



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2020/21

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

www.nb-housing.org

Signature:

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2020 and March 2021

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1 In 2020-21, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

Introduction to NB Housing

NB Housing is a registered social housing association with charitable status. It is governed by a voluntary Board of 7 members. Responsible for effective governance of the Association the Board comprises of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and 3 further members.

The Chief Executive is responsible to the Board of Management for the operational management of the association as a corporate body and therefore will ensure that the association fully complies with the Equality Scheme.

At the end of 2020/21 reporting period we had a team of 42 staff to include a Senior Management team comprised of Chief Executive, Director of Development & Property Management and Director of Housing Management & Corporate Services. Our 5-line managers include the Finance Manager, Housing Manager, Foyer Scheme Manager, Development Manager and Maintenance Manager, who manage teams of officers, administrative, support and caretaking staff.

NB Housing has a clear mission and vision to commit to providing outstanding social housing for those in need. We continue to aspire to a strong promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations for all prospective and current tenants, residents and staff.

Our Mission

NB Housing provides affordable rents and homes that build vibrant neighbourhoods and communities

Our Vision

To lead physical, social and economic regeneration through outstanding social housing

Despite the impact and challenges COVID has presented though out the reporting year, we have continued to grow our stock and provide homes for those on need. Stock levels increased from 1049 homes in 19/20 to 1082 at the end of this financial year. Whilst the majority of our stock is located in north and west Belfast we continue to expand outside the city in areas such as Ballygowan, Ballymena, Newtownards, Carrickfergus, Coalisland and Donaghadee.

In the final year of our Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and Annual Business Plan 2020, our mission continues in the provision of excellent social housing. We continue to accommodate across the Section 75 groups.

Our current stock portfolio of 1082 units accommodates for a variety of needs.

General Needs	950
Supported Housing	68
Sheltered Housing	64
Total	1082

Whilst the majority of housing we provide is for general needs and families we also provide accommodation and specific support groups. These are:

- Sheltered accommodation and support for the elderly at Holy Rood House
- Independent 55's and over in McCorry House providing one-bedroom apartments and support provided by our Tenant Support Officer.
- Homeless young people aged 18-25 at our Flax Foyer Scheme
- Accommodation for vulnerable families at Thorndale House in joint management with the Salvation Army
- Hostel accommodation in partnership with Rosemount Ltd for recovering alcohol dependent residents.

Examples of Key Policy and Service Delivery Developments throughout reporting period 2020/21:

Continuity of Service during Covid 19 pandemic

This reporting year found us all in very uncertain times with the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic resulting in lockdown measures in late March 2020. Government and Public Health Authority guidelines meant our offices closed while we planned for our staff to work from home. NB Housings' continuity business plan was swiftly implemented to ensure our tenants and residents were receiving services as far as possible during lockdown.

With little knowledge about the virus and its impact on our communities, risk assessments were completed manage our workflow in as safe a manner as possible. Office staff were equipped with mobile phones and laptops for home working, while our caretaking team and support staff continued to provide services on site in Flax Foyer and our sheltered schemes, Holyrood House and McCorry House. External support services and visitors to schemes were restricted as per guidelines while staff provided one to one support over the phone. Staffing rotas were amended to limit contact on site, and to accommodate for those who were shielding. The wearing of PPE and social distancing measures were, and continue to be, implemented.

To reduce the risk of transmission in the early days of the pandemic, we were instructed to suspend allocations to our general needs' properties. This directive was lifted in July 2020. All maintenance work in properties, with the exception of emergencies, was also suspended until August 2020.

We were able to continue works in our new developments and completed handover of 24 x 2- and 3-bedroom houses at Forthriver Road/Way and an apartment complex consisting of 9 homes on Hopefield Avenue in Belfast.

NB Housing were fortunate to be in a position of not having to furlough any staff during this period. Recruitment also continued using zoom and commenced 8 new staff during the reporting year.

At the end of the reporting period, and following two lockdown periods, our offices remained closed and limited staff had returned to the office to carry out essential tasks and support services were ongoing.

Communication

As our offices were closed during this pandemic year it was of paramount importance that communication with our tenants and residents was maintained. Unfortunately, our tenants' face to face meetings were suspended as we were committed to reducing risk of transmission and maintaining social distancing. However, we ensured our tenants were aware that we could still be contacted through text, telephone and via our website.

Tenant Participation is a plan to increase tenant involvement in the delivery of social housing services and the decisions that are made about these services. Our Tenant Participation Strategy 2017/20 was extended for this reporting year. The new 2021/24 strategy aims to improve the quality of social housing services for tenants and landlords, by encouraging partnership and discussion between the organisation, tenants, service users, local communities and authorities. Our plan is to build on our previous strategy to ensure that Tenant Participation becomes an integral part of all the work of the association.

Tenant Participation events in 2020/21 have been limited due to lockdown restrictions however we made some delivery changes to ensure this communication and engagement was ongoing. Actions to promote communication and feedback included:

Online Contact: Meetings were suspended as were normally conducted in group attendance. Our Community Development and Tenant Support Officer commenced a "What's App" group with tenants to offer opportunity to engage. Zoom was also introduced for group contact so any scheme or focus group meetings could be held online.

Our tenant texting service is ongoing and has proved successful as it provides immediate contact with tenants who may not have made contact in the past. This is a key improvement in communication with tenants as it ensures two-way engagement to ensure service delivery.

Annual Tenant Satisfaction Surveys: Our 2020/21 survey was circulated as per previous years and provides feedback on how we are performing and any potential opportunity to improve service delivery.

A summary of key satisfactions results for the reporting year is as follows:

Tenant Satisfaction Summary	2020/21
1. NB Housing overall service	84%
2. Rent represents good value	75%
3. Your accommodation	79%
4. Area/ location	74%
5. Service charges provide value for money	74%

Tenants Newsletters: Informing tenants of upcoming events, useful contacts, how the Association is performing etc is ongoing.

As part of our commitment to keeping tenants informed we produce a quarterly newsletter and an annual report to keep tenants informed of the performance of the Association. Information on useful topics is delivered in our quarterly newsletter. Topics include for example:

- Access to services offered by the Association and other useful links
- Campaigns
- Contents Insurance
- Debt advice
- Effective Recycling
- Emergency Repair contacts
- Health and Safety Issues e.g. Fire Safety, Gas Safety
- Housing or Tenancy Advice
- Information and tips from Consumer Council
- New Staff
- Notification of upcoming tenant engagement events
- Office operating hours
- Outcome prize draws etc
- Results Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Support signposting to Advice Space, North Belfast Advice Partnership, Ligonell Advice Partnership, Family Hubs

Examples of these publications can be accessed on our website www.nb-housing.org

Tenant Consultations: We ask for feedback on repairs and planned developments so that tenants have opportunity to inform the Association on how satisfied they are with their homes. This may lead to further improvements moving forward.

Tenant consultation and engagement is carried out when maintenance and development works are to be commenced. Once works are completed tenants are invited to provide feedback on the improvements.

Communication at NB Housing head office is aided with Loop service and our website provides a Browse aloud function for both text, volume adjustment and language translation to assist those with sight and hearing impairment and where English is not a first language. Tenants are also supported via Big Word and Flex Language Services in relation to translating tenancy documentation into their chosen language and interpretation services for any tenancy related communication.

Community & Tenant Engagement

2020/21 has seen a strong collaboration with other agencies in an effort to combat the challenges of COVID while delivering services. Our staff further developed ways to ensure tenants were provided with advice and assistance to manage their way through a pandemic. Lockdown meant residents and tenants were confined to shielding or isolating, furloughed from their work and subjected to reduced contact with family and friends.

Our Community Development and Tenant Support Officer worked closely with local agencies to support tenants who were particularly impacted. Some of these developments included:

- Use of technology and the ability to contact tenants remotely was an area we embraced as face to face contact was restricted. A *What's App* group was set up to communicate with tenants who had expressed an interest in becoming involved in our tenant focus groups.
- Within the reporting year we also provided Wi-Fi installation at our sheltered accommodation. With the aid of our Tenant Support Worker residents were able to interact with friends and family.
- In December 2020 we presented a successful application to Belfast City Council for a £1,000 grant for the purchase of 10 computer tablets. The tablets can be widely used by our tenants either in lockdown or as an aid to remote and extended communication and engagement. We further developed this initiative to promote participation in tenant forums/groups.
- Food for Life programme awarded NB Housing with £300 in funding for the delivery of the "Cook It" programme. Eight slow cookers were purchased and gifted to tenants to participate in this online cooking class. The classes were very productive and equipped participants with the knowledge of how to prepare a meal for the family for under £5.
- Family Support Hubs: One initiative that has been welcomed by families is a joint initiative with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Belfast City Council (BCC) who have been working to help provide families with essentials. This has been administered by the Sure Start programme and we have been working in partnership to deliver packs of mother and baby essentials worth over £100. We have also continued to work with North Belfast Area Partnership (NBAP) to deliver food parcels, butcher vouchers and fuel vouchers to families in need.
- NB Housing was also successful in our application for £600 funding to provide a soup session programme for families, this was also in partnership with the family support hub. The aim was to provide instruction and demonstration on making nutritional meals for under £5. This funding application was achieved through ongoing working partnerships with North Belfast Advice Partnership the Family Support Hubs and Residents

Groups. Tenants were provided with a blender and ingredients to make soup and took part in an online cooking demonstration.

- NB Housing participated in an initiative for the delivery of hot meals at discounted prices from a local café. With many tenants in lock down, Ardoyne Association in North Belfast set up the programme for NB Housing tenants. Tenants were provided with a code to avail of the delivery of the hot meal at a discounted price. Many of our elderly tenants participated in this offer over lockdown.
- We continue our interagency working and have been represented at the following group meetings throughout 2020/21. These meetings will consist of members of other housing associations, NIHE, local community workers, local councillors, advice sector, and tenant representatives etc. Some of the groups include:
 - ❖ Tenant Participation Practitioners Network (TPPN) meetings with Supporting Communities who have set up a 3-monthly forum for Housing Associations. The aim is that Housing Associations share good practice ideas in relation to Community Development and Tenant Participation.
 - ❖ Upper North Multi-Agency Meeting.
 - ❖ Glencairn Residents Group & Interagency group
 - ❖ Ligoneil Community Cohesion Group
 - ❖ North Belfast Advice Partnership: Providing advice on benefits, impact of welfare reform, housing issues, provision of food banks etc.

Supporting Young Homeless People: We work in partnership with many services providing support to our young residents at Flax Foyer. While a number of agencies' this year could only provide over the phone support due to lockdown, the latter part of the year saw services begin to open up and re engaging on a limited basis with one to one support. Some of these services included:



Daisy Project provides a drop-in facility at the Foyer for anyone who is seeking information/advice/counselling relating to Drugs or Alcohol misuse issues. This is a confidential service.



New Life Counselling provide information in relation to Mental Health to better understand mental health and get some practical ideas to help deal with any issues.



Bytes run a programme in conjunction with PWC and the Hummingbird Project in relation to Mental Health. Mentoring sessions have been operating on the phone.



Northern Ireland Youth Programme (NIYP) run a Relentless Change Project for 16-25-year olds who have a housing issue and want to create change.



The **Ashton Centre** provides support on the phone to residents who require assistance with CV writing, job applications, training etc



HYPE deliver advice for residents on sexual health. Due to Covid-19, this service delivered one to one sessions on the phone.



Food Cloud scheme with Lidl who provide donations of any unsold food to the Foyer. We also avail of local food banks and built up an emergency food supply for our young residents on site.

Community Safety

We have continued to engage a mobile security company for our apartment buildings to deter anti-social behaviour. Operating in areas of high deprivation and density, some of our tenant's experience incidents of antisocial behaviour (ASB). The security service provides a means of contact should ASB arise outside office hours. The service gives our tenants an ability to report incidents and also gives assurance that resolution is forthcoming to not only ensure their safety but safety within the immediate community.

We continue to maintain links with community police, local councillors, and encourage tenant liaison with our staff teams. Open communication with local outreach workers in hotspot areas has been invaluable as the focus is to encourage youths involved in anti-social behaviour to engage with youth clubs and divert this unwanted behaviour and promote good relations.

Within this reporting period, NB Housing received 93 complaints of antisocial behaviour, 71 of which were resolved.

Our Staff Team

At NB Housing we ensure our staff avail of Equality of Opportunity in all aspects of their working life. Key developments this reporting period include;

- **Recruitment and Selection:** Within the reporting year we recruited 8 new staff. Two positions were on a temporary basis to cover maternity leave and four to fill vacant positions. We also employed two additional Support Night staff for our Flax Foyer. *(A further recruit commenced after the reporting period)*
- We are an Equal Opportunity employer. From April 20 to March 21 we advertised a total of 9 posts, received 227 applications, shortlisted 55 applicants, interviewed 48 and filled all 9 positions.
- **Employee Assistance Programme:** Given the uncertain times during lockdown and ongoing pandemic, we engaged *Inspire Workplaces* to deliver an Employee assistance programme for all staff from May 2020. The programme offers support to staff who may have situations affecting their well-being for example stress, relationships, finance etc. The programme will deliver 24hr access to counselling

as well as advice and information for support. The service is provided at no cost to our staff.

- Investors in People: NB Housing was reassessed in June 2019 for reaccreditation in the 6th Generation Framework of Investors in People. The Association was awarded GOLD accreditation until 2022.
- Work Life Balance: Flexibility to staff working patterns was implemented during the reporting year as our staff were balancing home working and other responsibilities at home, e.g. childcare, schooling etc. due to lockdown.

Property Maintenance and Development

Tenant and residents' needs are addressed through a number of key service delivery improvements throughout the year. Our adaptations service continues to address physical needs of our tenants by involving multidisciplinary teams such as OTs, Social Workers, Support workers etc. and ensuring needs are met.

The Association completed 20 disability adaptations at a total investment value of £139,062.45. Works included, the provision of level access showers, hearing devices, stair lift, grab rails etc. This reporting year two homes were extended to include ground floor level access bathroom and bedroom accommodation for tenants with disability. Completed adaptation components included:

Adaptation Type	Number Completed
Level Access Shower	7
Grab & Stair Rails	7
Alarm System for hearing impaired	1
Stair Lift	1
Tap replacement	1
Level Access External Door	1
Home Extensions	2
	20

The Association continues to develop homes for those in need. New schemes handed over during the year included:

- The completion of 24 x 2- and 3-bedroom houses at Forthriver Road/Way
- 5 new build 3-bedroom family homes at Emersons Mill, Ligonell
- Hopefield Avenue off the Antrim Road in North Belfast, completed in September 2020 year and provides 9 one- and two-bedroom apartments.
- Meeting House Mews in Donaghadee, provides 4, one-bedroom houses.

In addition to the new homes above, our development department continues to add to our property portfolio with 48 homes within the reporting year.

Development Activity 20/21	Number of Homes
On site	
Rehabs	12
Off the shelf	3
Completed	
Rehabs	9
Off the shelf	9
New build	15
Total	48

2. Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2020-21 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

Age

Communication: The outcome of our 2020/21 annual survey on communication is outlined below:

Communication 2020/21	% of Very/ Fairly Satisfied
1. Your views are taken into account	72%
2. Keeping you informed	76%
3. Opportunities for participation in management and decision making	65%

- 80% of tenants stated that when they last had contact it was easy to get hold of the right person.
- 95% of respondents said that they found staff helpful and 86% of respondents said that staff were able to deal with their query. 73% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the final outcome, 21% were dissatisfied and 5% said neither.
- 54% of respondents indicated that they would like to access their NB Housing account/ report a repair online.

During a year when offices were closed to visitors, we would have expected our overall results to fall somewhat. However, a high percentage (80%) of tenants indicated they found it easy to get the person they were looking for and that 95% found the staff contacted were helpful.

Digital Inclusion: Throughout the year our older residents (65+) in Holyrood House endured restricted visiting because of the pandemic. Families and friends were unable to visit for a number of months in the early part of the year. NB Housing availed of Belfast City Council funding to aid engagement and improve mental health through this unusual time. Ten tablets were purchased and Wi-Fi installed in the scheme so that tenants could avail of online tools. With assistance, residents enjoyed chatting to their families on screen.

What's App, and Zoom played an important role in Tenant Participation. As access to offices and group meetings were suspended, contact was reinstated using digital methods. This has proven to be both successful and valuable.

Flax Foyer residents (18-25yrs) are making good use of the computer suite at The Foyer both independently and with the BYTES project.

Our website provides an accessible means of contact where tenants can present questions/queries, pay their rent, make a complaint or request a repair.

Social Inclusion: Unfortunately, the onset of the COVID 19 crisis brought social activities to a halt in late March 2020. Plans were put in place to review how delivery of

activities could be carried out with limited contact, use of technology and one to one telephone support. As mentioned above, Zoom began to play an important role in getting tenants together. Our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer arranged on line “Cook It” demonstrations on Zoom showing tenants how to make nutritious meals for under £5. Tenants not only enjoyed the instruction but also a time to meet other tenants socially.

Welfare Reform: Furlough added another dimension for tenants already struggling to make ends meet. Tenants found themselves with reduced income and in some cases without work forcing them onto universal credit. The introduction of universal credit has been a difficult process for recipients. In March 2020 a temporary £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was introduced recognising the plight of many struggling financially during the pandemic.

Welfare Reform remains an agenda item for our Tenant Newsletter as the impact will affect all tenants of working age in receipt of benefit. We provide information to tenants and signpost to debt advice agencies where necessary in an effort to reduce potential financial hardship. The reform is impacting age groups differently, for example, while over 65's will not be impacted, those between 25 -35yrs will be affected by a shared room rate capped by the local housing allowance, and families/households who are under occupying their properties will have housing benefit cut by up to 25%, more commonly known as bedroom tax.

We continue to lobby against the removal of mitigations payments. The removal will mean tenants currently receiving supplementary payments for Benefit Cap and Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax) will experience further hardship as payments cease.

Dependents

Welfare Reform/Single Room Rate: As above, the adverse impact of Welfare Reform may be extensive. Our Foyer scheme continues to prepare young people for the adverse impact particularly for this age group. Residents are supported by their keyworkers to understand the implications as they move on to independent living in the community.

We signpost our tenants to various advice agencies to raise awareness to families in particular, as tenants considering a transfer to other accommodation may be impacted. The outcome of the equality action plan has positively highlighted the need to provide relevant and timely information to our tenant base. We are now also carrying our benefit checks to ensure our tenants struggling with rent payments are receiving all benefits they are entitled to.

Lack of 2-bedroom accommodation: This accommodation type will be in high demand particularly for those vulnerable tenants in need of a carer, and single parents. At the end of this reporting period NB Housing 2-bedroom accommodation represented 44%

of its total stock. This will continue to rise as new developments and acquisitions are finalised going some way to meet need in this category.

Disability

Lifetime Homes: The Lifetime Homes Standard incorporates a set of principles that should be implicit in good housing design that maximizes utility independence and quality of life. The Lifetime Homes Standard seeks to enable 'general needs' housing to provide, either from the outset or through simple and cost-effective adaptation, design solutions that meet the existing and changing needs of diverse households. NB Housing seeks to deliver on these principles on all new build properties. Our new build stock is built to Lifetime Homes standard with incorporation of a further 9 lifetime homes at our new build scheme at Hopefield Avenue in Belfast handed over in September 2020.

Adaptations: NB Housing completed 20 adaptations to homes throughout the year. Adaptions can include fixed aids, or home extensions to assist mobility or activities of daily living for those with disability.

Communications/Electronic: We continue to deliver our browse aloud function for hearing or sight impaired on our website. Text phone provision is also available and head office is serviced by the loop system. Frailer tenants in our sheltered scheme are equipped with pendant and pull cord devices to access assistance outside office hours. This provides assurance for those tenants' dependent on support services.

Gender Imbalance

Activity Programmes: Whilst activity programmes are essential in group living accommodation to prevent social isolation, it is as important to ensure activity planning is appropriate across genders.

As reported above events and in-house activity programmes were suspended during the year due to Covid. However online activity was offered and all genders were able to avail of the "Cook It" activity, wreath making in the run up to Easter and Zoom meetings. We continue to survey tenants to gauge interest and participation in future activity planning.

Political Opinion

A potential inequality was highlighted within our Audit of Inequalities and therefore included in our action plan. This related to perceptions for potential employees who have "political convictions". NB Housing continues to request application to Access Ni for all potential support staff and continues to recruit staff based on the Merit Principle.

Race

Communications: Our current tenant profile has 0.46% of households who do not have English as a first language, this is a decrease of 0.40% in 2019/20. We continue to engage with both Big Word and Flex Language Services who have provided translation and interpretation services for our tenants. We continue to provide information on our services on our website which is serviced by Browse Aloud. This enables tenants or prospective tenants to translate information to any language.

Good Neighbour Agreements: For the promotion of Good Relations all of our tenants are required to sign up to the principles of the Good Neighbour agreement. The agreement encourages all tenants to,

“Respect all neighbours and their property, irrespective of their religion, race, ability, culture or political belief.”

Sexual Orientation

Our training programme includes staff awareness of LGB&T community to continue to improve positive attitudes among staff and tenants. The support-based training has provided a practical approach to the issue’s groups may experience and how our support staff can manage these. Staff practice and response is enhanced and as a result we are providing positive outcomes for our residents. Agencies consulted to provide support include, Gender Jam, Rainbow, Cara Friend, HYPE, GPs, and Gender Assessment Clinic at Knockbracken.

PART A

3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No (go to Q.4) Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

Due to the pandemic, we have changed how we engage with our tenants. Our Community Development & Tenant Support Officer has developed involvement and participation in community forums and meetings through technology. This has permitted discussions around the services of the association.

Additionally, much work has taken place around benefits and financial assistance, for example, support from local Family Support Hubs, the use of Quick Calc for benefit maximisation, greater access to benefits, discretionary housing payment applications, food banks, etc that may have positive impact in the lives of those across Section 75 groups.

3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

With the introduction of Universal Credit and the lengthy waiting times to process claims, it was necessary to review procedures with respect to arrears. Action on arrears cases was extended to consider lengthy waiting times for a claim to be awarded. The decision meant households were not subjected to tenancy terminations whilst awaiting claim decisions.

3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

This reporting year has seen the move to migrate all benefit claimants to Universal Credit paused with no firm indication as to when full managed migration will take place.

Additionally, some claimants who have moved to universal credit have experienced a negative impact moving to the new system in terms of both reduced income and managing the claim process. We continue to monitor the impact households were struggling as rent accounts saw increasing arrears. Support is provided in the form of benefit checks for those on low incomes, advice on additional financial support by way of grants and discretionary support etc. This has become a process under continual review.

- As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):

Our staff team can provide information to tenants that will assist them in managing their finances and the benefit process. Tenants are also provided with a list of specialist agencies with whom they can make contact dependent on their need.

- Other (*please specify and give details*):

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

- 4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs

PART A

- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Staff Appraisal and Development Plans are agreed once Business Planning for the year is complete. As an association built on strong values we ensure our values are integrated into each appraisal document. We provide social housing for those in need. Our mission is;

"To provide affordable rent and homes that build vibrant neighbourhoods and communities"

At NB Housing we realise the important role that the community, voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties.

6 In the 2020-21 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2020-21 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Our Annual Business Plan for 2020/2021 has incorporated NB Housing targets in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties of our Equality Scheme and Disability Action plan

"Meet all our statutory and regulatory reporting requirements, including DfC regulatory returns, statutory accounts, Charities Commission, HMRC, Fair Employment, Equality Schemes and Disability Action Plan reports"

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2020-21 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

24

Actions ongoing:

2

Actions to commence:

0

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

As outlined in Section 2 of this report.

While this reporting year as seen restrictions on activities programmes and events for tenants, we have embraced other avenues such as Zoom to ensure we can deliver on this particular category. It is hoped that as restrictions are lifted further tenant social activity engagement will be reinvigorated.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2020-21 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

There have been no changes made to the plan in this reporting year.

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2020-21 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

- All the time Sometimes Never

11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2020-21 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

Consultation with our tenants and residents on matters that affect them is central to NB Housing Tenant Participation Strategy. Our 2017 – 20 strategy was extended for this reporting year as the pandemic presented challenges that impacted on some

consultation processes. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure tenants have a voice in the way service of the Association are delivered. We aim to consult regularly with tenants through a menu of involvement to assess which method best suits our tenants needs or preferences. Work on our new Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-24 was completed in this reporting year and can be viewed on our website www.nb-housing.org

12 In the 2020-21 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: (*tick all that apply*)

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other (*please specify*):

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

As above

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

www.nb-housing.org

15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

0

16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2020-21:

0	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
0	Consultations for an EQIA alone.

17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

N/A

18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

19 Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2020-21 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

20 From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2020-21 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

21 In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

22 Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2020-21 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

No adverse impacts

23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

N/A

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2020-21, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

PART A

Adult Safeguarding Training

Volunteer Now

Online

Various dates:

22 & 25/04/20

04 & 09/05/20

Adult Safeguarding Champion: Meeting the Requirements

Volunteer Now

Online

Various dates:

21/04/20

22/05/20

Keeping Children & Adults Safe

Volunteer Now

Online

25/04/20

29/04/20

Quickcalc Training

Online

5/08/20

Recruiting Fairly

Equality Commission Northern Ireland

Online

16/09/20

CYM Anti-Stigma and Mental Health Awareness Staff Session

Inspire Wellbeing

Online

02/11/20- 08/11/20

Substance Misuse

ASCERT

Online

24/11/20

Trauma Crisis Intervention Training

CRJ

Online

25/11/20-27/11/20

Managing Stress and Anxiety

Inspire Wellbeing

Inspire Wellbeing

Online

11/01/21- 17/01/21

Recruiting Fairly

ECNI

Online

18/01/21

Section 75- Using Evidence in Policy Making

ECNI

Online

20/01/21

Domestic Abuse Awareness Training

ONUS

Online

25/02/21

**Supporting clients in Rent Arrears
Housing Rights**

Online
24/03/21
26/03/21

Safeguarding Adults at Risk of Harm Training

BHSCT
29/03/21

In 20/21 any scheduled training was suspended in the early part of the year as providers and offices were in lockdown. Nevertheless, our commitment to training continued as use of online methods replaced face to face training.

NB Housing recognises that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in effective implementation of our Section 75 duties. The impact this training has had positive results as it:

- Raises awareness of the issues those suffering with mental ill health endure and how to effectively support them. The training has enabled staff to understand different mental health issues and their potential symptoms. Training provided information on the steps that should be taken to ensure someone is given the support and guidance they require to seek appropriate professional help.
- The safeguarding of vulnerable tenants and residents is a duty to report any risks or safeguarding concerns. Staff are trained in the necessary protocols to ensure our tenants, residents and children are safeguarded.
- The pandemic has resulted in an increase in mental ill health due to isolation, stress and financial hardship. Training to create awareness of mental health issues and how these can impact any one of Section 75 groups developed an understanding of the challenge's individuals can encounter and how we might manage support and reduce stigmas.
- Will help to inform policy reviews to ensure promotion of equality for Section 75 categories
- Recruiting Fairly covered in detail the various aspects of the recruitment and selection process and aimed to provide employers with practical guidance and support. The positive impact was that it provided staff with knowledge to ensure that the recruitment and selection process is carried out in a fair manner
- Sessions on substance abuse, domestic abuse and trauma gave staff the tools to effectively deal with crisis situations that tenants may find themselves in and how they can act to provide the best support for a positive impact.
- Increased awareness of the impact Universal Credit will have on Section 75 groups in particular, young people, families, those between 25-35yr olds etc and the management of rent arrear cases. A rent arrears session provided by Housing Rights aimed to deliver debt and financial inclusion training on rent arrears to empower staff to deliver appropriate advice and support to tenants on the housing issues arising from rent arrears.
- Several online training sessions were provided to our staff teams to address mental health and well-being as we dealt with changing working environments in a pandemic.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

NB Housing outlines its training and development plans for the upcoming year based on the outcomes of staff appraisal and performance reviews, staff development plans, changing needs of our client groups, and legislative requirements and duties. The aim of the plan is to develop staff skill and update knowledge in the delivery of the objectives in the annual business plan.

We seek feedback on the training delivered through an evaluation process. Overall staff have given positive feedback on the sessions provided as training not only raises awareness and assists staff in their knowledge of legislative requirements but also ensures best practise. During this reporting year, whilst the sessions were delivered online and group interaction was suspended, we found attendance was greater as travelling was not involved and screen time for a session was reduced.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland provides training sessions that are practical, informative and interactive where practitioners and service providers are able to present and discuss examples to improve practise and positive outcomes. Raising awareness of the availability of information such as policy templates, advice etc. is a valuable resource to assist in the delivery of our Equality Scheme objectives.

The impact of a year of Covid and restrictive measures resulted in an increase in cases of mental ill health among our younger residents. This client group has experienced changing needs and we must ensure our staff are equipped with the knowledge to deal with these needs. Training around mental health, safeguarding, and substance misuse has guided staff on how to develop a holistic service to address individual needs of the residents, including risk assessment and an outcome-based action plan. We have seen an increase in the need for specialist training sessions in mental health awareness, health and wellbeing and wellness recovery plans etc as clients present with differing needs and are trying to deal with the impact of isolation periods with limited resources open to them during the pandemic. Likewise, our older tenants would have similar experience as contact with families is reduced and require individual support. Training has equipped staff with the knowledge on how to address these issues.

NB Housing invested in Quick Calc, an online tool developed as an aid to maximise benefits for our tenants. This training developed skills for our Community Development and Tenant Support Officer to accurately inform of benefit entitlement and assist tenants in claiming benefits they were maybe unaware they were entitled to. Welfare Reform has left many tenants unsure of entitlement as they work their way through the new system. The use of Quick Calc has meant a positive outcome for our tenants.

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2020-21, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- Whilst our % of tenants who do not have English as a first language reduced this year, we continued to engage with translation and interpreting services as a means of improved communication and information
- Website access providing continual updates on information about our services and tenancy documentation
- Quarterly newsletter publications mailed to all tenants and also uploaded on our website to inform of developments in the association, access to external contacts, advice on managing tenancies etc.
- Further engagement with Supporting Communities following review of Tenant Participation Action plan to improve consultation
- Introduction of What's App & Zoom for tenants as tool for tenant focus groups

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2020-21?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

N/A

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

November 2022

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

In the uncertain times ahead, we would anticipate a return of some of the activities we have had to restrict during this pandemic year. We would hope to embrace further online contact with our tenants as well as the possibility of socially distanced meetings. Our ongoing action plan measures i.e. tenant profiling will continue to ensure we target our services to meet the changing needs across Section 75 groups.

We have attended ECNI training in the past for policy screening. We have also sought specific training within the sector to ensure the training fits our needs, but this has not yet been delivered. This is an area we will focus on for the next reporting period.

PART A

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

12

Fully achieved

1

Partially achieved

2

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	1.Representation on both Board and Staff Teams at NB Housing as well as Housing Sector/NIFHA Meetings	Recruitment Processes/Board Recruitment Attendance at Meetings and Sub Committee Meetings	Positive input to decision making process.
Regional ^{iv}	2.Tenant Consultation/ Engagement/Participation Strategy	Dedicated staff member in post to drive Tenant Participation Strategy/Tenant Welfare. Choices available on methods of involvement	Increased involvement particularly among older tenants. Expanded involvement methods to online access e.g. Zoom.

PART B

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
		<p>circulated to all tenants to encourage participation.</p> <p>Greater publicity of engagement both in newsletters, mail drops, one to one and website to encourage attendance</p>	<p>Publicised in tenants quarterly Newsletter seeking involvement/engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Contact has been made via Community Development and Tenant Support Worker</p>
Local ^v	3.Review internal and external communications	<p>Yearly review of Annual Report.</p> <p>Tenants surveyed to inform of preferred methods of communication.</p>	<p>Positive imagery included in Annual Report.</p> <p>Continued use social media sites, texting service & browse aloud function.</p>
	4. Recruitment Drives reaching a wide audience.	Jobs advertised externally via Nijobs.com, Community NI or NIFHA and the Job Centre. Internally via email to all staff, adverts displayed on noticeboards.	Applications received from those with and without disability
	5. Support Staff with disabilities to fulfil career development and learning	Training needs analysis for all staff. Performance appraisal process on going.	Training and development plans are in place for staff with or without disability. Staff inform of training needs at appraisal meeting or one to ones.

PART B

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
			Outcomes provide increased awareness and improved service provision.
	6. Conduct Staff Survey to include disability issues	Survey distributed via Investors in People	Positive survey results. (Next survey due 2021/22)
	7. Recruitment & Support: Exit Interviews	Exit interviews held to identify needs that may impact policy direction	Policy includes reference to exit interview process. Interviews carried out for leavers.
	8. Work with joint partners to adopt the principles and spirit of disability duties/ Links with disability groups	Quarterly and annual review meetings with joint partners. Report on performance provided. As and when required contact with external agencies to address needs.	Documented meetings/actions with Joint Management Partners. Contact with external groups for example OTs, disability action, sensory awareness teams etc to assist tenants to maintain their tenancies independently.
	9. Encourage interaction between those with disabilities and those without	Given pandemic and restrictive contact, one to one/group activities suspended.	On line interaction encouraged via Zoom
	10. Promotion of positive attitudes	Ongoing engagement to adopt principles of disability duties	Improved services to those with disability

PART B

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Scheduled for 2021/22		

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Accessibility	Information available online in various formats Two office sites, however closed due to Covid as per government guidelines due. Loop system available in Office	Greater accessibility to information for those with/without disability. Preferred method of contact is one to one meeting, telephone or in writing. Tenants meetings on line were available.
2	Tenant Consultation/Engagement/Participation	Menu of Involvement circulated to tenants to choose most appropriate engagement option.	Paper based survey offered and implemented. One to one or group contact offered online.
3	Information/Publications	Information available in alternative formats, on request. Text phone provision, browse aloud facility, large print, texting etc.	Improved access to information for tenants or applicants with sight or hearing impairment.

PART B

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Encourage engagement for those with disability and those without	Encourage attendance at any socially distanced or online events	Attendance at online/socially distanced events/meetings of those with disability and without.
2	Engagement with external organisations and multi-agencies	Establish positive working relationships with external organisations	Contact with external organisations such as, New Life Counselling, Aware NI, ECNI, Autism awareness, Disability action, Daisy, Belfast Trust, Local GPs, OTs, Support and Care Providers etc., has a positive impact and promotes independence for our tenants and residents.
3	Activity Programmes	In house activities suspended due to Covid. Survey and feedback from residents/tenants/participants.	Continue to survey to assess choice/interest

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1			
2			

PART B

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Establish the scale of disability amongst NB Housing Tenants (Ongoing)	Profiling questionnaires for tenants. Use of new staffing resource to assist in the process.	To better address housing needs for tenants with disability.	Tenants are not forthcoming regarding information in relation to personal information on request. Applications for adaptations are being received and needs addressed.

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Include Questions in Policy Screening template to assess significance of disability duties as part of screening exercise	Screening ongoing
2	Provide Training/Refreshers on disability duties to Board members and staff.	Not offered as a separate session. In training plan for 2021/22

PART B

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Tenant Activity Surveys
- Tenant Participation/Engagement Events
- Maintenance & Development Consultations
- Adaptation Consultations
- Response Maintenance Satisfaction Surveys
- Training Evaluations
- Complaints Monitoring

(b) Quantitative

Quantitative

- Recruitment monitoring returns
- NICORE Statistics
- Fair Employment Monitoring
- Annual Satisfaction Survey

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No further revisions have been made following review of Disability Action Plan 2017

PART B

If yes please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation’s annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

NB Housing continues to keep the plan under review and should opportunities for new measures arise we will endeavour to incorporate

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.