



Welcome to Supporting Communities 215th 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

## Victor Blease, former Chief Executive NI Housing Executive



*Victor Blease, Chief Executive NIHE, 1st July 1985 to 30th Sept 1998 (photo: July 1991)*

It is with great sadness that staff at Supporting Communities learned of the passing of Victor Blease, formerly Chief Executive of the NI Housing Executive. Victor Blease joined the Housing Executive soon after it was established and became originally as Information Officer then Director of Housing and ultimately Chief Executive from 1985 until his

retirement in 1998.

Current NIHE Chief Executive Grainia Long described Mr Blease as a "driving force for social change" during his time with the organisation. "Victor was a driving force for social change throughout his time at the Housing Executive, overseeing the large scale redevelopment of many neighbourhoods and major investments in our own homes and private sector housing," Ms Long said.

"During a very difficult chapter in Northern Ireland's history, he also introduced many ground-breaking initiatives to enhance community engagement and participation. This created a legacy for community engagement and cohesion that underpins the work we do today."

Supporting Communities staff recall the enthusiastic support given to the organisation, then NI Tenants Action Project, by Victor as it entered a new phase in its development particularly in the establishment of the Housing Community Network.

Supporting Communities Chair and former Housing Executive District Manager and colleague of Mr Blease, Lorraine Campbell, remarked, "He was truly remarkable, always bounding with ideas as to how encourage staff development and to improve housing services. He understood the value of community development in creating good neighbourhoods long before it became accepted wisdom. He was always a champion of excellent customer service and delighted in the Housing Executive becoming one of the first organisations to be awarded the CharterMark."

## NIHE Statement on the launch of Homewards in Belfast

**Speaking following the launch of Homewards Northern Ireland, Grainia Long, Northern Ireland Housing Executive Chief Executive, said: "This partnership has the potential to be transformational.**

"Homelessness is not a 'problem to be managed', and it is not inevitable. Through partnership, and with a focus on person centred solutions, it can be resolved. We are absolutely delighted to be part of Homewards, which will galvanise partners to prevent homelessness for the people we serve.

"The discussion this morning with Prince William, members of The Royal Foundation and local partner organisations, confirmed that we share a real and a longstanding commitment to work together to improve the lives of those people who are struggling to find a place to call home. We share the same vision



*Grainia Long, Northern Ireland Housing Executive Chief Executive chats with Prince William about Homewards.*

and are all equally optimistic that we can end homelessness here in Northern Ireland. The launch of Homewards comes at a time when we are facing unprecedented levels of demand in respect of housing and homelessness. This requires a relentless focus on prevention and early intervention. Where homelessness cannot be prevented our aim must be on providing tailored customer support for individuals, as well as a permanent place to call home.

“Homewards will enable greater collaboration across sectors in Northern Ireland and across each of the four regions of the UK. At its core is a focus on providing long-term solutions to prevent and end

homelessness. We also believe that participation in Homewards will help remove the stigma of homelessness, raise awareness of the complex nature of homelessness and highlight the support services available. We look forward to working with existing stakeholders and creating new relationships with others as the programme evolves and as we share best practice and ideas with other participants.

“Despite the currently challenging environment, we are very optimistic that, through the Homewards programme, we will make real progress towards ending homelessness in Northern Ireland.”

---

## NIHE warns that budget cuts will hit those most in need

The Housing Executive has warned that proposed budget cuts to homelessness prevention, the new build programme and home energy grants will impact households in most need in Northern Ireland.

In its response to the Department for Communities' Budget 2023/4 Equality Impact Assessment, the organisation has set out its concerns about the funding challenges for a number of programmes and services.

Grainia Long, Chief Executive said:

“At a time when we need to be building more homes, preventing homelessness and helping those experiencing fuel poverty, the proposed budget would result in substantially fewer social homes started than originally planned for next year, an increase in people needing temporary accommodation and the effective suspension of the boiler replacement scheme. The funding challenge outlined in the draft budget comes at a time when the cost of living crisis is continuing to impact on many households across Northern Ireland.

As housing professionals we are concerned about the impact that the proposed budget cuts will have across society but specifically on those individuals who need our help most: people with disabilities; young people leaving care; the increasing number of young women presenting as homeless; households in rural areas; those in fuel poverty; and vulnerable groups, including older people.

While the proposed draft budget comes at a time of unprecedented levels of homelessness, the indicative funding of £26.4m for homeless services equates to a shortfall of £7.4m. As a consequence, it will be virtually impossible to provide services to prevent homelessness, with the overwhelming proportion of the homelessness budget focused on response. Perversely, failure to fund prevention services, will lead to greater numbers living in expensive temporary accommodation, leading to greater budgetary pressures. We are extremely concerned that failure to fund homelessness services will lead to job losses in the voluntary and community sectors. The

proposed budget will also have a significant detrimental effect on the social housing new build programme, when demand for housing is at a record high. A funding requirement of £199.5m has been identified in order to target 2,000 new social housing starts in 2023/24, to meet housing need.

A funding allocation of between £141.6m and £159m budget is likely. Either scenario will result in substantially fewer homes being built in 2023/4 than originally planned. This means that more households will be waiting longer to have permanent housing offered to them. We are concerned about the levels of funding proposed for the forthcoming year for energy efficiency programmes tackling fuel poverty across Northern Ireland.

A shortfall of £2m in the Affordable Warmth scheme will curtail this improvement programme and the indicative funding of £148k of the Boiler Replacement scheme effectively closes the scheme to new applicants this year. In addition, the budget outlined in the EQIA does not allow for the high cost of goods and materials, contingency planning for emergency situations, such as a Covid-19 outbreak or cold snaps during the winter. Furthermore, it does not enable us to meet additional numbers presenting as homeless following positive 'leave to remain' decisions. The outlined budget in the EQIA and other departments' current budget announcements will also have a negative impact on the much-needed collaboration across sections such as health, education and justice as well as with partners in the housing sector.

We have been working closely with the Department of Communities to set out the impact of the budget reductions proposed and today published our response to their EQIA. We will of course work to minimise any disruption to services and programmes of work, however, it is our view that the proposed expenditure as it stands will have an adverse impact on the most vulnerable people across Northern Ireland, who are urgently in need of housing services.”

**Housing**  
Executive

## Youth employment scheme relaunched by DfC

An employment scheme for young people at risk of long-term unemployment has been relaunched by the Department for Communities following the allocation of funding from the UK government.

The JobStart scheme, which supports young people between the ages of 16 and 24 into the labour market, has been allocated £15 million from the New Deal for Northern Ireland initiative.

Originally launched by the Department for Communities in 2021, JobStart provides six and nine-month job opportunities across a range of employment sectors, equipping young people with the skills to move into the labour market.

Of the 1,452 young people who completed the original scheme, 77 per cent have gone on to secure full-time employment.

Department for Communities' Deputy Secretary for Work and Health, Paddy Rooney said:

"The success of the JobStart scheme shows the importance of such initiatives in supporting young people at risk of long-term unemployment.



Department for  
**Communities**

An Roinn  
**Pobal**

Department for  
**Commonities**



"By providing funding to employers to create real job opportunities, young people can develop their employability skills in positions which align with their individual skills and interests.

"I would encourage employers to take this opportunity to invest in our young people and to benefit from the strengths that they can bring to your business."

The £15 million allocation is part of a £40 million fund from the UK Government being shared with the Department for Economy and Invest Northern Ireland. The funding is aimed at increasing access and participation of under-represented individuals in skills, education and employment.

Invest NI will support the work of both Departments through its local employer and business base and will harness the expertise of its client-facing teams to secure commitment and engagement from employers.

## Part-Time BSc Hons Community Development - Recruiting Now!

Your experience counts! If you work or volunteer in communities, you can apply directly to Ulster University and gain a professionally recognised degree in Community Development? Apply now to transform your life and your community!

Do you want to make a difference in your community? Do you want to help improve people's lives and challenge inequalities that exist in society? By studying this course, you will develop your knowledge and understanding of core community development concepts such as equality and diversity; power and social justice; community and informal education. You will also gain skills in managing community projects, writing funding applications, delivering informal education, conflict resolution and peace-building.

Students actively participate in the learning on this programme and you will have many opportunities to share your experience and learn from your peers. There are three placements over the four year programme, one in Years 2, 3 and 4, which will help you to put the theory into practice and develop your skills in community work. (Placements also operate one day per week and replace the normal teaching day). This also gives you the opportunity to broaden your experience and make some very useful contacts for your organisation.

This unique programme is professionally endorsed by the UK Endorsement and Quality Standards Board and the All-Ireland Endorsement Body.

The degree runs over one day per week (Wednesday) over four years. There are exit points after Year One (Certificate), Year Two (Certificate in Higher Education) and Year Three (Associate Bachelor Degree).

Entry Requirements: Applicants should normally have a Grade C English Language GCSE or Pass in Essential Skills Literacy Level 2\*. No A levels required if you have experience working or volunteering with marginalised or disadvantaged groups.

Those with A levels or higher qualifications and substantial experience of working in or with the community/voluntary sector, may be eligible for direct entry into Year 2 (contact us for further information).

Apply directly via the online application:  
<https://www.ulster.ac.uk/courses/202324/community-development-30145>



## Camping Safety

Camping is a fantastic way to enjoy the great outdoors. Following some simple safety advice will ensure your camping holiday goes smoothly and make it a memorable experience.

- Allow at least 6m spacing between tents.
- Know the fire safety arrangements for the campsite; know the location of the portable firefighting equipment and nearest telephone.
- Cook outside and away from the tent; keep flammable material away from the cooking area; make sure cooking appliances are stable and cannot be knocked over easily.
- Never use candles inside or near a tent; torches are much safer.
- Don't smoke inside a tent.
- All flammable liquids and gas cylinders should be kept outside the tent.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is known as the silent killer because you can't see it, smell it or taste it. CO gas can build up quickly and can kill with no warning. Therefore, you should be CO aware when camping.

- > Never use fuel-burning devices such as disposable barbecues, camping stoves, camping heaters, lanterns, etc, inside a tent.
- > Disposable barbecues and smouldering charcoals can produce CO for hours after you have used them.



Northern Ireland  
Fire & Rescue Service

- > Keep any fuel cooking appliances down wind and well clear of tents to ensure fumes don't build up in nearby tents.
- > Remember a vehicle engine or generator exhaust gases also contain high levels of CO.

Dry ground and vegetation in the summer means there is an added risk of a fire starting.

Follow these tips to reduce the chance of a wildfire in the countryside.

- > Only use barbecues in a suitable area and never leave them unattended.
- > Dispose of cigarette butts safely; ensure they are completely extinguished before placing in a waste bin.
- > Open fires can be dangerous; keep a bucket of water or sand and a shovel close by.
- > Don't leave glass bottles in woodland – sunlight shining through the glass can start a fire.
- > If you see a fire in the countryside, call the Fire & Rescue Service immediately.

Remember, if a fire starts, dial 999 and ask for the Fire & Rescue Service.

For further information phone NIFRS HQ 028 9266 4221 or visit [www.nifrs.org](http://www.nifrs.org)

## Register with Social Value NI

Social Value is about maximising the social, economic and environmental benefits through the public procurement process. Ultimately, this allows Government Departments and their stakeholders to find new and far reaching methods to deliver on the outcomes of the Programme for Government.

<https://biteable.com/watch/3839349/057567cda04300a577b20688fe969067>

The Social Value NI website offers the public, private and third sectors a suite of bespoke resources, training modules and model procurement documentation to ensure consistency of approach

while allowing public bodies, and their suppliers, to retain flexibility in the delivery of the 4 social value themes:

- Increasing secure employment and skills
- Building ethical and resilient supply chains
- Delivering zero carbon
- Promoting Well-being

Your organisation may be able to benefit from contractors working in your area – all you have to do is register as a broker here: <https://socialvalueni.org/brokers/>



# Consultations

## Draft Equality Scheme

The Executive Office

[Consultation on The Executive Office Draft Equality Scheme | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 11<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## Changes to the Concessionary Fares Scheme

Department for Infrastructure Public Transport Policy Division

[Consultation on changes to the Concessionary Fares Scheme | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## Future Operational Protocol to Assess the Impacts of Air Pollution on the Natural Environment - A Call for Evidence

Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Ammonia and Nutrients Policy Branch

[Future Operational Protocol to Assess the Impacts of Air Pollution on the Natural Environment - A Call for Evidence | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023

## Provision of Free Period Products

The Executive Office Equality, Policy & Legislation Team

[Provision of Free Period Products: Public Consultation - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

Closing date 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023

---

# Policy and Practice Focus

## Tenant empowerment is the way forward for social housing



by Sheenagh McNally

### About the author:

*Sheenagh has worked in housing and community development for over 30 years after graduating from the University of Ulster with a BSc in Social Policy & Housing Studies. She joined Supporting Communities (formerly NI Tenants Action Project) in 1992, having previously worked for a Local Authority in England as a Housing Officer.*

*Sheenagh has since held many positions within Supporting Communities, working closely with tenants, communities, and social housing providers, empowering them to make participation a meaningful and effective two-way process.*

*Now, as the Head of Corporate Services, Sheenagh has put Supporting Communities on the map as the tenant participation expert working to raise the standard of engagement for all tenants across the island of Ireland.*

The housing crisis sweeping across this island is not only a wake-up call to our governments but also an opportunity for us to recalibrate our attitude towards social housing. In the past social housing has been looked down upon as a tenure of last resort for the financially unstable or less fortunate, but now it is time to change that outdated perception and see it as an opportunity for active, involved tenants to create the kind of vibrant, sustainable communities we'd all like to live in.

With rising housing costs exceeding many household

incomes, fewer people can afford to buy a home or rent privately. Social housing is starting to be seen more widely as an attractive alternative, even as a tenure of choice for its long-term stability. We must recognise that in addition to being an affordable place to live, social housing presents an opportunity to build places where people are invested in their surroundings and feel a sense of community.

For this to work, however, it is imperative that those living in social housing have a real say in what happens. Residents must have the opportunity to be

part of the decision-making process of their landlord, where they can suggest changes and make their voices heard on issues that affect them directly. The involvement of residents in the business of housing ensures that policies and practices are attuned to the needs of the people who live there - something that cannot be achieved by landlords or policymakers alone.

Tenant engagement is the key to making this possible. By providing residents with the tools and resources to actively participate in the governance of their communities, social housing can be transformed into a space that residents are proud to call home. This approach can not only improve the quality of life for tenants but also promote sustainable practices that benefit the wider community and the environment.

At the first-ever [All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference](#), held on 13 June, Colm McDaid, CEO of Supporting Communities, challenged the assembly of social housing providers, tenants, and policymakers present, to take their tenant participation efforts further.

“We cannot rest on our laurels”, he declared. “There is always a ‘next level’ for tenant participation. Until we can honestly say that tenants are genuinely empowered to have more involvement and control over all aspects of their housing and live in empowered communities, our work is not done.” The conference, the first of its kind for Ireland, featured experts, practitioners, and tenants with a shared goal of increasing the effectiveness of tenant engagement. We heard from a range of housing providers at all stages of the ‘ladder of involvement’. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who, in

partnership with Supporting Communities, has been a pioneer in tenant engagement for over 40 years, gave the opening presentation detailing the work of the [Housing Community Network](#), the largest tenant engagement structure of its kind, made up of over 500 community groups across Northern Ireland. The conference also heard from housing associations that are just getting started but who are committed to taking tenant participation to the board level, such as the event’s headline sponsor, Circle VHA. Several landlords featured presentations from their tenants who spoke about their personal circumstances and reasons for getting involved, which really hit home with the audience.

The keynote address from Lesley Baird, former CEO of TPAS Scotland, assured the audience that tenant participation is both the right thing to do AND the smart thing to do for everyone involved and gave ample evidence of the success communities have had in Scotland.

In his closing remarks of the day, Colm McDaid issued a challenge to the room. “New levels around empowerment and citizenship are happening elsewhere”, he declared. “I would like to see how we can enable that here by creating new legislation in the Republic of Ireland and by refreshing and improving existing legislation in Northern Ireland. I would love to see the island of Ireland become the benchmark for tenant engagement across these isles and, indeed, further afield.”

The time is right for change. Investing in social housing and tenant empowerment can build a more equitable society where everyone has the chance to contribute and thrive.

---

## Social housing challenges: A European perspective



**General Secretary of Housing Europe, Sorcha Edwards, outlines the top challenges for affordable non-profit housing tenures across Europe and globally.**

*This article appeared in Agenda NI magazine*

The first challenge, Edwards believes, is that of building public understanding of cost rental housing, so as to maximise engagement and interest in what she believes is a “potentially very promising” housing model, with her hope that “the European Regional Development Fund may be used to tackle vacancies”.

In Northern Ireland, the intermediate rents policy aims to reduce rent prices to 20 per cent below market value. In the Republic of Ireland, a similar policy, referred to as cost rental, aims to expand the amount of non-profit social housing. The differentiation in nomenclature by different organisations, Edwards outlines, can be a source of confusion for the public. “I think it is a misnomer to use the different terms like social housing, cost rental housing, general housing,

and general interest housing because there is a lot of language interference.

“What could be termed ‘limited-profit co-operative housing’ is actually cost rental; what is termed ‘co-operative housing’ in Switzerland is actually cost rental. All of these models are essentially housing that factors out the profit incentive.”

Explaining cost rental

“In many countries, you have non-profit finance providers who are backing the schemes,” Edwards states. “That could be a public bank, or public revolving funds. In Ireland, we do not have that and there is an urgent need to analyse the scope for non-

profit finance provision in terms of the proportion of subsidies and the proportion of non-profit finance. There also might be a difference in terms of the long-term obligation to reinvest any limits on the profits that the entities make. In other countries, there would also be strict auditing and regulation around the reinvestment of any profit.

“The most common issues are the cost of finance, the cost of land, and the pressure coming from unregulated private markets. You also have inflation and interest rates which are making it very difficult, as well as the lack of labour and the cost of construction. There is real pressure to innovate and bring down the price of construction. There is the challenge of competition for the land with private players.”

#### Wider European policy context

Edwards emphasises the importance of ensuring that the green agenda being pursued by the EU takes a holistic approach, being acutely aware of the needs of those on lower and middle incomes.

“The European Green Deal, if it is implemented correctly, can help us tackle energy poverty, and can lead to better housing conditions,” Edwards says. However, she warns that: “If the Green Deal is not implemented correctly, it could lead to undesirable and negative consequences. So it is vital that we get the balance right with all of this.”

A further challenge raised by Edwards is the lifting of the break on EU state aid rules, which was implemented over the Covid-19 pandemic. Amid this backdrop, she states the need for “a recognition of the real amount of public finance that is now needed to tackle the crises in housing and the climate” and that “we have clear political space and fiscal space to make that investment which is badly needed”. She also reiterates that spending in these areas must be characterised as an “investment, not a cost”.

*“We cannot allow the agenda on affordable housing to be set by the private sector.” General Secretary of Housing Europe, Sorcha Edwards*

“Green taxonomy and the growing impact of environmental and social governance in the financial sector are very important; we have to make sure that the social impact is in line with the constructive work being done on the ground. We cannot allow the agenda on affordable housing to be set by the private sector.”

Emphasising the three key metrics of affordability, availability and sustainability, Edwards again

emphasises the need for a balanced policy approach. “We have to go green, but we have to go green in an inclusive fashion,” she states, adding: “We are constantly bringing together this benchmarking of systems, looking at what tools countries have to tackle the crisis, and how housing systems are equipped to tackle the type of societal challenges that we have.”

#### European examples



Edwards summarises the policy approaches taken by the governments of the Netherlands and Portugal.

“The Dutch Government has proposed quite a strong intervention in the private rented market. This is now being debated in Dutch courts. They will step in and reduce rents according to a points system linked to the quality of the homes. They are also looking at reducing short-term tenancies; something that was introduced in 2016 intended as a way to increase the speed of supply; it did not work out that way. Now, they are looking back to have permanent tenancies.”

In Portugal, meanwhile, Edwards explains how the Portuguese Government is intervening “to stop the golden visa scheme and to increase the pressure to bring vacant homes back into use”.

She concludes by outlining the challenges of ensuring that government policy is consistent with the needs of low and middle income earners, and how Housing Europe is considering these factors in its research.

“We are examining the social impact of having a strong limited profit sector because they can push the issue there. It can be issues like circularity, making sure biodiversity does not suffer from retrofitting, looking at how we can combine approaches, and bringing stock back into use.”

# Publications

## Live Here Love Here is Northern Ireland's largest civic pride programme



It's about loving where you live... and feeling empowered to take positive environmental action. Examples include: creating a community vegetable patch, organising a beach clean or starting up a tool swap scheme.

Create your profile [here](#) and join us in doing something positive for your community today.

Sign up for the e-bulletin here; [Live Here Love Here - Show your support](#)

---



Catch up on what's been happening at the Board in [Policing Matters July 2023 | Northern Ireland Policing Board \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](#) and the Chief Constable's Report to the Policing Board June 2023 is available at; [chief-constables-report-northern-ireland-policing-board 0.pdf \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](#)



The Environmental news bulletin is available at [ENRA-March-2023.pdf \(nienvironmentlink.org\)](#). For other NIEL publications and events, go to; [www.nienvironmentlink.org](#)

---



Please click the link below to access the latest news-letter for PCSPs which highlights local events and initiatives; [PCSP Projects coming to Life | Policing and Community Safety Partnerships \(pcsp.org\)](#)



RCN produces a range of publications including Rural Brief, a regular update of news and views affecting rural communities as well as Consultation Responses and Policy updates. A range of RCN publications is available at [Publications Archive - Rural Community Network](#)



# Events

## Meet the Fundraising Regulator - In Person

14 September 2023 - 10.30am to 1.00pm

This session in NICVA with Fundraising Regulator is an opportunity to hear more about their work, the guidance they provide and how they can support you. It is also a chance to hear about their upcoming review of the Code of Fundraising Practice.



At this engagement event with the Fundraising Regulator on 14 September you can find out more about its role and the [Code of Fundraising Practice](#) which sets the standards for all charitable fundraising in Northern Ireland, England and Wales.

The Fundraising Regulator is currently [reviewing the Code](#) to ensure it provides an effective regulatory framework now and in the future. Chief Executive, Gerald Oppenheim, and Head of Policy, Paul Winyard, will talk about their plans for the coming months and share with you how you can have your say during the consultation process this autumn.

The event is open to anyone with an interest in charitable fundraising, from those who are new to fundraising, or to more experienced fundraising professionals. It is for those organisations who are already registered with the Fundraising Regulator as well as organisations that are not - everyone is welcome.

The event will end with a networking lunch.

To register go to; [Meet the Fundraising Regulator - In Person | NICVA](#)

---

## Let's Talk IRL: Meeting the Needs of Children From Diverse Backgrounds



Tuesday 3rd October 2023 at 7.00pm

230b Belmont Road, Belfast, BT4 2AW

Within Barnardo's Fostering NI service, 25% of the children in our care come from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, including those with Eastern European heritage or from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

During this in-person meeting, we will discuss the ways we are aiming to meet the needs of BAME children and young people in our care. We'll be reflecting on cultural competence in the context of fostering at a time when we are managing a shortfall in carers from diverse backgrounds.

We will discuss the kinds of fostering we offer: short term, long term and fostering-to-adopt. We will also be talking about the kinds of children we find placements for, the application process and the support you can expect along the way.

We need foster carers and adopters from all walks of life so that when a child comes to our service, we can find the right family for them.

Could it be you? for more information, go to; [Let's Talk IRL: Meeting the Needs of Children From Diverse Backgrounds Tickets, Tue 3 Oct 2023 at 19:00 | Eventbrite](#)

Please do register if you intend on joining us so we have numbers for refreshments, thank you.

# Training

## HCN Members Forums Digital Drop-In Sessions

Are you a member of the [Housing Community Network](#)?

If you attend Central, Area, Regional, District Level meetings or Inter-Agencies, you will soon have access to all of your forum resources online!

Carla Mullholand, our new digital inclusion officer, will be holding regular drop-in sessions on Thursday afternoons from 1.30pm - 2.30pm to help members get signed up and use the online forums.

Not to be confused with the tenant portal, where you can manage aspects of your tenancy by signing in on the Housing Executive website, the collaboration portal or 'HCN Online Forums' are designed to create a simple online environment for sharing files, online chat, discussions, managing meetings and associated papers and assigning tasks or 'to-do' lists.

The online forums will improve the network's ability to collaborate by removing the need to email papers, minutes, and meeting invitations which individuals can quickly lose. Instead, all the forum's documents and discussions will be stored in an organised way online where members can access them whenever needed.

Read more [about Carla and her new role](#) in assisting the HCN to gain the digital skills needed to participate online.

### Register for these session

These session will be held on Zoom. To register for any of these sessions, please [fill in this form](#).

If you have any questions, contact Carla Mulholland at [carla@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:carla@supportingcommunities.org).



---

## Free Digital Skills Training this August for HCN Members

Are you a Housing Community Network member who wants to improve your digital skills this summer? We've got you covered!

Carla Mulholland, our HCN Digital Inclusion Officer, is offering a 4-week online course to get you skilled up quickly. Join her for all four sessions or pick and choose the ones you like!

The course will run on Wednesday mornings at 10 am throughout August for one hour each on Zoom.

### Course Topics:

**Week 1:** Using Google 9 August, 10 am - 11 am  
Topics will include how to use Google Search, Google Lens, and Gmail.

**Week 2:** Downloading Apps 16 August, 10 am -11 am  
Make the most of apps on your phone or tablet! We will look specifically at the HCN Members Forum App.

**Week 3:** Online Safety 23 August, 10 am -11 am  
Keep your information safe online. Learn to use and store secure passwords for all your online accounts.

**Week 4:** Social Media 30 August, 10 am -11 am  
Does your community group use social media to promote your work? We'll cover the basics!



To take part in any or all of these sessions, email [carla@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:carla@supportingcommunities.org) and tell her your HCN group name and which dates you'd like to attend. Is there something extra you'd like her to cover during one of these sessions? Let her know!

## Belfast Maritime Festival – Sail Training opportunities



Belfast  
City Council

The Belfast Maritime Festival makes a welcome return to Belfast this September and as part of the celebrations there are a number of Sail Training opportunities aboard one of the vessels, the Brian Boru.

The ship and its crew will be undertaking a number of voyages from Sunday 3 September to Wednesday 13th September 2023.

These voyages are heavily subsidised by Belfast City Council and all applicants must live in the Belfast City Council catchment area.

Date	Voyage	Route	Start	Finish	Duration
Sunday 3 September to Thursday 7 September	Newry to Belfast Young people aged 18 to 26	Embark at Newry, then sail to Isle of Man and the Irish Sea.  Disembark at Belfast.	Depart at 10am	Arrive at 5pm	Five days  Cost £80 pp
Monday 11 September to Wednesday 13 September	Belfast to Dún Laoghaire Young people aged 18 to 26	Embark at Belfast, then sail to Isle of Man and the Irish Sea.  Disembark at Dún Laoghaire.	Depart at 10am	Arrive at 5pm	Three days  Cost £40 pp

For more information and to get involved, email [sailtrainingprogram@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:sailtrainingprogram@belfastcity.gov.uk)

## Volunteer Now Training Sessions in August 2023

### Volunteer Induction, Support and Supervision

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 10:00 am- 1:00 pm

#### Online Standard Course, fee from £30 +VAT

What do you need to include in a volunteer induction? How do you make it visually appealing? Have you considered moving volunteer induction online?

Do you value your volunteers, recognise they have other commitments, give them a voice?

We will look at good practice and how we ensure we are being proactive and not reactive to our volunteers. We will also look at new ways to carry out Support and Supervision remotely as well as face to face.

This session will also examine why Support and Supervision is important for volunteers and your organisation.

Find out more and book your places here – <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training/courses-scheduled/>



## Attention 16/17 Year Old School Leavers...Maximize Your Potential with Bryson!

For over 30 years Bryson have successfully managed and delivered a wide range of vocational qualifications, training and employment programmes for those who do not want to return to school.

Bryson is a leading provider of a range of employment and training initiatives, designed for school leavers, young adults and those living with long term unemployment.

Our premises are located in Belfast City Centre.

Bryson's 16 years+ vocational training opportunities focus on providing relevant vocational qualifications and the development of key practical skills to enable learners to progress along the chosen path of their future career.

RECEIVE AN AMAZON VOUCHER WHEN YOU REGISTER YOUR DETAILS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

RECEIVE AN AMAZON VOUCHER WHEN YOU REGISTER YOUR DETAILS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023



**Bryson Energy**  
**OPEN DAYS**

AT STOCKMAN HOUSE  
39-43 BEDFORD STREET | BELFAST | BT2 7EE

ARE YOU AGED 16/17 YEARS OF AGE  
ARE YOU A SCHOOL LEAVER

OPEN DAYS ARE ON

24TH AUG 10.00AM-4.00PM  
25TH AUG 10.00AM-4.00PM  
29TH AUG TO 1ST SEPT 10.00AM-5.00PM

BRICKLAYING | BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
CHILDCARE | HAIRDRESSING | IT | JOINERY | RETAIL  
PLAYWORK | CATERING | HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

@Bryson Training and Employability    
**07730 527528**



**LOOK AT WHAT YOU CAN GET!**

- **£40 WEEKLY EMA (NON MEANS TESTED)**
- **TRAVEL ALLOWANCE**
- **BONUSES**
- **WEEKLY AND MONTHLY DRAWS**
- **EMERGENCY HELP WITH UTILITY BILLS AND FOOD**
- **VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**
- **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES & MORE!**

For more information contact the Recruitment Team on **07730 527528**

@Bryson Training and Employability  

The 16 years+ vocational pathways are designed for individual abilities and include real work experience with an employer.

To find out more information about Post 16 vocational pathways with Bryson or to enrol contact Nuala on Tel: 07730 527528 or Email: [nuala.mcstravick@brysonenergy.org](mailto:nuala.mcstravick@brysonenergy.org)

Or Register your interest through: <https://tinyurl.com/Brysonregistrationform>

# BRYSON MAXIMISE EMPLOYMENT

Unlock your potential with our Employability Service!

Are you currently looking for opportunities to enhance your skills and get back into the workforce? Look no further! Our comprehensive employability service is here to empower you and help you succeed on your journey towards sustainable employment.

## WHAT WE OFFER

### WEEKLY ALLOWANCE

As part of our commitment to your success, we provide a generous £15 per week allowance to support you during your employability journey.

### FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR EXTERNAL TRAINING

Take advantage of this opportunity to gain industry-recognised certifications and enhance your employability by gaining the skills employers want.

FREE COURSES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU TO INCREASE YOUR CONFIDENCE WITH NUMERACY.

## BENEFITS OF JOINING OUR PROGRAMME

### TAILORED SUPPORT

Whether you need assistance with job searching, CV writing, interview preparation or career counselling, we've got you covered.

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Through workshops, training sessions and online resources, you'll have the opportunity to enhance your skills to excel in any workplace.

### ONGOING SUPPORT

Even after you have found employment, we continue to offer guidance and assistance.



SCAN ME!



HOW TO GET STARTED

Joining our programme is simple.

Just contact us @ [employment@brysonenergy.org](mailto:employment@brysonenergy.org)

or Telephone: **07872 130312** We will guide you through the application process.

## Housing Rights Training

### Sustaining Tenancies in the Private Rented Sector

Location: Online

Date: 9th August 2023

Time: 10.00am to 1.00pm



Fees: *Voluntary and Community from £56.00 / £70.00*  
*Public and Statutory from £100.00 / £125.00*

This course will ensure attendees have the knowledge and skills to help sustain tenancies in the private rented sector.

This course will help you support clients who are having problems in keeping their private rented home. It will inform private renters on their rights and responsibilities. You will learn about possible resolutions to help clients sustain their tenancy.

What we will cover:

- support and protections available to private renters
- renters rights and responsibilities
- rent arrears and affordability
- changes in legislation affecting tenants
- disrepair

### Financial Support to Address Housing Poverty

Location: Online, Zoom

Date: Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Time: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

We developed this course in response to problems people are facing with growing poverty and the cost of living crisis.

It will cover the various forms of financial support available to help people alleviate poverty and keep their homes.

What we'll cover :

- forms of discretionary support

- financial assistance & eligibility
- changes to Discretionary Housing Payments
- changes to Support for Mortgage Interest
- charitable help and other cost savings available

Who should attend:

- social housing sector staff
- private landlords and agents
- advice agencies

For more information on Housing Rights Training, courses and seminars, go to; [Housing Rights Training](#)

# Supporting Communities Training



## Understanding 'Social Value'? (Online Session) Wednesday 30th September 2023 from 10.00 am to 11.00 am

Join us online to get a better understanding of what we mean when we talk about 'Social Value' and 'Impact Measurement'.

This session will help you to:

- Recognise the importance of measuring your social value
- Understand the jargon associated with impact measurement
- Learn about the tools available to use to measure your impact

### Register your place

This session will be held on Zoom. To register, [please fill in this form](#).

***Please note, this session is designed for community groups in Northern Ireland.***

---

## Writing Successful Funding Applications (Online Session)

Wednesday 16th August 2023 from 10.00 am to 11.00 am  
Wednesday 20th September 2023 from 10.00 am to 11.00 am

Join us for this short session looking at planning and completing a successful funding application.

Learners will gain:

- an understanding of the key processes of a successful funding application
- increased confidence when approaching funders
- enhanced fundraising skills and knowledge

### Register your place

To register for this course, [please fill in this form](#).



***Please note, this session is designed for community groups in Northern Ireland.***

# Funding

## Food Hardship Grant for Community Organisations

The Department for Communities has made available hardship funding to local authorities to support the most vulnerable affected by the cost of living crisis. Council is working with partners in the Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group to support borough wide services to deal with the increased demand for support through a range of measures.

The purpose of this Grant Programme is to support small localised constituted community and voluntary organisations that are currently supporting residents experiencing food insecurity, and that need additional resources to cope with the increased demand for their services.

The Programme will assist organisations to support residents through the direct provision of food, hygiene and household essentials through established community food projects such as community food pantries and cupboards.

Applications are invited from constituted community and voluntary organisations that have a track record of working directly with people experiencing disadvantage. These include:

- Food pantries/ cupboards;
- Projects that redistribute food, such as community fridges, to those that need it most in local communities;
- Holiday hunger schemes.

Only those applications which provide a targeted response in relation to food poverty interventions will be considered.

This scheme is for localised food insecurity projects; a separate scheme will operate for larger registered foodbanks that provide regional coverage and so they should not apply through this programme. Due to the one off nature of this funding the grant cannot be used to support the set up of new food projects. That grant is opened on a rolling basis and the fund will close as soon as the available funds are allocated. Eligible organisations can apply for grants of up to £3,000 towards 100% of eligible costs. Funded activities can take place up to 31st March 2024.



**Causeway  
Coast & Glens  
Borough Council**

Funding should be used for food items and other

household and hygiene essentials. A maximum of 10% of the grant awarded can be used for administration costs.

Projects must demonstrate how they will address all of the following 3 objectives:

- Support residents who are experiencing financial difficulty through the provision of food. This may also include hygiene or household essentials;
- Ensure that the support is targeted at those most vulnerable and in need of support;
- Ensure that any food intervention is linked with other support services by signposting or referral (such as benefits and money advice; energy efficiency advice etc.)

You are strongly advised to speak to a member of the Community Development team before applying to ensure that your project is eligible.

The team can be contacted as follows:

Limavady, Benbradagh & Ballymoney -  
Catherine Farrimond  
07846 099916

[catherine.farrimond@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.farrimond@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

Coleraine, Bann, Causeway & The Glens -  
Lisa Harris

[lisa.harris@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.harris@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

Neighbourhood Renewal areas in Coleraine &  
Limavady -

Jenni Archer  
07892 764937

[jenni.archer@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:jenni.archer@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

For detailed guidance notes and application form please apply here:- <https://grants.ccgbcapps.com/>

**Closing date is 31st August 2023**



## Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) Small Grants Programme

Local community and voluntary groups are invited to apply for funding from the Ards and North Down PCSP's small grants programme for 2023-2024. Applications will be considered from constituted groups wishing to deliver projects that will address levels of Anti-Social Behaviour within the Borough and improve community safety.

Funding is available for projects to local groups, organisations and partnerships wishing to undertake interventions to address;

- anti-social behaviour
- substance abuse in public spaces
- criminal damage
- disruption
- nuisance
- street drinking

Projects should encourage positive action to enhance

a positive lifestyle and priority will be given to projects targeting ASB hotspots in the Borough.

Closing date for applications is 4.00pm Friday 18 August 2023

Please see below word and PDF versions of the Grant Application Form 2023-24

- [PCSP ASB Small Grant Application Pack 2023-24 \[Word\]](#) (DOC 760 KB)
- [PCSP ASB Small Grant Application Pack 2023-24 \[PDF\]](#) (PDF 391 KB)

For more information and to apply, please visit [PCSP grants | Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)



---

## The UK Fund to launch in August

The UK Fund is one of our first significant commitments as part of our new strategy, 'It starts with community.'

We're looking to fund organisations that want to do more to help communities come together and help make us a better-connected society.

Your project must either work across the UK, or be able to inform, influence or scale across the UK.

We want to fund projects that:

- strengthen relationships between people whose experiences of life have not been the same. For example, relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds, generations, occupations or geographies
- create connections between online and offline worlds
- help make sure people from all backgrounds can shape the future of their communities.

We'll fund ambitious projects that aim to create longer-term, transformational change. We'll take an equity-based approach to tackle inequality. This means we'll fund where there's greatest need.



You can read our blog for [examples of projects we're likely to fund.](#)

**Area:** You must either work across the UK, or be able to inform, influence or scale across the UK.

**Funding size:** £500,000 to £5m

**Length of grants:** We expect most projects to run from 2 to 5 years. We may consider funding for up to 10 years.

Application deadline - Ongoing

For more information, please visit [The UK Fund | The National Lottery Community Fund \(tnlcommunityfund.org.uk\)](#)





## Funding Opportunity for Healthy Eating Projects

The Community Food Initiatives (CFI) is a healthy eating programme funded by **safefood**. The programme runs over a three year cycle (2022-24) and its purpose is to provide people with the knowledge and skills to provide healthy food options for themselves and their families. **safefood**, as a North / South body established under the Good Friday Agreement, provides CFI funding to organisations in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. The programme is managed by SECAD Partnership on behalf of **safefood**.

### CFI at Home

**safefood** is inviting organisations who are not currently involved in the CFI to apply for funding to deliver an online project, in their own local area, that meets the criteria of the CFI at Home Programme. The purpose of the CFI at Home Programme is to support families in their own homes to develop their cooking skills and healthy eating habits. Projects could include all or some of the following elements:

- Learning how to prepare & cook a recipe
- Attending an online cookery session
- Online support groups for sharing ideas and tips
- Online interactive talks delivered by a dietitian or registered nutritionist

Examples of online projects that were delivered during 2020 and 2021 can be found at this link: [CFI Booklet 2019-21](#)

### safefood Resources

The resources needed to plan and deliver a CFI at Home project can be found on the **safefood** website at [www.safefood.net/cfi-hub](http://www.safefood.net/cfi-hub) and include:

- 101 Square Meals Recipe Book
- Food Pyramid and The Eatwell Guide
- **safefood** START campaign
- Handwashing
- Family Meal Planning
- Food Safety
- Healthy Lunchboxes



- Kitchen Skills

### Funding

Interested organisations can apply for funding up to a maximum of **€2,000** or **£1,720** to deliver a project in their local area.

### Applicant Organisation Criteria

Organisations must:

- Be community-led organisations with a legal status and appropriate governance structure
- Be experienced in the management of public funds which support social inclusion initiatives
- Currently employ and manage full time professionals with community development experience
- Have experience of working with the target group identified
- Be supporting other broader community initiatives through their work
- Provide supports across communities irrespective of age, race or creed

### Preparing an Application

Please contact SECAD Partnership for details on how to apply for the funding at:

Sinéad Conroy  
SECAD Partnership CLG

T: 00 353 (0)87 354 3606  
E: [sconroy@secad.ie](mailto:sconroy@secad.ie)

### Closing date for application

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis up to and including Friday, 16th September 2023. As funding is limited, interested organisations are advised to apply as soon as possible. All activities must be completed by Sunday, 5th November 2023.

## Power NI's Brighter Communities

Our Brighter Communities programme energises innovative and emerging community groups, teams and projects with £1000 of funding awarded each month. Since 2018 we have contributing over £40,000 to our communities and we are still going!

Applications for the month are now open, and we welcome all communities to apply using the form below. Successful applicants will be contacted using the details provided and will have 72 hours to respond and accept the £1,000 funding. All applications must comply with the Brighter Communities terms & conditions.

[Brighter Communities | Community Funding | Power NI](#)



## Small Grants Programme 2023-2024

The Small Grants Programme has been set up to allow young people from Education Authority Youth Service (EAYS) registered and verified groups to apply for grants for projects to Support the Growth and Participation of young people.

The Small Grants Programme for 2023-2024 is to enable young people to apply for funding to support other young people in their communities to:

- Promote youth participation, leadership and volunteering
- Build and develop life skills

This year, there are two options. Groups can apply for a maximum of £500 for a one-off event or a maximum of £1500 for a group work programme with multiple sessions. All projects must demonstrate young people's involvement in planning and delivery.

**The closing date for applications is 20th October 2023.**

Any applications received on or before 4th August will

be assessed and notified by the end of August 2023.



Any applications received after 4th August will be assessed and notified by the end of November 2023.

All projects must be completed by 31st March 2024. If you would like to make an application in the 2023-2024 programme, please ensure your organisation is registered with the EA Youth Service and have received a verification visit. Registration is open all year round and details on how to register can be found [here](#).

Youth Service: Small Grants Programme  
Education Authority  
Grahamsbridge Road  
Dundonald  
BT16 2HS

Email: [sgp@eani.org.uk](mailto:sgp@eani.org.uk)  
Phone: 02890566429

## Tesco Stronger Starts

Giving thousands of children a healthier, active start in life

Tesco Stronger Starts supports schools to apply for extra financial help they might need to provide healthy food and activities that boost young people's mental and physical wellbeing.

Tesco Stronger Starts supports thousands of local community projects and good causes across the UK.

The scheme is open to all schools, registered charities and not-for-profit organisations, with priority given to projects that provide food and support to young people.

Examples of eligible applications with a focus on food security, children and young people could be:

- A school providing pupils with food for breakfast clubs or snacks throughout the day.
- A school wanting to buy equipment for outdoor or indoor activities.



- A school wanting to develop a food growing area.
- A school supporting an after school club.
- A voluntary organisation working with families to run a food bank.
- An organisation addressing holiday hunger.
- A healthy eating project that supports families to cook healthy meals on a budget.
- A Brownie or Scout group needing funding for new play equipment or activities.

For more information and to apply, please visit [Apply for a grant – Tesco Stronger Starts \(tescocommunitygrants.org.uk\)](#)



## Community Mentoring & Grants Programme

Elevate provides a unique opportunity for community organisations to put their collective learning on health inequalities into practice in a supportive and encouraging environment. One of the elements of Elevate is the Community Mentoring & Grants programme.

Groups who are successful in the Elevate Mentoring and Grants Programme receive:

- Direct support for your group from a mentor organisation
- Networking sessions, coming together with other Elevate mentee Groups
- A grant of up to £5,000 to implement a community-based project following identification of local needs and solutions.

We have partnered with six organisations that demonstrate excellent community development practice and a solid commitment to tackling health inequalities, to deliver the mentoring on behalf of Elevate. These are Mid & East Antrim Agewell Partnership, County Down Rural Community Network, ARC Healthy Living Centre, and Supporting Communities. These mentors will each support groups by providing them with direct mentoring sessions supporting them to build their community development practice as a group, and networking sessions where groups have the chance to come together with other Elevate mentee groups. The networking sessions allow local organisations to make connections, build networks, share information and ideas and support each other in their work.



Community  
Development  
Capacity Building  
Programme

Successful groups also receive a grant of up to £5000 to enable them to use a community development approach to deliver a project aimed at reducing health inequalities in their locality or for the target group they support.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) – funded Elevate Community Mentoring and Grants programme 2023-24 is NOW OPEN. The programme supports groups who could benefit from mentoring and funding (up to £5,000) to deliver a project which uses community development to tackle health inequalities.

**The closing date for applications is 4:00pm on Monday 28th August 2023.**

This year, we will consider all applications, and particularly welcome applications from groups who are in local areas with previously low uptake (Lisburn and Castlereagh, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Lisanelly Omagh and Crossmaglen areas) and groups who support people from LGBTQIA+, BAME, and other under-represented groups.

For more information and to apply, please visit [Community Mentoring & Grants Programme - Elevate NI](#)

## Small Woodland Grant Scheme

The [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)'s Small Woodland Grant Scheme is now open and will remain open until 10pm on 31 August 2023.

Almost all woodlands in Northern Ireland are planted with some form of grant assistance. The Forest Service encourages the creation of new woodlands and the management of existing woodlands by providing grant aid towards the cost of the work.

Forests for Our Future programme aims to plant 18 million trees or 9,000 hectares of new woodland over the next 10 years to help our environment and economy. Grant funding for creating new woodlands will be via the Small Woodland Grant Scheme or the Forest Expansion Scheme.



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working,  
active landscape valued by everyone

The Small Woodland Grant Scheme is specifically for new native woodland planting of 0.20 hectares and larger. It provides a fixed area based payment for woodland establishment, a fencing grant and where eligible annual premia for a 10-year period.

Closing date: 31 August 2023 at 10pm

For more information and to apply [bit.ly/3SJR418](https://bit.ly/3SJR418)



Tel: 028 2564 5676

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

[info@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunities.org)

