

building good relations



community cohesion

**Housing
Executive**

The Regional Strategic Housing Authority

This document is available in alternative formats.
Please contact the Community Cohesion Unit.



foreword

The Housing Executive's duty is to ensure housing is provided on the basis of need. There is no doubt that community division and segregation exerts a high price which, in housing terms, prevents the best use being made of existing housing and land. Those who need housing in the social and affordable sectors must have greater choice. If we are to meet housing need in all its forms we must work to make progress. In this context the promotion of good relations is a key Housing Executive objective.

With a wealth of experience at local level the Housing Executive published its first community relations strategy in March 2004. In doing so we made an explicit commitment in our 2004/2005 Corporate and Business Plan to promote good relations. Among the Housing Executive's aims is a commitment to promote mixed housing where it is practicable, desirable and safe.

This is a summary of some of the key principles which underpin the Housing Executive's approach. Alongside our aims and objectives we also explain the work of the organisation's Community Cohesion Unit. This new unit is charged with translating our community relations objectives into actions on the ground.

Our approach is set within five themes:

- 1. Flags, Emblems and Sectional Symbols**
- 2. Segregation/Integration**
- 3. Race Relations**
- 4. Interface Areas**
- 5. Communities in Transition.**

Successful implementation calls for joined up thinking and working between communities, agencies and individuals. Community cohesion depends ultimately on trust and safety. While the delivery of this is beyond the remit of a single agency, the Housing Executive will continue to make its contribution through its policies, partnerships, investment and resource allocation to speed up the pace of change.

This booklet is supported by a comprehensive implementation plan with clear, measurable targets the details of which are available through the Community Cohesion Unit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Rowntree', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Rowntree
Chairman

background

Over the years the Housing Executive has made a substantial contribution to community relations through its mainstream policies and initiatives. Examples include our local presence in communities and our long-standing relationship with community groups through the Housing Community Network. We have also been to the forefront in dealing with community conflict responding to intimidation and property damage, and implementing the SPED (Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings) and the POPPI (Protection of Private Properties at Interfaces) schemes. More recently we have worked with local groups to clean up estates and remove the manifestations of division. We are also working with the Common Ground Consortium, Habitat for Humanity and the Mediation Service. The Housing Executive has a wealth of experience at local level and the Community Cohesion Unit will develop and use this experience.



our aims

The Housing Executive has a statutory duty in terms of Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In this context the Housing Executive has a key role in promoting community relations and community cohesion.

Our strategic objective to promote good relations is linked to the following aims.

The Housing Executive will:

- Respond quickly and effectively to the needs of people in danger as a result of community conflict.
- Work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society.
- Respect the rights of people who choose to live in single identity neighbourhoods.
- Facilitate and encourage mixed housing as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.

our principles

Our commitment to good relations is based on the following values and principles:

- Housing need continues to set the context for housing policy.
- We understand the impact poor community relations have on the delivery of housing services.
- We believe no housing policies or programmes should endanger the lives of tenants, staff, communities or property.
- We will support individual housing choice whether it is exercised in favour of single identity or mixed neighbourhoods.
- Partnership working will underpin the analysis of the problems and the responses designed to enhance community cohesion.



Housing Executive

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Housing and Health

We will work with health professionals to ensure that housing programs provide maximum support to health care.

Housing and Community Care

We will provide the necessary environment, including adapted housing, to enable people to live in their own homes as long as possible.

Housing and Community Involvement

We will continue to promote community development by working in partnership with local groups such as the Northern Ireland Volunteers and Northern Ireland Volunteer Centre, and the Rural Community Development Council, Belfast.



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what does community cohesion mean?

Community cohesion is about:

- Creating a common vision and sense of belonging.
- Valuing and appreciating people from different backgrounds and circumstances.
- Providing similar life opportunities for people from different backgrounds.
- Developing strong, positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.
- Brokering good relations between groups and communities.

objectives

- To contribute to the creation of more stable, safer neighbourhoods.
- To work in partnership with others to address the complex housing needs of a divided society.
- To respect the rights of people who choose to live in either single identity or integrated neighbourhoods.



The Community Cohesion Unit is responsible for 5 priority themes

flags, emblems & sectional symbols

The Community Cohesion Unit will;

- Identify areas ready for positive intervention.
- Consult and support local communities about the removal of sectional symbols
- Use **Creating Common Ground/ Community Safety** as vehicles for addressing sectional symbols.
- Focus on more acceptable expressions of cultural identity.
- Propagate models of 'good practice'.



residential segregation/ integration

The Community Cohesion Unit will;

- Support people who choose to live in single identity or mixed neighbourhoods.



- Analyse and assist in the sustainability of mixed estates.
- Facilitate and encourage mixed housing schemes in the social and affordable sector as far as this is practicable, desirable and safe.
- Work with the Department for Social Development, Housing Associations and others to bring proposals forward for two pilot projects of mixed housing schemes in the medium term.

race relations

The Community Cohesion Unit will;

- Demonstrate a clear and positive commitment to tackling race issues through the Housing Executive's Race Relations policy.
- Contribute towards race relations on a strategic and operational level through effective partnership working.



communities in transition

The Community Cohesion Unit will;

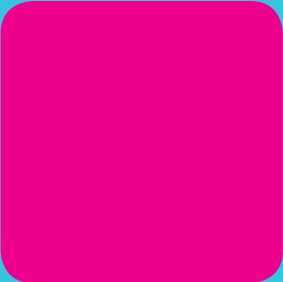
- Identify communities at risk.
- Create the environment to allow timely and appropriate interventions.
- Engage with adjacent communities to foster an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and understanding.
- Conduct regular audits and prepare local plans.

interface areas

The Community Cohesion Unit will;

- Develop opportunities to bring communities together.
- Continue capacity building in areas of weak social infrastructure.
- Continue to invest in improvement through environmental initiatives.
- Continue to invest in improvement through regeneration programmes.





The Northern Ireland Housing Executive Community Cohesion Unit

“Good Relations is not a new concept to the Housing Executive. There is a wealth of experience dealing with these issues at local level. The Community Cohesion Unit is about developing and using this experience.”



Jennifer Hawthorne
Head of Community Cohesion Unit
Tel. 028 9031 829
Email: jennifer.Hawthorne@NIHE.GOV.UK

Alfred Abolarin
Assistant Principal Community Cohesion Officer
Tel. 028 9031 8842
Email: alfred.abolarin@nihe.gov.uk

Linda Hutchinson
Assistant Principal Community Cohesion Officer
Tel. 028 9031 8236
Email: linda.hutchinson@nihe.gov.uk

Carol McAllister
Senior Community Cohesion Officer
Tel. 028 9031 8304
Email: carol.mcallister@nihe.gov.uk

James Leighton
Community Cohesion Administrative Officer
Tel. 028 9031 8234
Email: james.leighton@nihe.gov.uk

The Housing Executive would like to hear your views on building good relations.

Please contact the Community Cohesion Unit.

www.nihe.gov.uk
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