



Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report

Contact:

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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 2022 and March 2023

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 2022-23, 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 6 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 2022/23 reporting period we had a team of 41 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.

In this reporting year NB Housing implemented a new 3-year Corporate Strategy 2022-2025 with a new mission and vision. We have 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

To provide a place to call home and an outstanding service to those in need.

A home where people,

- ***Feel they belong***
 - ***Feel safe***
- ***Feel financially secure***
 - ***Feel supported***
- ***Feel part of the community***

Our Vision

Everyone has an affordable, sustainable home in a supportive community that enables them to lead their best lives.

We have continued to grow our stock and provide homes for those in need. Stock levels increased from 1091 homes in 21/22 to 1108 at the end of 2023 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, Ballynahinch, Carrowdore, Newtownards, Carrickfergus, Coalisland, Donaghadee, Millisle, Glenavy and Lisburn.

We continue to accommodate across the Section 75 groups.

Our current stock portfolio of 1108 units accommodates for a variety of needs.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| General Needs | |
| Houses | 647 |
| Bungalows | 127 |
| Apartments | 202 |
| Supported Housing | 68 |
| Sheltered Housing | 64 |
| Total | 1108 |

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 Worker.
- 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 2022/23:

Post Covid 19 pandemic

With the easing of COVID restrictions and with consultation with staff we implemented an Agile Working Policy in October 2022. This permitted office staff to return on a rota basis working a minimum of two days a week in the office and three at home. Staff are aware that should it be necessary to work from the office as service demands then the two days per week may be increased. The policy arrangement has also had an added advantage as staff have experienced a cost savings in relation to travel to work during a cost of living crisis.

Communication

The aim of our Tenant Participation Strategy is to increase tenant involvement in the delivery of social housing services and to be part of the decision making process on the services we offer. Our overall aim 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.

Website Upgrade:

In June of 2022 we upgraded our website to provide an improved layout and information refresh available to website visitors, current and prospective tenants. We also introduced a new Tenant Portal, “My Tenancy” which gives tenants access to their rent accounts and repairs progress at a time convenient to them. In addition to this our Reach Deck service is available to website users who do not have English as a first language where speech and translation support is easily accessible.

Online Contact:

Our Community Development Officer and Tenant Support Worker continued to provide engagement events online and contact via a “What’s App” group with tenants to offer further engagement opportunities. Zoom was also introduced for group contact so any scheme or focus group meetings could be held online.

We continue to contact tenants via our improved texting service 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 2022/23 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 satisfaction results for the reporting year is as follows:

| Tenant Satisfaction Summary | 2022/23 |
|--|---------|
| 1. NB Housing overall service | 70% |
| 2. Rent represents good value | 74% |
| 3. Your accommodation | 76% |
| 4. Area/ location | 76% |
| 5. Service charges provide value for money | 70% |

As part of our action plan we have decided to change how we deliver the survey in order to gather greater response and therefore greater feedback to allow for improvement opportunity. To date we have forwarded everyone a postal survey and will this year include telephone surveys.

Tenants Newsletters:

As part of our commitment to keeping tenants informed we produce a quarterly newsletter and an annual report to keep tenants updated 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
- Emergency Repair contacts

- Access to Free Wifi
- Health and Safety Issues e.g. Fire Safety, Gas Safety
- Housing or Tenancy Advice
- New Team Members
- Notification of upcoming tenant engagement events
- Office operating hours
- Outcome of prize draws etc
- Results Tenant Satisfaction Surveys
- Money Management Advice
- Support signposting to Advice Space, North Belfast Advice Partnership, Ligoneil Advice Partnership, Family Support 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.

Our Development department will also consult in regard to upcoming development and housing provision. This can be in a group meeting session or as a leaflet drop. The following were leaflet drops this past year:

- Langley Street, Belfast 14 Consultation: 24 April 2022 – 6 June 2022
This is a new build development comprising of 3 x 2-bedroom houses, 2 x 2-bedroom apartments and 1 x1 bedroom apartment.
- Bridge Street, Lisburn Consultation: 6 April 2022 – 13 May 2022
Comprises of 9 x 1-bedroom apartments
- Gobrana Rd, Glenavy: 21 Aug 22 – 5 December 2022: This consultation was both a leaflet drop and public meeting held on 28th September 22. The development will accommodate general needs tenants in 20 x 3-bedroom houses.
- Rockfield Meadows, Carrowdore, Newtownards: 31 January – 27th February 2023: Comprises 6 x 3-bedroom houses for general needs tenants.
- Kingsway, Dunmurry: 14 February 23 – 31 Mar 2023 comprising 14 x 2-bedroom apartments

Communication at NB Housing head office is aided with Loop service and our website provides a Reachdeck 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

Our Community Development Officer worked closely with local agencies to support tenants who were in need of support services either due to their own particular circumstances, cost of living crisis or just to engage with others. Some of these developments included:

- ❖ Our Community Development Officer was successful in obtaining £1480 funding for a crafts programme to get tenants together following pandemic. The “**Get Crafty**” programme commenced in August 2022 and included sewing, printing and macramé/crocheting classes. These classes were suitable for all ages, gender and ability.
- ❖ Following consultation with tenants on programmes best suited to them, flower arranging classes were held in the last quarter of the reporting period. **Let’s Craft NI** provided the flower arranging class at the Houben Community Centre. This presented another great opportunity to get tenants together all of whom left with spring centre pieces for their home.
- ❖ **Hillhead Crafts** tutored tenants in candle making, soap making and origami. This session also provided an opportunity for tenants to come together and get to know each other, as well as developing a new skill.
- ❖ **Outdoor programmes** included raised vegetable beds at our older tenants scheme Holyrood House to enable them to grow soup vegetables. The beds were provided by the local Men’s Shed and the funding from Urban Villages. This project commenced early July 2022.
- ❖ We continue to hold **Tenant Forum Group** meetings on a quarterly basis. Discussions not only take place regarding service delivery but invite local speakers to raise awareness on various topics for example stress management and environmental issues. We also alternate meeting times to ensure we have as large a cross section of tenants as possible.
- ❖ The **Social Supermarket** opened in the first quarter of 22/23 as ‘The Pantry’ through the Aston Centre. Membership fees are £5.00 per week which enables struggling families to avail of a weekly shop up to £40.00 for 12 weeks. It is hoped that after the 12-week period families will have a better idea of how to budget and do their weekly shop purchasing products which offer good value for money.
- ❖ **Bridge of Hope** Engagement with new groups continues including Bridge of Hope which helps support tenants who are struggling with mental health issues. We can make referrals to Bridge of Hope where a need is identified.
- ❖ **Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership** We have been included in this groups mailing list and receive all mail drops with area information and local initiatives. This will be beneficial to the Association in creating

networking and information sharing opportunities for the benefit of our resident and tenants.

- ❖ **Community Clean Up** In the summer of 2022 we worked with Flax Mews tenants on their street clean up. Following this the tenants held a community street party, which we also made a small donation to. This was a fun filled event which was enjoyed by many of the residents and their children and was a great example of community spirit and good relations.
- ❖ We attended regular meetings throughout the year with the **Tenant Participation Practitioners Network**. These meetings included various housing groups and are a useful platform to share ideas and discuss different ways to engage with tenants. It was therefore a great opportunity to network and build relationships with other housing providers and has allowed us to share how we deliver some of our programmes.
- ❖ **Family Support Hubs**: Our Community Development Officer continues to work with the Family Support Hubs. This initiative that has been welcomed by families. 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. Examples of support include respite for children and behavioural support, fuel vouchers and food parcels. There is also some assistance with budgeting and repayment plans for rent arrears.
- ❖ We continue our **Interagency Working** and have been represented at the following group meetings throughout 2022/23. These meetings consist of members of other housing associations, NIHE, local community workers, local councillors, advice sector, and tenant representatives etc. Some of the groups include:
 - ❖ *HACT*: Comprises approximately 10 Housing Associations as well representatives from NIFHA, NIHE and Supporting Communities who meet monthly. This group aims to encourage a joined up approach regarding various prevailing issues, information sharing as well as tenant education and awareness. This year the group delivered a cost of living booklet to include tips around keeping warm, dealing with damp and condensation, energy efficiency and managing bills.
 - ❖ *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*: These meetings continue to take place every fortnight and the group deals with issues raised within the Upper North Belfast Area which are addressed through statutory and voluntary parties working together. The majority of issues raised revolve around ASB and neighbour disputes which is

an issue across North Belfast. Groups receive valuable feedback and try collectively to come up with practical solutions

- ❖ *Ligoneil Community Cohesion Group*
- ❖ *North Belfast Advice Partnership*: Providing advice on benefits, impact of welfare reform, housing issues, provision of food banks etc.
- ❖ *Grace Family Centre* who offer a variety of different support services to women and their families. These include general family support, education and training along with health advice.

Supporting Young Homeless People: We work in partnership with many services providing support to our young homeless residents (18-25yr olds) at Flax Foyer. Some of these services include:



Springboards' Head Start Programme offer young people qualifications, a chance to gain essential skills, work placements, free travel and £40 per week. They will also receive a £40 bonus after 13 weeks.

HYPE attend the Foyer every fortnight to discuss sexual health with our young residents.

Ashton Centre Core Project offers residents a range of practical courses for our young people, to include: Personal Trainer, CSR card, Warehouse Operative, Security Card & Hair & Beauty. They also offer Essential Skills in Literacy & Numeracy.

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 launched their new Launch Pad Programme with young people from the Foyer. This is a 12- week programme, aiming at getting young women into the workplace. There are opportunities to gain OCN qualifications and visits to colleges/ employers.

Northern Ireland Youth Programme (NIYF) Northern Ireland have a number of projects that will benefit the young people in the Foyer, these include: Mentoring Programmes, Young Women's Group, Fitness and a host of wellbeing programmes that offer 1-1 counselling and therapeutic interventions. Northern Ireland Youth Programme (NIYF) are also starting new round of a Relentless Change Project for 16-25-year olds who have a housing issue and want to create change. There is the potential of residential and overseas experiences, University accreditation at the University of Ulster and becoming a Youth Consultant.

Extern's Moving Forward, Moving On project works with young people, aged 16-24, who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) and/or have a history of offending behaviour. It is a research and evidence-based model of working with young people, which provides support and the tools they need to make a successful start in the world. The mentoring support service works with young people and young adults from across the city, who have previously been through alternative education projects, such as Extern's Pathways Project.

The **Vine Centre** provided a 2-hour money management course in the Foyer, for our young residents to provide budgeting skills. This information will go a long way once residents move on to become self-reliant in the community. As an incentive to attend residents were also given a £25 voucher.

Christmas during a **Cost of Living Crisis**: Our young residents at the Foyer were generously supported during the Christmas period having received a Good Will Grant from the Department of Communities via Homeless Connect. The grant enabled support staff to provide food, treats, vouchers, a delicious Christmas dinner and much more. Local organisations and schools also donated food and fuel vouchers to ensure our young people have the basic essentials during the winter months.

Building Good Relations

Community Safety and Multi Agency Meetings are continuing to take place monthly with the aim of building support across the board to look at local community safety and anti social behaviour issues (ASB). Funding cuts have impacted the provision of a Youth Outreach Detached Group and so the working group continues to hold these meetings to discuss ongoing community safety issues.

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 opportunity 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 youth 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.

In 2022/23, NB Housing received 53 complaints of antisocial behaviour, 37 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 advertised for 12 vacant positions and recruited 10 permanent staff. This year we offered a Housing Apprenticeship in conjunction with Northwest Regional College.
- We are an **Equal Opportunity employer**. From April 22 to March 23 we advertised a total of 19 times, received 54 applications, shortlisted 33 applicants, interviewed 21 and filled 10 positions.
- **Vitality Private Healthcare:** Since September 2022 our staff have an option for private healthcare with Vitality Healthcare. This provides a full range of medical services and rewards for members. Staff can also include family members in the plan should they wish.
- **Employee Assistance Programme:** We continue to offer our staff *Inspire Workplaces* services who deliver an Employee assistance programme for all staff. The programme offers support to staff who may have situations affecting their well-being for example stress, relationships, finance etc. The programme delivers 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 July 2022 for reaccreditation in the 6th Generation Framework of Investors in People. The Association was awarded GOLD accreditation until 2025.
- **Agile Working/Work Life Balance:** We introduced an Agile Working following consultation with staff in October 2022. Staff now have the flexibility to work 2 days from the office and three days at home on a rota basis. Flexibility to staff working patterns has aided a new way of working following the pandemic and promotes a balanced work life.

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 21 disability adaptations in the reporting year. Works included, the provision of level access showers, lighting upgrades, grab rails, safe play area etc.

PART A

| Adaptation Type | Number Completed |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Level Access Shower | 8 |
| Grab & Stair Rails | 9 |
| Automatic WC | 1 |
| Lighting Upgrade | 1 |
| Safe Play Area | 1 |
| Sensory Requests (Various Works) | 1 |
| | 21 |

Our Development Team continue to work to meet the needs of applicants on the housing waiting list providing a variety of house type in various locations.

During this reporting year, NB Housing completed the purchase of 17 properties in various locations namely, Newtownards, Belfast, Newtownabbey and Ballywalter.

New developments on site during the reporting year were:

- 14 units on Crumlin Road in Belfast,
- 6 on Langley Street off the Crumlin Road,
- 9 on Bridge Street, Lisburn.

2. Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (or append the plan with progress/examples identified).

Age

Communication: The outcome of our 2022/23 annual survey on communication is outlined below:

| Communication 2022/23 | % of Very/ Fairly Satisfied |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Your views are taken into account | 66% |
| 2. Keeping you informed | 73% |
| 3. Opportunities for participation in management and decision making | 58% |

- 77% of tenants stated that when they last had contact it was easy to get hold of the right person.
- 87% of respondents said that they found staff helpful and 85% of respondents said that staff were able to deal with their query. 70% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the final outcome, 24% were dissatisfied and 6% said neither.
- 19% of respondents indicated that they would like to access their NB Housing account/ report a repair online.

Digital Inclusion: In June 2022 we carried out a redesign of our website and introduction of a new online portal has meant tenants can access their rent accounts, or report repairs. Our website will also enable tenants or visitors to make a comment, send a query, make a complaint or compliment. It also features a Reachdeck function which accommodates various languages, and those with both sight and hearing impairment.

The Foyer Connect Project was well utilised in this reporting year. Under the Supporting People Programme Covid 19 Recovery Fund we were awarded £22,705 for this project last year. It aimed to improve the connectivity of young people in the Foyer and in turn improve their mental health. The young residents utilised 5 new computers, 5 laptops, 2 i-pads, x-box with games, printer, DVD player, Wifi throughout the ground floor of the scheme and 5 new chairs for the computer suite. This was a much-needed provision for young homeless people to stay connected and proved very successful.

Our older residents (65yrs+) in Holyrood House were recipients of Belfast City Council funding to aid engagement and improve mental health. Last year ten tablets were purchased and Wi-Fi installed in the scheme so that tenants could avail of online tools. This continues to be a useful resource for online activity.

Social Inclusion: Since COVID we continue to make made good use of technology to ensure tenants are still involved with the Association. Whilst we are now carrying out activities face to face, in the early part of the reporting year Whats App and Zoom were common place for meetings and support.

Welfare Reform: Welfare Reform remains an agenda item for our Tenant Newsletter as the impact of the migration to Universal Credit 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 are not 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 have housing benefit cut by up to 25%, more commonly known as bedroom tax.

We continue to lobby against the removal of any mitigation's payments. The removal will mean tenants currently receiving supplementary payments for Benefit Cap and Social Sector Size Criteria (Bedroom Tax) will experience further hardship if these payments should cease.

The Cost of Living Crisis has added a further struggle for those with limited income. We have witnessed a number of families now accessing foodbanks, as they struggle to meet the demands of increasing utilities, food and fuel costs. We work with local agencies to signpost tenants in need for support and advice.

Dependents

Welfare Reform/Single Room Rate: 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 also carry 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 44.1% 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.

Adaptations: NB Housing completed 21 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: The *Reachdeck* function for hearing or sight impaired tenants and website visitors has been included as part of our website review. Our 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. Activities offered during the year have attempted to address the any gender imbalance. For example, raised planting beds, soil and seeds were provided at Holyrood House for residents to plant out. Volunteer gardeners visited the scheme to give instruction on how to care for the plants so that residents could continue this activity independently.

As part of Volunteer Week in August 2022, a coffee morning was hosted by volunteers at Holyrood, the event was well attended and all inclusive.

January 2023 the residents hosted a lunch and organised a ballot to raise funds for the Ardoyne Youth Club. Residents wanted to "give back" as the youth club had been involved in intergenerational activities with residents of Holyrood House in the past. £700 was raised for the Youth Club.

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

Good Relations Week 19th- 23rd Sept 2022

Our Foyer scheme planned hosted a variety of discussion sessions to raise awareness during good relations week in September 2022. Each day a different topic was explored over the course of the week. Our young residents also shared unique life experiences and cultures involving identity, good relations, and prejudice.

In addition to this, our young people enjoyed the sampling of cuisines from different cultures, sharing culinary skills and experiences from around the world.

Communications: Our current tenant profile has 0.64% of households who do not have English as a first language, this figure is consistent with that of 2021/22 reporting period. 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 Reachdeck. 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 Assessment Clinic at Knockbracken, Gender Jam, Cara-Friend, HYPE, and Rainbow.

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 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

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

Please provide any details and examples:

The implementation of the Agile Working Policy in October 2022 has re-evaluated how we work. Office based staff have the option to work from home three out of five days per week. This has delivered flexibility for staff and created a work life balance. This is particularly evident as other services have also changed their way of working which has impacted on staff for example, childcare services, school clubs, etc. Additionally, a hybrid approach to working from home and office has been a positive move during the cost of living crisis and increased fuel costs.

We have continued to use technology to engage with tenants. As we expand our stock portfolio across Northern Ireland, Zoom for example, has given an alternative option for tenants wanting to participate, make contact or attend meetings but live further from our offices. This method ensures tenants are accommodated and included.

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:

As above

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):*

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

Changes were implemented as a result of COVID restrictions in 2020. Restrictions forced us to review how we worked and delivered services. The use of technology to improve access to information and engagement for example, has been positive and therefore has remained as it benefits individuals across section 75 groups.

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 2022-23 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 2022-23 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:

We developed a new Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 in this reporting period. Our new Mission and Vision ensures we integrate our section 75 duties as we deliver services to those in need.

Our Mission

To provide a place to call home and an outstanding service to those in need.

A home where people,

- *Feel they belong*
 - *Feel safe*
- *Feel financially secure*
 - *Feel supported*
- *Feel part of the community*

Our Vision

Everyone has an affordable, sustainable home in a supportive community that enables them to lead their best lives.

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 2022-23 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 2022-23 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

24

Actions ongoing:

2

Actions to commence:

0

PART A

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

As per section 2

- 8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

No changes have been made in 2022/23

- 9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 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 2022-23 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:

- 12 In the 2022-23 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

PART A

- 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:

13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 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)

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 2022-23:

| |
|---|
| 0 |
| 0 |

Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment (EQIA)** presented.

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Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 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 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Equality Training

People 1st
Zoom
13/04/22

Benefit Training

Law Centre
Online
4/05/22

Handling Disclosure of Sexual Abuse

NEXUS
Online
22/06/22

Introduction to Equality

ECNI
Online
22/09/22

Promoting Equality for People with Disabilities

ECNI
Online
04/10/22

Recruiting Fairly

ECNI
Online
10/11/22

Managing Bullying and Harassment in the workplace

ECNI
Online
17/11/22

A Focus on Equality Screening

ECNI
Online
25/11/22

Promoting Mental Wellbeing at Work

ECNI
Online
08/12/22

Recruiting Fairly

ECNI
Online
13/12/22

Nexus 2023 Conference:

Breaking the Cycle of Sexual Trauma
Nexus
St Comgall's Primary School
08/02/23

Financial Support and Funding

Housing Rights
Zoom
08/03/23

Universal Credit & Housing

Housing Rights
Zoom
13/03/23

Designated Officer Training Keeping Children Safe

BHSCT
15/03/23

An Introduction to Loneliness and Isolation experienced by Older People

North Regional College
23/03/23

- 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 Training and Development plans are structured to incorporate mandatory or regulatory training, the development needs of the staff member and to address new or ongoing policy and procedure. The 2022/23 training plan covered a cross section of topics and was a working document that could be added to when a new skill or development area was required. NB Housing recognises that awareness raising and training plays a crucial role in effective implementation of our Section 75 duties. The extent to which this training met the training objectives of the Equality scheme can be summarised as follows:

- As new staff come on board, Equality is addressed in induction plans, included in job descriptions, included in training plans and is an objective of the annual business plan. The Introduction to Equality delivered by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland provides a comprehensive overview for beginners in employment equality, covering the role and function of the Commission, an introduction to anti-discrimination legislation in NI, definitions of discrimination, the reasonable adjustment duty, Fair Employment Treatment Order and good practice.
- Recruiting Fairly training is essential for managers involved in recruitment processes to ensure best practise and to comply with equality legislation. Managers will attend 2 yearly updates in the area.
- Promoting Mental Wellbeing at Work allows staff the opportunity to discuss issue they may be dealing with openly so that any support required can be sourced. Our Employee Assistance Programme provides many publications and tips for wellbeing throughout the year which staff can avail of. 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. Handling these conversations can be difficult for managers as try to effectively communicate workplace issues.
- Financial Support and Funding hosted by Housing Rights raised awareness of resources available for tenants and their families. Staff as a result are able to signpost and inform tenants of what benefits and funding is available to assist in the current cost of living crisis. Likewise training provided around Universal Credit provides an understanding of entitlements and how to work through the UC system.
- An Introduction to Loneliness and Isolation experienced by Older People was attended by our Community Development Officer who gained an understanding of the challenges faced by our older residents and suggestions on how to overcome this through activity and engagement.

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

26 Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

- Our website upgrade has provided a more user-friendly platform for tenants and visitors to the site. It is now easily accessible and interactive giving tenants the choice to use the website to ask questions, seek information, request a repair etc. Information leaflets are available on many topics for example tenant participation, anti-social behaviour, repairs, tenants' handbooks, value for money statement, annual reports, equality scheme etc.
- Reachdeck is accessible on our website homepage and translates website content into a chosen language. We have continued to engage with translation and interpreting services as a means of improved communication and information. Big Word is used as a translation service for our tenants who do not speak English.
- The new tenants portal "My Tenancy" gives tenants the opportunity to access their rent account online and report repairs.
- 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
- We continue the use of What's App & Zoom for tenants as tool for tenant focus groups and meetings.
- We created a Careers page on our website to inform of employment opportunities.
- Social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter will inform tenants of campaigns, job vacancies, alerts to scam callers, office closures, tenant activities/meetings etc.

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2022-23?

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:

Reviewed August 2023

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)*

We value the training provided by the Equality Commission and other providers and will avail the following sessions when available for the upcoming year for both new staff and refreshers for current staff:

- ❖ Equality Screening
- ❖ Recruiting Fairly
- ❖ An Introduction to Equality

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:

17

Fully achieved

1

Partially achieved

1

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 | Implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy and monitoring of action plan. Dedicated staff member in post to drive | Increased involvement particularly among older tenants with the provision of WiFi and iPads to a small number. Expanded involvement methods to online access e.g. Zoom. |

PART B

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| | | <p>Tenant Participation Strategy/Tenant Welfare.</p> <p>Choices available on methods of involvement 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 involvement</p> <p>Access to meetings via Zoom, What App etc</p> | <p>Publicised in tenants quarterly Newsletter seeking involvement/engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Contact has been made via Community Development Officer</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 & Reachdeck function.</p> <p>Introduced “My Tenancy” portal</p> |
| | 4. Recruitment Drives reaching a wide audience. | <p>Jobs advertised externally via Nijobs.com, Community NI or NIFHA and Employers Online and on new Careers page on website. Internally via email to all staff</p> | <p>Applications received from those with and without disability</p> |
| | 5. Support Staff with disabilities to fulfil career development and learning | <p>Training needs analysis for all staff. Performance appraisal process on going.</p> | <p>Training and development plans are in place for staff with or without disability. Staff inform of</p> |

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| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| | | | <p>training needs at appraisal meeting or one to ones.</p> <p>Outcomes provide increased awareness and improved service provision.</p> |
| | 6. Conduct a monitoring survey of all Board Members and staff members with disabilities | Distributed on recruitment | Outcomes monitored and needs addressed as required. |
| | 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 | Activities programme ongoing in supported schemes and within community via Community Development Officer | On line interaction encouraged via Zoom/Whats App |
| | 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 |
|----|--|---|---|
| 11 | Provide Training/Refreshers on disability duties to Board members and staff. | <p>2022/23 training plan included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Equality for People with Disabilities • Equality in the Workplace | Refreshers that included awareness raising of Section 75 duties and legislation and the roles and responsibilities of the NB Housing Team. Reference to reasonable adjustment duties. |

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

| | Communications Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact |
|----|--|---|--|
| 12 | Accessibility | Information available online in various formats including Reachdeck function | <p>Greater accessibility to information for those with/without disability.</p> <p>Preferred method of contact is one to one meeting, telephone or in writing. Tenants meetings on line were available.</p> |
| 13 | Tenant Consultation/Engagement/Participation | Menu of Involvement circulated to tenants to choose most appropriate engagement option. | <p>Paper based survey offered and implemented.</p> <p>One to one or group contact offered online via Whats App and Zoom</p> |

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| | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|--|
| 14 | Information/Publications | Information available in alternative formats, on request. Reachdeck facility, large print, texting etc. | Improved access to information for tenants or applicants with sight or hearing impairment. |
|----|--------------------------|---|--|

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

| | Encourage others Action Measures | Outputs | Outcome / Impact |
|----|--|--|---|
| 15 | Encourage engagement for those with disability and those without | Encourage attendance at any socially distanced or online events | Attendance at meetings of those with disability and without. |
| 16 | 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. |
| 17 | Activity Programmes | Activity Programme in place | 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 |
|--|---|---------|-------------------|
| | None | | |

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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, this is ongoing as new applicants become tenants | Profiling questionnaires for tenants. Use of new staffing resource/apprentice to assist in the process. | To better address housing needs for tenants with disability. Applications for adaptations are being received and needs addressed. | Tenants are not forthcoming regarding information in relation to personal information on request. |

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 |

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

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- Maintenance & Development Consultations
- Adaptation Consultations
- Response Maintenance Satisfaction Surveys
- Training Evaluations
- Complaints Monitoring

(b) 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

Please select

If yes please outline below:

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

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- 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.