



Welcome to Supporting Communities 221st Edition of E-Zine, bringing you Best Practice from the Community Sector; Funding and Training Updates and Policy Developments in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Republic of Ireland

## Dishing up a treat thanks to the Housing Executive

Local people in the Lagmore area of west Belfast are cooking up a treat, thanks to £2,640 funding from the Housing Executive. With the housing body's Community Involvement Grant, Lagmore Community Forum has been able to run two six week workshops for 20 residents. Led by Pearce Tohill from P25 Nutrition, the workshops give participants the skills and knowledge to make healthy nutritional choices to help improve their health and wellbeing.

Maire Scott, from Lagmore Community Forum, and who took part herself, said: "Each week there is a live cookery demonstration and nutritional information workshop. "Residents taking part get a pack with basic store ingredients including spices, the Public Health Agency's 5 Ways to Wellbeing leaflet and an apron. They also receive a recipe book and access to a Whatsapp support group. Each week we learn how to cook healthily on a budget. Different topics are covered looking at each of the food groups and learning about the NHS Eatwell Guide, which helps you achieve a balanced diet."

Maire continued: "It was brilliant, really good, I loved it. We were shown how to make the most of our microwave or electric grills. The meals don't take up too much of your time so they are easier to prepare if you live on your own but are really tasty and the recipes are simple and designed to be nutritious. Among the dishes we made were naan bread, potato wedges, chicken gyros made from yogurt and spices, and healthier chicken goujons, "At the last session we made poached eggs with sourdough bread, homemade guacamole and bacon done in the airfryer, which cuts down on the electric you use," she added. "I'm 68 and this was my first time eating avocado and I must say I really enjoyed it. We get salads and spices to take home with us so we can try at home. The meals are all made from ingredients that we can get in our local supermarket."



*Residents learn new skills and knowledge about food at a healthy eating workshop. Pictured include Maire Scott, Lagmore Community Forum (front row, left), and Stuart Lavery, Housing Executive Good Relations Officer (back row, right).*

There is also a DigiSkills trained volunteer who can help participants access to a Whatsapp group where they can view videos of food being prepared.

Margaret Marley, the Housing Executive's Area Manager for West Belfast, said: "We were delighted to award this funding to Lagmore Community Forum, which does excellent work with people in their area. I'm pleased to see that it has been so popular. We are very fortunate to work with many amazing groups and volunteers who are the backbone of our communities.

"All through the year, they provide support, compassion and dedication. Moreover, they meticulously plan projects which make a real difference to so many lives.

"Our community involvement grants show our continued commitment to encouraging effective engagement with local people and to making our communities better places to live for everyone."

## Good Relations Indicators 2021 Report

The Good Relations Indicator report published by The Executive Office today presents a range of statistics relating to community relations, including numbers of hate crimes, attitudinal data on Protestant/Catholic relations and attitudes towards mixing in schools, neighbourhoods and the workplace.



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The publication monitors indicators for the four key priorities of the T:BUC Strategy: our children and young people; our shared community; our safe community; and, our cultural expression.

All figures relate to 2021, unless otherwise stated.  
Some of the key findings include:

### Our Children and Young People

- 36% of adults and 27% of young people in 2021 think that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better now than they were five years ago. These are significant decreases on the corresponding figures of 40% in 2020 for adults (2021: 36%; 2020: 40%) and 44% in 2019 for young people (2021: 27%; 2019: 44%).
- In 2021, 61% of young people have been involved in shared education. Of those who have been involved in shared education, 57% of young people have 'done projects' with pupils from other schools; 49% have 'shared classes'; and 28% 'shared sports facilities or equipment' where the pupils are from a different religious background.

### Our Shared Community

- 87% of adults in 2021 think that leisure centres in their area are 'shared and open' to both Catholics and Protestants; 87% think this about parks; 92% think this about libraries and 95% think this about shopping centres.
- 89% of adult respondents said they would prefer a mixed religion workplace; 77% a mixed religion neighbourhood; and 69% mixed religion schools.

### Our Safe Community

- 50% of adult respondents said that they see town centres as safe and welcoming places for people of all walks of life. This is a significant decrease of 4 percentage points since 2020 (2021: 50%; 2020: 54%).
- In 2021, 81% of adult respondents say they feel 'very' or 'quite' safe going to events held in a Protestant secondary school; 81% to events held in a Catholic secondary school; 65% to events held in a GAA club; and 52% to events held in an Orange Hall.

### Our Cultural Expression

- 70% of adult respondents in 2021 think that the culture and traditions of Catholic communities add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society; 64% think this about Protestant communities; and 66% think this about Minority Ethnic communities.
- Since 2020 there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of adults who feel they have an influence on decisions in their neighbourhood (2021: 17%; 2020: 24%) and Northern Ireland decisions (2021: 14%; 2020: 18%).

The report is available on the Executive Office Statistics and Research Branch website at: [www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/good-relations](http://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/good-relations)

## Bereaved parents whose partner died between 9 April 2001 and 8 February 2023 are being urged to check if they are eligible for backdated financial support before the window closes on 8 February 2024.

Eligibility for Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment was extended to cohabiting parents with dependent children by the Department for Communities in February 2023 with a 12-month window for backdating claims. The extended eligibility means parents with dependent children who were living with their co-habiting partner at the time of their partner's death may be eligible. The financial support was previously only available to bereaved parents who were married or in a civil partnership.

Bereaved parents whose partner died before 6 April 2017, have three months left to make a backdated claim for Widowed Parent's Allowance or to claim Bereavement Support Payment if their partner died on or after 6 April 2017. Bereaved parents claiming Bereavement Support Payment after the backdating 12-month window of 8 February 2024, may still receive some monthly payments, but fewer than if claimed before 8 February 2024.

Even if their children are no longer dependant, bereaved parents can make a claim as both Widowed Parent's Allowance and Bereavement Support Payment could be backdated to 30 August 2018 subject to eligibility.



Claims for Widowed Parents Allowance can be made over the telephone by ringing 0800 085 2463 option 3 or through a paper application form, which can be downloaded from NI Direct.

More details on eligibility and how to make a claim for Widowed Parents Allowance can be found at: [NI Direct](#) ([external link opens in a new window / tab](#))

Claims for Bereavement Support Payment can be made online via NI Direct or over the phone by calling 0800 085 2463 option 1 or a paper application form that can be downloaded from NI Direct.

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## Call for School Governors across Northern Ireland

A campaign has been launched by the Department of Education and the Education Authority to encourage applications for the role of school governor.

School governors play an important role in the management of a school, alongside the Principal and school staff.

Education Permanent Secretary Dr Mark Browne said:

“Becoming a school governor is a fantastic opportunity to promote the education of children and young people and contribute to your local community. Posts are available in controlled and maintained schools across Northern Ireland and I would encourage anyone with an interest to apply. You do not need to be an educational expert or be a parent to serve as a governor. You will need to have the desire to ensure children get the best possible education and bring qualities such as enthusiasm, commitment and the ability to work in a team.

“We are looking for volunteers from across the country to become school governors and make a positive difference in the lives of our young people in local schools.”

Sara Long, Chief Executive of the Education Authority said:

“School governors play a vital role in the successful management of schools. Working together with school leaders, they set the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school. They can bring experience from other

walks of life and make an important contribution using

qualities such as empathy and good judgement. Governors focus on making a genuine difference to the outcomes of children and young people in their schools.”

Eve Bremner, Chief Executive of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools said:

“Being a school governor is a rewarding role and governors provide essential leadership and support to schools and pupils. Boards of governors benefit from having people from a wide range of backgrounds, so I would encourage people to apply and become part of our network of schools.”

Successful applicants will be expected to take up the post for a four-year term of office from 2024 - 2028.

The Department and the Education Authority encourages applications from all sections of the community and previous experience, or formal qualifications are not required. Anyone aged 18 or over can volunteer to become a school governor.

If you are interested in applying to become a school governor, you can find further information at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-governor-appointments> or [School Governance | Education Authority Northern Ireland \(eani.org.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-governance)



Department of  
**Education**

# Consultations

## Recommendations of Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in NI

Department of Health

[Consultation on Recommendations of Independent Review of Children's Social Care Services in Northern Ireland | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023

## Private Tenancies Act 2022 Section 10 Electrical Safety Standards

Department for Communities

[Consultation on Private Tenancies Act 2022 Section 10 Electrical Safety Standards | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Private Tenancies Act 2022 Section 8 Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

Department for Communities

[Consultation on Private Tenancies Act 2022 Section 8 Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Closing date; 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023

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## Community and Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support - future plans

The Department is carrying out a programme of work aimed at refreshing the policy frameworks for our voluntary and community sector support. This includes agreeing with our partners on the outcomes that we should prioritise in future years. A review of sectoral needs will inform how we can better support the sector to deliver outcomes set out in any future Programme for Government.



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### Future plans

As part of this review, we engaged with a wide range of organisations in the sector, to draw together their collective experiences, understand key priorities and needs, listen to ideas and opinions, and add voice and input to help us shape future programmes for whom the refresh will deliver. We have also engaged with other departments, local government, independent funders and established a reference group comprising of a range of sectoral interests. See a [complete overview of our engagement](#).

We are now keen to share what we have learned from our engagement sessions, and seek views on our proposed Infrastructure Support Framework through a public consultation. The [proposed framework and consultation documents](#) are available.

### Have your say

We welcome views and responses on the proposed framework through our consultation events being hosted both in person and online through November and December 2023, and are inviting you to sign up for one of our events at; [Community and Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support - future plans | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

The events will take the form of roundtable discussions and are an opportunity to share thoughts, ideas or comments.



# Policy and Practice Focus

## New research from Housing Rights pinpoints mortgage holders struggling due to high interest rates and the cost of living crisis

Many households in Northern Ireland are facing an unprecedented challenge with recent mortgage interest rate rises and the cost of living crisis sees many mortgage holders facing severe financial difficulties. Since December 2021 to August 2023, there have been 14 consecutive interest rate rises from 0.1% to 5.25%. Whilst there have been no further increases since August 2023, interest rates remain stubbornly high at levels not seen in over a decade.

Research commissioned by Housing Rights reveals a concerning trend in Northern Ireland, where an increasing number of households are struggling to make their mortgage payments.

The burden of rising mortgage repayments has placed immense strain on many households, particularly those with interest-only and variable rate mortgages. It has also heightened the vulnerability of specific groups including households with a member with a disability, lower income households, older mortgage holders, those with children and those living in rural areas.

Interest-only mortgages have emerged as a major point of concern. Many borrowers with interest-only mortgages are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet as they struggle to cover monthly repayments and save for their capital payment. Almost a third (31%) of households on an interest only mortgage said their mortgage was not affordable, with a quarter (25%) reporting that they have struggled to make payments in last 12 months.

Variable rate mortgage holders are also struggling with rising interest rates. 81% of homeowners on a variable rate reported paying extra on their mortgage than they were 12 months ago, compared with 28% of those on a fixed rate. These rises in monthly repayments have created financial instability and unpredictability. One fifth (20%) of households on a variable rate mortgage reported frequently or always running out of money before payday, and 34% said their mortgage was not affordable.

Lower income households are more likely than higher-income households to be on a variable-rate or interest only mortgage and are therefore more exposed to the financial shock of interest rate rises. Over a quarter (27%) of lower income households said they were finding it difficult on their current income compared to 15% of higher income households and 29% thought their mortgage was not affordable, with over a quarter (26%) saying they had struggled to pay their mortgage in the past year.

Adding to this critical issue is the heightened

vulnerability of households with a member with a disability. Those with disabilities often face additional expenses related to healthcare, accessibility, and other essential needs. The rising mortgage crisis places an even heavier burden on these individuals and their families, who are already dealing with numerous challenges. Over half (54%) of households with someone with a disability are paying more than they were last year on their mortgage. 25% said their mortgage was not affordable, and half (50%) have had to borrow money in the past year to make ends meet.



The research also identified older mortgage holders as particularly vulnerable, with those aged 45 and over (18%) the age group most likely to say they always or frequently ran out of money before payday compared to 12% of 35 to 44 year olds and 9% of those aged under 35. One fifth (20%) of respondents aged 35 to 44 and 45 and over were more likely to say their mortgage was not affordable than those aged under 35 (9%).

Interviews informing this research were carried out in May and June of 2023, providing a snapshot in time. Since then, the Bank of England base rate has risen from 4.5% to 5.25%, and many more fixed-rate deals will have expired. With the situation worsening for many this research highlights the pressing need for action to be taken to help mortgage holders who are struggling.

Natalie Whelehan, Head of Policy and Development at Housing Rights said:

*This important research paints a picture of serious difficulties for an increasing number of households in Northern Ireland. In recent months, we have seen a disturbing increase in the number of repossession hearings in Northern Ireland. The research shows that vulnerable groups are being hardest hit. We urgently need a functioning Executive and a plan of action to be put in place to support and assist vulnerable mortgage holders as soon as possible.*

*Assistance should include ensuring access to justice, including advice and court representation for those subject to repossession hearings, which will require making additional resources available, the exploration of a fit for purpose mortgage rescue scheme for Northern Ireland, the reinstatement of Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) as a non-repayable grant that can be accessed after 13 weeks and the adoption of an end to end, 'person-first' approach by lenders and their agents to support customers and meet their needs.*

## Regulators urge banks to improve ‘inadequate’ services for charities



Lea Legrain writes;

*In recent months Supporting Communities staff have been advised by groups that they are experiencing difficulties with opening bank accounts and accessing the full range of facilities they would otherwise expect from banking institutions. This article published in Civil Society Media highlights work being undertaken by Charities’ Regulators with the industry.*

UK charity regulators have called on banks to improve their “substandard” services for charities, some of which are having their accounts closed or suspended suddenly and are experiencing “poor customer service and administrative delays”.

Today, chief executives of the Charity Commission, Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and Charity Commission for Northern Ireland wrote to the UK’s main high street banks to demand “urgent action to help hard-pressed charities. They said that the longstanding banking issues faced by the sector mean that many charities have been experiencing disruption to their operations and, in some cases, have been unable to pay their staff.”

The Charity Commission previously said that there was a “[growing sense of worry about banking services](#)” among charities, citing difficulties in accessing accounts and finding new accounts and having their accounts suddenly closed or frozen. These issues are of concern to us and should be of concern to banks’

In the letter, the regulators said that while charities help beneficiaries deal with the cost-of-living crisis, they themselves face financial difficulties and stresses that are “heightened by avoidable frustrations at the availability of bank accounts and substandard service from banks”.

They said they are aware of charities having their accounts closed or suspended for long periods of time, facing a reduction in bespoke banking services, experiencing poor customer service and administrative delays and finding that online banking is not designed to match the way they operate. Adequate banking provisions and control over cashflow are critical to robust financial governance procedures, and that underpins the sustainability of the sector,” they wrote.

“Charities need banking providers to support them in ensuring funds are appropriately and transparently managed. If inadequate provision drives charities to rely on unsafe practices – such as trustees using their own bank accounts, or keeping large cash reserves unsecured – public trust in charities may become eroded. Those impacted most tend to be smaller local organisations. These issues are of concern to us as charity regulators and should be of concern to banks.”

Processes must be ‘more straightforward’ for charities

The regulators said that some work is underway to address banking issues, but added that there is “much more that banks could be doing to make this easier for charities”.

They urged banks to improve the process for setting up a charity bank account by making it “more straightforward” and to ensure banking employees are trained adequately so that they understand how charities operate and what their needs are. Training materials would ensure bank staff are aware of the different charity structures and how they are governed, so they request correct documentation and prevent avoidable delay driven by misunderstanding within banks,” they said.

“The action needed can only happen with support and leadership from UK banks. Working with charities is key to acting as a responsible business within our society, and the best way that banks can do so is by streamlining services to help charities operate in a way that does not create serious governance issues for them.”

At the Charity Commission’s annual public meeting in Liverpool today, chief executive officer Helen Stephenson is due to say that the letter “makes clear that we consider the service charities experience is unacceptable. The scale of the response from banks needs to improve, now, and at pace.”

Muslim Charities Forum: ‘This issue has not been addressed sufficiently until now’

Fadi Itani, chief executive of the Muslim Charities Forum (MCF), said: “Muslim-led charities in particular have been disproportionately affected with sudden bank account closures under banks’ de-risking processes. Banks opt to de-bank charities in order to appease their risk appetite, rather than seeking to understand their clients’ operations and the relevant safeguarding policies charities have in place. Often this process is not

communicated nor explained to charities who have fulfilled all legal and financial obligations and who can be left without access to vital banking facilities. These place public trust and support in jeopardy and most importantly, disrupt charities' operations, and can stop vital aid reaching people in desperate need.

“We welcome the statement from the Charity Commission, as many charities have been struggling for years and are concerned that this issue has not been addressed sufficiently until now. As MCF, we call for a complete review of banking practices, including full transparency on how internal decisions are made, and how they use third-party data to inform their decision-making. We believe this is an area that the Treasury and FCA can lead on to introduce better governance and regulations to deter banks from de-banking charities without consequences, offering stronger protection for charities from such practices.”

Charity Finance Group: Progress ‘slower than we would like’

Clare Mills, director of policy and communications at the Charity Finance Group (CFG) said: “CFG welcomes this action by the Charity Commission. We have been working closely with the regulator and other infrastructure bodies since early 2022 to improve access to banking for charities, voluntary organisations, faith and community groups, all of which need to have a straightforward and secure way to manage and protect money. Although there has been some progress behind the scenes, with positive input from some of the banks and UK Finance, this has been slower than we would like.”

“There are two aspects of risk in this situation. There’s the risk to individual charities and social purpose organisations which are struggling with access to banking services, which can include having accounts closed suddenly. This can mean charities being unable to operate and support their beneficiaries, and creates a significant amount of work to unpick what’s happened and return to ‘business as usual’.

“If charities are unable to operate effectively and maintain good governance, then there is also the wider risk to the sector as a whole. This cumulative impact of access challenges is equally concerning. We don’t want to see the high levels of trust in the sector undermined by the loss of access to banking services.”



Please see the list of following jobs currently available at the Housing Executive:

- 2023-204 - Assistant Payments Manager
- 2023-207 - Senior Housing Benefit Project Manager
- 2023-206 - Assistant Solicitor
- 2023-205 - Senior Solicitor

Further information on these jobs can be found at the GetGot website which can be accessed by clicking this [link](#) and typing ‘Housing Executive’ into the search bar.

# Publications

## Attitudes to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Northern Ireland 2022

The Executive Office today published the 'Attitudes to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Northern Ireland 2022' report.

This report analyses data from the Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) survey, examining public attitudes to refugees and asylum seekers in Northern Ireland.

### Key Findings

- The proportion of respondents who agreed that asylum seekers should be allowed to stay in Northern Ireland has increased significantly between 2018, the first year of the current time series, and 2022 (from 54% to 70%).
- Fifty-one percent of respondents to the 2022 survey agreed that Northern Ireland is a society

that welcomes refugees escaping persecution in their home country – a significant increase compared with 2019 (39%), the first year of the current time series.

- The proportion of respondents who agreed that "it is our duty to provide protection to refugees who are escaping persecution in their home country" has increased significantly over time, from 65% in 2019 (the first year of the current time series) to 76% in 2022.

The report and associated data tables are available on the Statistics and Research section of the [Executive Office website](#).



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

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

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

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



Catch up on what's been happening with the Chief Constable's Report to the Board at [chief-constables-report-northern-ireland-policing-board.pdf \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](#) and the Human Rights Review of Privacy and Policing at [Human Rights Review of Privacy and Policing \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](#)

In addition the November edition of Policing Matters is available at; [Policing Matters Issue 34 | November 2023 \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](#)



The Report "Linking the Irish Environment" is available at [Linking-the-Irish-Environment-Executive-Summary-June-2023.pdf \(nienvironmentlink.org\)](#). For other NIEL publications and events, go to; [www.nienvironmentlink.org](#)



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



# Events



Chartered  
Institute of  
Housing  
Northern Ireland  
Futures

## CIH FUTURES NI SOCIAL NETWORKING EVENT

Thursday 30 November 2023  
The Bobbin Cafe, Belfast City Hall  
2pm - 4pm

- Join us for our Speed Networking Event, giving you a chance meet other young professionals working in the sector.
- Meet & greet CIH Futures team and hear their plans for 2024.
- Hear more on professionalism from CIH NI Director
- Join us afterwards for some festive fun at Belfast Christmas market.



**Don't miss out because  
space is limited**

# Training

## Volunteer Now Training Sessions

### Keeping Adults Safe: Training for Staff and Volunteers (Western Trust)



**DATE:** Tuesday 11th January 2024, 10.00 AM - 3.30 PM

**ONLINE** Free Course

**This** course is for organisations in the Western Trust area only. For other areas, please view our training calendar by clicking [here](#).

This is a FREE 1 day certificated course for those working/volunteering with adults at risk. It covers:

- awareness of vulnerability;
- legal context of adult safeguarding;
- awareness of abuse issues;
- procedures for reporting concerns;
- procedures for planning activities and assessing and managing risk;
- confidentiality issues; and
- code of behaviour for staff/volunteers.

The training will raise awareness of risk of harm in adulthood and assist voluntary, community and independent organisations working with adults at risk to achieve the minimum standards of best practice as outlined in the publication 'Keeping Adults Safe – A Shared Responsibility'.

#### **PLEASE NOTE:**

this training will be provided for Voluntary, Community and Independent sectors and a maximum of 5 participants from any one organisation will be accepted on to each training course.

### Keeping Adults Safe: Recruitment, Selection and Management (Belfast Trust area)

**DATE:** Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**ONLINE** Free Course

Joining information will be sent out 24 hours before the session.

Alternatively, we can provide tailored training for your team (across Northern Ireland): <https://>

[www.volunteernow.co.uk/training/tailored-training/](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/training/tailored-training/)

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

## Housing Rights Training

### Challenging housing decisions

Gain the skills to effectively challenge a negative housing decision in the social rented sector.

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

#### Book now

**Location;** Online

**Date;** 7 December 2023

**Time;** 10:00am to 1:00pm

This course will give you the confidence and skills to help your client challenge a negative housing decision in the social rented sector. You will gain knowledge on the law supporting challenges to housing decisions.

It will also address common problems and issues that Housing Rights advisers come up against when challenging housing decisions. We will share with you how to best address these.



#### **What we will cover**

- procedures for challenging different negative decisions
- processes around reviewing requests and submissions
- conducting homelessness investigations and reviews
- temporary accommodation pending review
- the principles of judicial review and appeals to County Court
- role of the ombudsman

#### **Who should attend?**

- housing advisers
- community / residents groups
- benefits advisers
- constituency offices
- social and hostel accommodation providers
- solicitors

## Maximising Potential with Bryson Energy – Training and Employability

**LOOK AT WHAT YOU CAN GET!**

- **£40 WEEKLY EMA (NON MEANS TESTED)**
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For more information contact the Recruitment Team on **07730 527528**

@Bryson Training and Employability  

Bryson Energy – Training and Employability is a leading provider of a range of employment and training initiatives, designed for young adults and those living with long term unemployment. We are contracted by the Department of the Economy for the delivery of Programmes such as ApprenticeshipsNI 2021, Skills for Life and Work, Up Skilling and Employability Programmes.

### Enhancing Opportunities

Bryson deliver vocational training and employment opportunities through the Skills for Life and Work Programme to 16 & 17 year olds, individuals under 22 years of age who have a disability and individuals under the age of 24 who qualify under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002).

Skills for Life and Work includes:

- No exam requirements to join
- Vocational qualifications & work experience
- £40 per week Educational Maintenance Allowance
- Travel allowance & bonuses
- Pastoral care programme and employment opportunities

Vocational Qualifications include:

- Business Administration
- Childcare
- Health and Social Care
- IT
- Retail

At Bryson we offer a comfortable learning environment with small groups of 10-12 learners. Learners also experience all round specialist support from our Learning Support Team, the team includes a full time qualified councillor, Mentors & Employability Officers.

Skills for Life and Work is designed for individual abilities and includes real work experience with an employer.

For more information on vocational qualifications available - contact Nuala on: 07730 527528



On [Facebook](#)

**Bryson**  
Energy

**Bryson**  
Training and  
Employability



## Tenant Participation & Community Development OCN Level 2

Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 10.00 AM

Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 12.30 PM

This new, improved 8-week course looks at the intersection of Tenant Participation and Community Development.

It is targeted at those working in social housing as well as community workers that engage with social housing providers in Northern Ireland.

(We will be looking at a course aimed at the Republic of Ireland in the future!)

This newly revamped course now includes a good practice visit, more case studies, and practical examples to help you develop in your work!

### Learning Objectives:

This course will ensure participants are able to:

- Understand what tenant participation is
- Understand the policy context within the UK
- Have knowledge of the tenant participation requirements in NI
- Be aware of the range of approaches to tenant participation
- Understand the components of a good tenant participation strategy
- Understand what community development is
- Have knowledge of the different approaches to community development
- Understand the community development process
- Be aware of the governance requirements

### Course Benefits:

In addition to increasing your knowledge and understanding of tenant participation and community development, this course will:

- Help you carry out your role as staff/tenant representative/volunteer
- Examine your organisation's strategy and see how your role fits in with it
- Share good practices with other housing professionals and tenant representatives
- Provide networking opportunities with like-minded professionals and volunteers
- Develop your career prospects and professional development with an accredited qualification



### Time Commitment:

This is an 8-week course that will be held on Thursdays from 1 February until 21 March from 10 until 12.30pm

Weekly sessions will be held on Zoom. One week will be an in-person day trip for a good practice visit - date to be announced.

**Cost:** £425 per person

### Registration & More Information:

Contact Siobhan O'Neill at [siobhan@supportingcommunities.org](mailto:siobhan@supportingcommunities.org) with any questions and to register your place.

## Youth Engagement in Social Housing: Unlocking the Potential

Date: Tuesday, 5th December 2023

Time: 10:00 am to 12:00 noon

Save the date for this joint online workshop on youth engagement!

We are delighted to be joining our counterparts at TPAS England, Scotland, and Wales once again to deliver an online interactive workshop. This session will be aimed at sharing good practice around engaging with young people, and we invite you to share your experiences.

More details and registration information will be available soon.





# Funding

## Nike and Spotify's Fund to Get Girls Moving Through Music

The Make Moves Fund, a social-impact-led initiative, is provided by Nike and Spotify and administered by Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) on their behalf.

The funding is for UK-based community organisations to pioneer innovative, girl-first programmes that combine music and movement with the expectation that the mental health and wellbeing of girls aged 10 to 17 years from diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds will be improved by moving through music.

UK registered charities and Community Interest Companies can apply for grants of up to £20,000 as long as they:

- Have an income of at least £40,000 in the last financial year.
- Have a bank account in the name of their organisation.
- Are able to report demonstrable impact and progress at the end of the six month grant period.

They must also have a proven track record in at least one of the following areas:

- Working with girls aged 10-17.
- Delivering programmes to encourage people to be more active.
- Working with young people to improve their mental wellbeing.

Projects need to meet the following criteria:

- Reach girls from diverse backgrounds, aged anywhere between 10-17 (inclusive). Inclusive proposals reaching anyone who identifies as a girl are welcome.
- Leverages the power of music to engage the least active girls in regular movement. 'Least active' is defined as girls who do not meet the Chief Medical Officer guidelines of taking part in sport and physical activity for an average of 60 minutes or more a day.
- Are creative, innovative, and scalable by design.
- Rooted in improving the confidence and mental wellbeing of girls.
- Co-created with input from the girls the applicant organisation work with.

The programme must run regularly and be delivered in the UK for at least four months between 1 March and 31 August 2024.

**The deadline for applications is 30 November 2023 with notification of decisions by end of January 2024. Please visit [Make Moves Fund: empowering girls through music and dance. Nike UK](#)**



## Funding to Support Youth-Led Social Action Across the UK

Co-op Foundation, in partnership with Co-op and the #iwill Fund, is offering grants of up to £20,000 for groups to support young activists, campaigners, disrupters, co-operates, and social entrepreneurs to lead social action to improve their communities and build upon Co-op's vision of 'Co-operating for a Fairer World'.

Through the Young Gamechangers Fund, a total of £600,000 is available for groups with an income of less than £250,000 that are:

- Committed to engaging in long-term projects as part of a network of young gamechangers.
- Focused on creating sustainable positive social change that aims to have a lasting impact on individuals and the wider community.
- Proposing or leading social action work that has a clear purpose.
- Rooted in the Young Gamechangers Fund priorities.

Preference will be given to groups that have previously not had access or experienced barriers to funding,

groups that are led by and for marginalised communities, and groups that prioritise youth activism and shared power.

Funding can be used for specific project costs, or core and ongoing cores such as salaries, overheads, or other activities that support the group's work.

There is a two-stage application process. Groups must submit an online eligibility test before being invited to complete a full application.

**The deadline for applications is 19 December 2023 (noon).**

**For more information please visit [£4.5m Young Gamechangers Fund - Co-op Foundation \(coopfoundation.org.uk\)](#)**



Foundation



## The Fore's Unique Funding Programme Opens for Spring 2024 Registration on 6 December 2023

The Fore is the only open-access funder in the UK offering development funding and strategic support to early-stage charities and social enterprises who have exceptional leadership, innovative idea and cost-effective solutions.

The Fore offers a 'wraparound' package of unrestricted, multi-year grant-funding (up to £30,000) training, skilled volunteers, peer-to-peer networks and impact measurement to UK registered charities, CIOs, CICs, and social enterprises with an annual revenue of less than £500,000 in the previous completed financial year.

The funding is intended to have a transformational impact on the organisations being supported by unlocking exponential growth, sustainability, efficiency or some other major step forward.

The unrestricted funding can be used for any purpose, including core costs and capital funding. The grant could help, for example, an organisation grow, increase internal capacity, serve new beneficiary groups, become more sustainable or more efficient, etc. Applications for core costs must show how the funding will move the organisation forward rather than enabling 'business as usual'.

There are three funding rounds each year (Spring, Summer, Autumn).

**The next funding round will open for registration at noon on 6 December 2023 and close at noon on 13 December 2023.**

Please visit [Home - The Fore](#)



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## Growth Events Fund

As part of the Borough Events Strategic Direction, Ards and North Down Borough Council is releasing a new multi-annual Growth Events Fund to support existing events.

The Growth Events Fund will open for applications on Monday 6th November 2023 at 12 noon and close on **Monday 27th November 2023 at 12 noon.**

To apply to the Growth Events Fund, you must meet with the Events Team to discuss the eligibility of your event. If your event is eligible, you will be sent an application form to complete.

Please contact: [tourismgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:tourismgrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk) to organise a meeting and for further information.

Please note, all successful applications are subject to budget confirmation from the rates setting process.

Organisations can only make one application annually to Council events funding schemes.

[Download Guidance Notes.](#)

Guidance Notes will be available in different formats upon request and will be available from Monday 6th November 2023.

Applicants should also refer to the [Event Management Toolkit | Ards and North Down Borough Council](#) for more information and guidance to assist you in organising your event. This includes the Event Management Guide, the Event Management Plan Template, the Risk Assessment Template and the Council Land Request Form.

Please visit [Growth Events Fund | Ards and North Down Borough Council](#)



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## Apply for a free defibrillator for your community

Applications for a free, BHF-funded defibrillator are now open. Applications will close on 15 March 2024.

All eligible UK-based community groups can apply. Each organisation can only apply for one award package.

A limited number of funded defibrillators are available. Applications will be reviewed monthly against a set of criteria so defibrillators can be awarded to communities that need them most.

For more information please visit [Defibrillator funding for your local community - BHF](#)





## Help the Homeless

Help the Homeless are a small charity with limited funds available. Please check carefully that both your organisation and your project meet the criteria before making an application.

### CRITERIA

- Your organisation must be registered with the Charity Commission in England, Wales or Northern Ireland or a registered Scottish Charity.
- We are able to help only small charities with an annual turnover of less than £500,000.
- We can only accept applications towards the funding of capital projects. We are unable to accept applications towards running/core costs. Note: we are also unable to consider requests for computers and IT equipment.
- We provide small grants of up to £5,000. We do not consider multi-year requests.

There should be a minimum period of two years between the receipt of a decision or grant from us and making a further application.

### APPLICATION FORM

All applicants must complete our [online application form](#). Please note we no longer accept applications by post or email.

### DEADLINES FOR APPLICATIONS

The quarterly deadlines for applications for funding each year are: 5pm on 15th March/15th June/15th September/15th December.

You will be informed of the Trustees' decision within eight weeks of each deadline.

### EXAMPLE GRANTS

Examples of recent grants made can be found [here](#).

For more information please visit [Applying for Funding – Help the Homeless \(help-the-homeless.org.uk\)](#)

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## The Live-Smart Community Environment Grant

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough is known worldwide for its beautiful scenery and amazing visitor experience. Council wants to preserve that for years and generations to come – this requires everyone making a conscious effort to live a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

The purpose of the LiveSmart Community Environmental Grant Programme is to provide small grants up to a maximum of £500 to local community and voluntary organisations. The grants are to give financial assistance to allow groups and organisations to:-

1. improve the general cleanliness in their local area, particularly in respect of litter
2. promote recycling, reuse and waste reduction
3. look at ways of reducing carbon footprint by taking simple, practical actions such as planting

Community groups and organisations are being encouraged and supported to keep their local area clean and tidy, promote recycling, reuse and waste reduction and have a positive impact on their carbon footprint. There are a number of specific objectives which applicants must address. Your application can address more than one objective but only one is necessary.



- RecycleSmart: aims to reduce waste by educating, engaging and inspiring us all to buy less, reuse more, recycle and compost.
- LitterSmart: aims to reduce litter through education, encouraging responsible disposal and supporting local people to carry out litter lifts.
- ClimateSmart: aims to reduce our carbon footprint by increasing our knowledge of sustainability and empowering change with simple, practical actions such as planting vegetables, fruit, native shrubs and pollinator plants

Applicants can request a grant up to a maximum of £500. You can only apply for one grant per year. Applications for the LiveSmart Community Environmental Grant Programme should be submitted online at <http://grants.ccgbcapps.com/>

This is a rolling programme and will remain open until all funds are expended.



## Tyrone Three Community Benefit Fund (Gortfinbar, Eshmore and Altamuskin)

This local community fund has been set up by Energia Renewables, working in close partnership with local groups from the areas surrounding the Tyrone 3 Windfarms. The Tyrone 3 Windfarms comprises three farms, which are:

- Altamuskin (6 wind turbines / 14.1MW)
- Eshmore (3 wind turbines / 7.0MW)
- Gortfinbar (5 wind turbines / 15.0.MW)

The windfarms are situated in close proximity to each other between the town of Ballygawley and the villages of Carrickmore, Sixmilecross and Beragh in County Tyrone. They are located in the Mid Ulster District and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council areas respectively.

Energia has set up the fund to ensure that the wind farm, whilst having obvious environmental benefits, will also provide significant social and economic benefits to the local community. The Tyrone 3 Windfarms Community Benefit Fund will be administered by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

Funding will be available to local community projects that are planned and run for the benefit of the local population and are within 7 miles of the centre of the three windfarms – [as per map](#).

In the event of oversubscription, priority will be given to projects based within 5 miles of the centre of the three windfarms – [as per map](#).

The fund will support projects addressing issues within the following theme areas:

- Energy efficiency and sustainability
- Social, cultural or sporting benefit for the local community
- Educational issues with a sustainability angle
- Environmental benefit or economic benefit

Fund priorities:

- Projects that improve the utilisation of existing community space in areas within the fund boundary.
- Contributions towards running/administration costs and for purchasing additional equipment to expand and support new and existing services/activities in each of the areas.
- Particular emphasis will be placed on funding activities/services that are specifically aimed at older people, people with disabilities, children and teenagers (including pre-school children), providing skills development of local people and promoting health related activities or services.
- Applicants are encouraged to network, share best practice and co-operate more between the areas. Projects which demonstrate the ability to collaborate,

network and share best practice will be encouraged and supported.

- Projects and programmes offering invaluable advice and information and signposting on key Rural issues should be supported e.g. Farm Support Services, Welfare & Benefits and Parenting/Family issues etc.
- Outdoor/Environmental projects will be considered in terms of encouraging a healthier and active community as well as protecting and enhancing the local environment.
- Wider community events and programmes that encourage greater community interaction (including cross community aspects) encompassing the local rich and varied cultural aspects of music, drama, dance and sport.

Examples of who can apply:

- Constituted voluntary organisations and community groups
- Local youth groups

Examples of projects that the fund might support:

- Local cultural projects recording and researching history
- Establishment of a “Men’s Shed” or other similar initiative
- Small capital works to a community facility
- Environmental awareness projects
- Activities supporting young people, the elderly, those with disabilities
- Community wide events
- Strategic projects that will benefit a number of communities, including partnership applications

Grants size:

Grants up to £5,000

Closing date for applications is 8th December 2023 at 1pm

For more information and to apply, please visit [Tyrone Three Community Benefit Fund \(Gortfinbar, Eshmore and Altamuskin\) - Community Foundation Northern Ireland \(communityfoundationni.org\)](https://www.communityfoundationni.org)





## Digital Evolution Programme for NI Arts Organisations

Funding is available to provide arts organisations in Northern Ireland with skills in the use of digital technology to create digital art.

The Organisations Digital Evolution Awards programme aims to support those arts organisations who are making digital art for the first time or are working with digital or immersive technology which they have not used previously.

Applications will be accepted from arts organisations, registered charities and other non-profit organisations. Collaborative applications from organisations working together in cross-discipline projects and activities are encouraged.

Examples of the types of projects that the programme will support include:

- Creation of a virtual environment or augmented reality environment, such as augmented reality visual arts or sound overlay on venues or geographical spaces.
- Using technology, such as 3D rendering and printing, to create artwork digitally which can either exist digitally or be manufactured into 3D physical

objects.

- Using technology to translate data into artistic content, for example algorithms that create music or visual content from data input.
- App development for the delivery of artistic content - this could include gamification or making an artistic experience for consumption on digital devices.
- Piloting new forms of support to individual artists or organisations that results in the creation of digital art.

Projects must take place between 1 February 2024 and 31 January 2025.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available.

**The deadline for applications is 1 December 2023 (12 noon).**

**For more information and to apply, please visit [National Lottery Organisations Digital Evolution... | Arts Council NI \(artscouncil-ni.org\)](#)**



## Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust Announce Themes for 2024/25 Funding

The Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust has announced the themes for 2024 and 2025 for which it will offer funding.

The Trust operates a three-year rotation system, with different fields of interests being funded each year.

In 2024, support will be available for the following priorities:

- Rounds 1 and 2 – Disability, specifically employment and training for people living with disabilities to ensure better access.
- Rounds 3 and 4 – Food Poverty (due to the increasing levels across the UK).

In 2025, support will be available for the following priorities (full details published toward the end of 2024):

- Rounds 1 and 2 - Access to the Arts.
- Rounds 3 and 4 - Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

The project must fall within the relevant category for the year the application is submitted, and organisations may only make one application during any one year.

The Trust awards grants of either £1,000 or £5,000 depending on the grant round.

### The Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust

Organisations registered with the Charity Commission (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or OSCR, or exempt from registration, can apply.

The level of grant awarded is determined by the income of the charity:

- Grants of £1,000 are available for charities with an operating income of between £100,000 and £1 million.
- Grants of £5,000 are available for charities with a minimum operating income of £1 million. There is no maximum level.

There are four grant rounds each year. Charities may only apply for one grant per calendar year.

**The first round is expected to open on 1 February 2024 and close on 29 February 2024.**

**For more information please visit [Home - The Austin and Hope Pilkington Trust \(austin-hope-pilkington.org.uk\)](#)**



## Sea-Changers' Marine Conservation Social Fund Reopens for 2023

Sea Changers is offering up to seven grants of between £3,000 and £5,000 for UK-based charities and other not-for-profit groups to deliver marine conservation projects that also deliver health and wellbeing outcomes for participants and disadvantaged communities.



health benefits of volunteering.

Through the Marine Conservation Social Fund, a total of £23,000 is available in 2023 for:

- Marine conservation education and engagement projects - such as campaigns or activities reaching out to and including those who do not access/engage with the sea and educating them about marine conservation issues and what they can do to help.
- Citizen science and/or practical/direct action projects – particularly where they engage disadvantaged communities and where they can show increased community cohesion/engagement and personal/

Sea-Changers is particularly interested in grassroots projects that galvanise community action, projects that increase the number of people acting for marine conservation, projects that may be formed through partnerships between marine conservation organisations and social welfare organisations, and pilot programmes that might be continued, expanded, or replicated with additional funding in future years.

**The deadline for applications is 22 December 2023.**

**For more information and to apply, please visit [Marine Conservation Social Fund 2023 | Sea-Changers](#)**

## Windrush Day Grant Scheme Opens for 2024 Funding Applications

Funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and managed by Near Neighbours, the Windrush Day Grant Scheme 2024 will focus on bringing communities together across different ages and ethnic backgrounds to commemorate, celebrate and educate their local area about the contribution of the Windrush Generation and their descendants across the United Kingdom.

22 June each year marks National Windrush Day and projects must include a lead event or activity on this date. All further events and activities must take place within the 10-week period of 8 June 2024 to 31 August 2024.

Projects need to focus primarily on at least one of the following overarching aims of the scheme:

- To educate people about the Windrush story.
- To foster a greater sense of national pride and recognition of the historic and ongoing contributions made by the Windrush generation and their descendants to UK society.
- To develop the skills and entrepreneurial ambitions of young people.



- To celebrate and commemorate the continued contributions of the Windrush generation to the UK. There is a total funding pot of £500,000 to fund activities across England and Northern Ireland with grants of between £5,000 and £50,000:

- Tier 1: smaller projects between £5,000 and £25,000.
- Tier 2: larger projects between £25,000 and £50,000.

Funding for all approved projects will be released in April 2024.

**The deadline for funding applications is 17 December 2023.**

**For more information and to apply please visit [Windrush Day Grant Scheme Applications — Near Neighbours \(near-neighbours.org.uk\)](#)**

## Funding for places

Our main grants programme provides support for places. These grants are for capital initiatives, i.e. buildings (new build or refurbishment) and equipment.

We fund a broad range of organisations working across the fields of education, science & medicine, health & disability, heritage, humanities & the arts.

### Who can apply?

Before you apply for funding, please check the types of places we fund and their specific funding criteria. You can also take our [eligibility quiz](#) to see if we could support your project.

For more information please visit [Funding for places - The Wolfson Foundation](#)



## Belfast City Council's Small Grants 2024-25 Tranche 1

Belfast City Council's Small Grants 2024-25 Tranche 1 are now open for applications for the grants listed below. The submission deadline for receipt of applications is **12 noon on Friday 12th January 2024**.



**Belfast**  
City Council

1. Community Festivals Fund
2. Arts & Heritage
3. Good Relations
4. Parks Events
5. Sports Events
6. S4S Large Development Grant
7. S4S Small Development Grant
8. S4S Hospitality Grant
9. S4S Sporting Individual Grant
10. Community Summer Scheme

For further details, guidance notes and to apply online please visit our website [www.belfastcity-grants.com](http://www.belfastcity-grants.com) or contact the Central Grants Unit Belfast City Council at [cgugrants@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:cgugrants@belfastcity.gov.uk)

## Funding Clinic Sessions

**Tuesday, 5th December 2023**  
**10.00 am - 3.00 pm**

Let's talk about your group's 2024/25 programme of events and get ahead of the game by securing funding early! Planning ahead is key to the success of your group and its activities.

HCN members can sign up for a one-to-one funding support session with Anita Doonan, Funding and Social Value Officer. You can meet by phone or video call, whatever you prefer.

Start thinking about your next projects by asking questions like:

- What funding to apply for
- How to structure your application and plan accurate budgets
- How to carry out a community survey
- How to prepare for action planning
- How to do pre and post-monitoring and evaluation of your project

## Book Your Place

Please [fill in this form](#) to request an appointment.

The funding clinic will run from 10 am - 3 pm with 30-minute slots available for individuals or groups to discuss their funding needs one-on-one with our funding officer.

This service is free for HCN members. If you are interested in becoming a member of the [Housing Community Network](#), please get in touch!

