **8 editions** of E-Zine publications compiled from April 2013 - March 2014 – circulated monthly
- **2** SCNI News editions have been circulated for same period – last edition focused on Community Conference 2013
- All publications continue to receive positive feedback from staff, stakeholders and community reps

### **Website Redevelopment**

SCNI’s website provides members of the HCN and stakeholders with new information sharing facilities including:

- An interactive Blog and Blog Resources section where members can post comments
- An interactive Training Intranet for training participants
- SCNI Facebook Page hosting relevant updates about the organisation, the Housing Community Network and opportunities throughout the sector
- An Information Section hosting the latest editions of the SCNI publications ‘E-Biz’ and ‘E-Zine’.
- The website continues to host the Community Funding Bulletin
- Approx. 198 Community Group mini-sites in existence – looking to improve these through Digital Inclusion Project and MyGroupNI
- Website has the latest editions of SCNI News
- From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 there have been **1,285** Visitors to the SCNI Website, **57.82%** of these being **new** visitors and there have been a total of **8,329** page views
- The most popular sections of the website to date are the ‘Community Group’ followed by ‘SCNI Staff,’ and ‘Funding Information’

A Facebook and Twitter Account was established at the end of the year and aim to utilise more proactively in the future

### **SCNI News**

- **2** editions circulated since April 2013 to an average mailing list of **1,356**
- New format/layout devised – positive feedback received on content and format
- New Impact document produced for 2013/14

## Research

- Since April 2013, SCNI has responded to the consultations on:
  - Social Development Committee Housing Strategy Consultation
  - DoE Planning and Community Benefits Summit
  - SCNI/HCN attendance at Social Development Committee
  - SCNI/HCN meeting with Social Development Minister
  - SCNI/HCN meeting with Social Development Officials
  - Charities Commission Public Benefit Test
  - Charities Commission Registration
  - NIHE Corporate and Business Plan
  - NIHE Draft Community Involvement Strategy
  - Belfast Sustainable Food City
  - Community Planning Manifesto
  - Revised Draft Planning Policy Statement 15 (Planning and Flood Risk)
  - Consultation on Future of NI Consumer Council
  - Anti-Social Behaviour Bill
  - Social Housing Allocations
  - Social Development Committee Forward Work Programme

### **Ongoing work and monitor on:**

- Together Building a United Community (OFMDFM)
- Welfare Reform
- NIHE Heating Policy
- Implementing Social Clauses in NI
- Volunteering Infrastructure
- Scottish Social Housing Reforms
- NI Local Government Reform
- NI House Condition Survey
- Hidden Costs of Private Renting in NI
- Expensive Lending in NI
- NI Housing Market Review
- Guide to Renewable Energy for Community Facilities
- Community Planning Manifesto
- Tackling Illegal Immigration in Private Rented Accommodation
- NIHE Community Involvement Strategy
- Charity Commission Reporting Requirements
- Housing (Scotland) Bill
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill
- Fundamental Review of Allocations Policy
- Proposed Housing (Anti-Social Behaviour) Bill
- Measuring Progress Towards Improving Good Relations
- Choice Based Lettings
- Social Housing Reform Research and Analysis Paper
- Environment Bill (proposed)

## **AIM 4 Provide a Tailored Training Service to Support Staff, Communities and Other Stakeholders**

### **Accredited Training**

- 5 Level 1 Community Capacity Building Courses
- 49 individuals participated in this training
- 17 groups participated
  
- 2 Level 2 Community Capacity Building Courses
- 18 Individuals participated in this training
- 5 groups participated
  
- 2 Level 2 Social Economy Training Courses
- 19 individuals participated in this training
- 9 groups participated

***98% satisfaction rate (on average) for Training delivered***

### **Individual Group Training**

17 sessions held  
154 individuals participated in this training

70 groups participated  
***98% satisfaction rate (on average) for Training delivered***

### **Digital Inclusion**

#### **SCNI Digital Champion Initiative**

A second phase of the Digital Champion initiative became operational in September 2013 and 15 in place until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. In addition to supporting the existing network of 432 champions and training a further 200 champions, specific pilots will be tailored and delivered to address the needs of the following:

- ◆Members of the Rural Community
- ◆Members of the Community with a Disability
- ◆Small business owners in the local Community
- ◆Supporting Past Participants

The overall benefit rating for the OCN Level 1 in Computer Essentials course remains **97%** on average with **95%** of participants reporting that their confidence improved significantly as a result of the training.

#### **Support Past Participants**

SCNI continue to support and develop the initially identified and trained 432 digital champions throughout the province.

Random sample has highlighted the following areas to benefit from the first 'Refresher session'

- ◆Ballykeel
- ◆Banbridge
- ◆Castle/Carnany/Glebe
- ◆Gelvin

## Spring Online Week 2014

Spring Online Week 31st March 2013 - 4th April 2014 was the ideal basis to engage the wider community and each day incorporated a different theme.

Highlighted below were the areas in which we engaged and the themes for each day:

- 31<sup>st</sup> March - Lettershandoney & DDG - Social Media Workshop
- 1<sup>st</sup> April - Moneyreagh CG - Digital Imaging Workshop
- 2<sup>nd</sup> April - Cavanaleck - Digital Imaging Workshop
- 3<sup>rd</sup> April - Coleraine Groups - Online Services
- 4<sup>th</sup> April - Glenshane House - Techy Tea Party

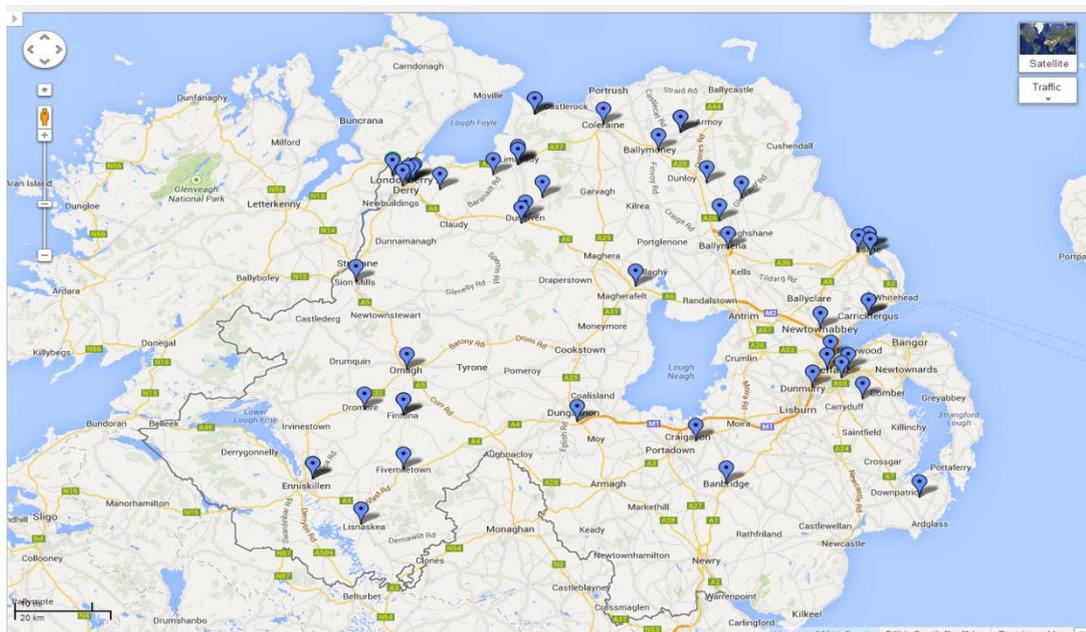
## Rural Road Show

SCNI attended the MEAAP Rural Road Show on the 27th March 2014 which allowed the opportunity to publicise the availability of the DI initiative. This was very well received with a lot of the attendees interested in more informal sessions.

## Three Mobile - Mi-fi pilot

As part of the Digital Champion Initiative SCNI have been approached by Three Mobile to distribute 30 Mi-fi routers - which will allow up to ten computers wireless access to the Internet at any one time for Community groups and champions throughout the province.

Below is a map highlighting the areas of distribution.



## **AIM 5 Provide a Comprehensive, Efficient Administrative Service to Staff, Communities and Other Stakeholders**

### **Salary Administration**

- PAYE service provided for 38 groups – **91** individual workers

### **Financial Assessments**

- Service provided for **127** groups

### **Financial Management Support**

- Assistance provided to various Projects under Restricted Funding eg Areas at Risk; Neighbourhood Renewal; SPOD

### **Other Admin Services**

- Typing minutes for IA and other relevant meetings
  - Database of Mailing Lists
  - Producing a wide range of Reports, Newsletters, Documents etc.
  - Analysing and compiling Community Surveys
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## **AIM 6 To act as a 'Champion' for Community Participation in Housing**

### **District Service Level Agreements 2013/2014**

- 11 Area Service Level Agreements signed with new Area Managers
- SLA signed with Housing Centre for 2013/2014 in April 2013

### **Community Participation Compacts**

- 266 group compacts in place as at March 2014

### **Community Cohesion/Shared Communities Programme**

- Assistance provided to Community Groups in order to undertake community consultation, develop vision and community relations plans and to adopt integrated local plans in the 30 identified Communities
- SCNI participation on local Project Teams/Steering Groups
- Meetings held with Shared Community Officers to ensure work is not duplicated with SCNI LOs

### **Community Involvement Strategy**

- SCNI input into compilation of Review of Community Involvement Strategy
- Facilitated Consultation with Central and Area HCNs on NIHE Customer Service Areas – Levels of Community Participation – Document ratified by Central HCN and presented to Social Dev Committee in July 2013
- Local Service Scrutiny Pilots (Local Offers) – provided support and ongoing guidance to HCN members and NIHE on development of Local Service Scrutiny Pilots as a new method of engagement
- Review of Pilots fed back to Central HCN – acknowledged in NIHE Annual Report
- Re-drafted Community Involvement Strategy 2014-17 presented to Community Conference (12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013) for consultation to end of Jan 2014
- Responses provided by SCNI – end of Jan 2014
- Facilitated Response from Central HF – end of Jan 2014
- Facilitated consultation exercise involving Central and Area HCNs on future restructuring of NIHE and assisted in compiling a response
- Role for SCNI in any future restructuring of NIHE has been acknowledged. Report presented to NIHE
- Minister's announcement on Strategy for Future of Housing in NI – SCNI facilitated meeting between Minister and Central HCN in June 2013
- Delegation from SCNI and Central HCN made presentation to the NI Executive's Social Development Committee at the beginning of July relating to the Social Housing Reform Programme (SHRP)
- Communication with the SHRP Project Team August 2013 in order to ensure that the HCN's voice was heard and had input into process
- SHRP Project Team attended SCNI Staff meeting and Central HCN meeting October 2013 – a joint comprehensive response was provided
- DSD Stakeholder Event (13<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013) – SCNI and Central HCN members attended – Workshops and input provided
- Attended Gateway Interview re: review of Tranche 1 of Programme – Jan 2014. Hope to be part of process for remaining Tranches

## **Community Conference**

- Conference held on theme of 'Volunteering' – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – very successful and very well attended - SCNI staff pro-active in ensuring success
- Task Group to overview Conference planning for 2014 set up - agreed theme of 'Social Enterprise - Sustaining Communities'

## **Rural Residents Forum**

- Revised Rural Action Plan launched in May 2013
- New members identified with assistance of SCNI
- SHRP – attended meeting at end of November 2013
- Response provided to Draft CIS – submitted to NIHE
- New member of SCNI staff sitting on RRF

## **Village Voices/Community Champions**

- Continued support to individuals ensuring they can play an active role not only in their community but throughout the HCN
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## **AIM 7 To Maximise Opportunities for Partnership Working**

### **Housing Association Work**

- Helm Housing
  - Mystery Shopping training and support provided to Helm Tenants
  - Mystery Shopping exercise complete and report forwarded to Helm
  - Information session on models of Involvement presented to Helm Tenants Executive Committee
  
- Apex HA
  - Advice and assistance provided to Apex on Customer Journey Mapping and Tenant Led Inspections
  - Mystery Shopping training and support provided to Apex Tenants
  - Customer Journey Mapping Exercise complete and forwarded to Apex
  - Mystery Shopping Exercise complete and forwarded to Apex
  
- Trinity HA
  - Mystery Shopping training provided to Trinity Tenants
  - Mystery Shopping exercise complete - findings being analysed
  
- Habinteg HA
  - Repairs Mystery Shopping completed and report forwarded to Habinteg
  
- Clanmil HA
  - Repairs Mystery Shopping exercise complete and report has been forwarded to Clanmil (monthly basis)
  - Mystery Shopping exercise ongoing
  - Tenant Participation training delivered to Clanmil staff and tenants to be delivered in February
  
- Ulidia HA
  - Support provided to Ulidia Housing Association on the development and sustainability of their Tenants Advisory Group
  
- Ark HA
  - Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out on behalf of Ark HA and report complete
  
- Triangle HA
  - Training provided to Triangle staff on Mystery Shopping
  - Mystery Shopping Exercise ongoing
  - Support to Triangle staff in relation to Tenant Participation Strategy
  
- Oaklee HA-
  - Computer Essentials training delivered to Oaklee tenants, with the potential for further training within schemes
  - Meetings convened with OakleeTrinity on proposed development of Tenant Participation Strategy

## **SCNI/HRS Collaboration**

- Achieving Excellence in Tenant Involvement Conference took place on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2013 in partnership with Housing Rights Service - very well attended and very successful

## **Neighbourhood Renewal**

- SCNI continued to support 6 Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships across NI – various roles including Chair (Ballymena) and Vice-Chair (Omagh)
- Organised good practice visits through relevant NR Co-ordinators
- Community Sub-committee established as part of Omagh and Enniskillen NRP – SCNI facilitates both – Dungannon/Coalisland established same – SCNI proactive role

## **Areas at Risk/SPOD Programmes**

- SCNI provided support role to NIHE in relation to SPOD Project in Ballymoney eg Worker support, financial management and training provision
- Level 1 CCB Training Course commenced January 2013 and completed end of March 2013 – Certificates presented August 2013.

## **SCNI Partnerships**

- SCNI continued to participate at Board level in a number of partnerships including:
  - Housing Rights
  - NIEL
  - Community Places
  - Sustainable NI

## **Good Relations**

- SCNI involved in development of Good Relations Strategy in Coleraine involving CRC, IFI, DSD and Borough Council
- Assistance/advice provided to NIHE in relation to Good Relations Awards
- Building Peace through the Arts – Re-Imaging Communities Programme through Arts Council launched in February 2013

## **Rural Development Plan**

- Provided varying degrees of support to 8 Rural Groups in developing Village Renewal Plans and securing matching funding
- Support provided to DARD members of staff

## **Promotion of SCNI**

- Website - updated on ongoing basis
- Digital Inclusion - Facebook page being developed
- Twitter account opened as new method of engagement with relevant organisations/individuals
- Brochures/Annual Reports – use as marketing tool

# SCNI STAFF

## CHIEF OFFICER

Colm McDaid

## SENIOR TEAM

Laura O'Dowd  
Conor Flanagan  
Theresa Patton

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