



Date: 16th February 2015

Welcome to the 65th Edition of Supporting Communities NI E-Biz



Housing Executive Housing Executive rents set for 2015/16

Housing Executive rents for 2015/16 will increase by 4.85%, an average of £3.08 per week. This compares to a 4.2% increase last year. The new rent levels will be effective from 6th April 2015 and will bring average rents to £66.60 a week, excluding rates.

Tenants will be informed of their new rent levels during February. Approximately 75% of tenants receive full or partial Housing Benefit support towards their rent. We currently manage some 88,000 homes across Northern Ireland.

Housing Executive rents continue to remain much lower than local housing associations in Northern Ireland, and around £20 a week less than the average rent for similar local authority accommodation in England.

The Housing Executive would encourage any tenants, either in the private or social sector who are having difficulty paying their rent to seek advice from their local Housing Executive office as their level of income may entitle them to claim Housing Benefit. Further information is available from the housing benefit section or Tel: 03448 920 902.

SCNI reminds all community and voluntary groups in NI to ensure that they are prepared for registration as a charity



Please note that this includes all community/voluntary groups e.g. 50+ years groups, local residents groups, local community groups, youth groups, issue based groups etc.

Please make sure that the Commission knows that your group exists and that they have your contact details for registration. You can do this **now** by checking the registration lists at www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/

SCNI is a 'helper group' for the Commission; if you require any help and assistance, please contact your local Liaison Officer or our main office.

POP NI – The Online Community Guide for Older People in Northern Ireland



A new web resource for older people in Northern Ireland and those who work with them has been released and it is free to use for all. POP NI (www.popni.net) is a web portal that offers easy links to information for older people across Northern Ireland, their families and people who work with them.

Funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and managed by Advice NI, POP NI draws its support from the leading charitable organisations such as Age NI, Engage With Age and Age Sector Platform. The office of the Commissioner for Older People and the Digital Inclusion Unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel have also helped guide the project.

Project Manager of POP NI, Ciarán Arthurs, says:

"POP NI has been designed specifically for older people and older people helped test it at every stage. The website is easy to navigate and offers visitors a wealth of information within a couple of clicks. As well as links to how older people can make their money stretch further and maximise their income, POP NI signposts visitors to organisations that can offer free and independent advice."

What makes the website so innovative and useful, though, is that you can make POP NI work for you and claim it as your own. Organisations big and small, from the leading charities to the local knit-and-natter group can upload their information and have a web presence free of charge. This means that you and your group can upload relevant information such as meetings, events and news, and older people can find that information with ease."

Ciarán and the team are available to travel to meet older people's groups and age sector organisations throughout Northern Ireland to show them how they can use POP NI for their own benefit.

If you would like further information, visit POP NI (www.popni.net) or contact Ciarán directly at Advice NI . Telephone: 028 9064 5919 Email: ciaran@adviceni.net.



Business on Board is a Business in the Community initiative that aims to strengthen the not-for-profit sector in Northern Ireland by increasing business representation and impact on the boards and management committees of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. This is done through a free web-based matching service.

A number of Social Enterprises have already benefited from this programme and have used it several times to help them find new Board members. For example, The Orcharville Society, The Now Group, Extra Care, Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd, have all found new Board members through Business on Board.

So if you need to strengthen your Board by finding people with specific skills such as Finance, Marketing, Human Resource, Strategic Planning, Business Development, then don't delay and register on Business on Board.

To register just go to the website www.businessonboardni.org and click on the Register as an Organisation button on top right of home page. Once registered you will be able to see which business candidates are matching with your organisation. You can then decide if you want to contact any of them, which you can do directly through the website.

If you want any more details then feel free to contact Denise Cranston, on 02890 460606 or email denise.cranston@bitcni.org.uk.



NICVA wants to reinvigorate how the voluntary and community sector engages in policy work

There is no doubt that there are challenging times ahead for the voluntary and community sector and the people and communities they work with. But in tough times the worst they can do is sit back, let it happen and hope they can weather the storm.

NICVA has been reviewing how it supports members, help them be more resilient and ultimately achieve their aims and objects.

Given the current situation across the sector and a wide spread sense of disengagement by and from government, it would be easy for them to become disillusioned and deflated. But that would be doing their organisations and the people they work with a huge disservice.

There is such a wealth of experience, expertise and passion in voluntary and community organisations that genuinely can make a huge difference to life in Northern Ireland. So, with this in mind and with the 2016 elections firmly in sight NICVA has developed a few new ways of facilitating the sector to come together and focus on creating positive social change; starting with three new opportunities:

- ♦ the new Departmental Monitoring Groups will keep a close eye on the work of each department.
- ♦ Policy Hacks are a totally new way of coming together to develop solutions to social, economic and environmental issues.
- ♦ the *Influence > Access* Policy Pop Ups will provide insights into how key decisions are made.

For more information on each of these, visit: <http://www.nicva.org/article/policy-reboot>

Five free tools that will boost support for your charity



Imagine if you create an influx of support for your organisation without emptying your pockets? **These five free tools are a great start.**

1. Improve with the click of a button: What if you could just fill out a form and it told you all of the things that you were doing wrong or could do better, and then showed you how? If you haven't heard about it yet, take a look at Big Potential. It's a diagnostic tool that lets you do exactly this. Following an online questionnaire, a few helpful steps including an advice session with a funder indicate what you need to do to secure different types of funding from simple loans to social investment.

2. Make your charity business plan irresistible to funders: A business plan is often treated as a document required to satisfy a particular funder. But a really good business plan can do much more. It can focus your organisation's thinking and articulate your future plans in a way that will communicate clearly with all your stakeholders, including diverse funders offering grants, loans or social investment. Charities and social enterprises that work on their business plans gain more control over their future and are able to reach more people. The Cranfield Trust shares business expertise with diverse charitable organisations and supports them to develop business plans free.

3. Gain supporters through advertising: AdWords, Google's online advertising program, is a great way to promote your mission among donors, volunteers and other stakeholders. You can place an advert, which is displayed to people who are already searching for things relevant to the work you do. These are the people most likely to respond to your message. You can choose where your ad appears, on which specific websites and in which geographical areas and you can monitor its impact. Google AdGrants is the non-profit version of AdWords, designed to help you promote your organisation online. If you meet the eligibility criteria the service is **free until you've used \$10,000 worth of advertising.**

4. Keep in touch with your community: Email newsletters are a great way to keep in touch with your supporters, update them or point them towards helpful information. Mailchimp is email newsletters made really simple, and the best thing is it is free if you have fewer than 2000 subscribers so it is perfect for smaller charities and social enterprises. If you're looking to grow, sharing your content is a great way to do this and Mailchimp's email marketing guides are a good place to start.

5. Make yourself heard online: In a digital age you can introduce your organisation to a potentially huge online audience, explain your mission and the work that you do. Via blogs, tweets or simply on a website you can tell your story. People are bombarded with text and information online so they need to be able to grasp what you are telling them quickly if they are going to act on it. The Hemingway App is a quick trick you can use to help you write and make your blog or web copy reader friendly. Just copy and paste and it will tell you if you're being too wordy.

If any of these pointers leave you wanting more information, let the Charity Bank know and they can put more guidance together in the Charity Bank February newsletter. Email idegrave@charitybank.org



Introducing Community Shares!



SCNI would like to introduce you to an alternative financing model that is suitable for many community groups, charities and social enterprises.

All enterprises need capital to start, to grow, and to be sustainable. This finance has to come from somewhere, and Community Shares enables this investment to come from the very community which an enterprise intends to benefit. These community shareholders invest in local enterprises to provide goods and services to meet local needs and only expect a fair and modest return on their investment, if any.

Co-Operative Alternatives, with the support of the Building Change Trust, is helping local Northern Ireland groups learn more about Community Share Offers and can even offer full hands-on support to a select number of groups with a viable enterprise that meets a need in the community.

Find out more <http://www.coopalternatives.coop/community-shares/> or contact Tiziana O'Hara on 028 90736075, mobile 07858317634 or by email tiziana@coopalternatives.coop

Assembly News



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Welfare Reform Bill Presented to the Assembly

At the full meeting of the Assembly held on Tuesday 10th February 2015 Minister Storey presented the Welfare Reform Bill to the Assembly. The Bill and report of the debate is available at; <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2015/02/10&docID=222650>

Weekly Answers Booklet 2013 / 2014

The Written Answers Booklet (WAB) is no longer be available in PDF format.

An electronic version of the Written Answer Book is now available via AIMS at the following link: <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/questions/weeklywrittens.aspx>. It provides questions and answers in a similar format to the WAB, i.e. on a weekly basis by department. However, unlike the weekly WAB, it will be updated daily as answers become available and it is also readily searchable for key words, reference numbers or phrases.

Assembly Round-up

A daily digest of events and sessions at the assembly is available on the Assembly website at; <http://blog.niassembly.gov.uk/>

At the full Assembly meeting held on Monday 2nd February 2015, the Minister for Social Development responded to questions on Traveller accommodation consultation, Trinity Housing Association, Housing Repossessions Taskforce on Mortgage defaulting, social housing new-build targets and fuel poverty. The full report of the session is available at;

<http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2015/02/02&docID=221588>

Social Development Committee

The minutes of all recent meetings including minutes of evidence, and the forward work programme for the committee are available at;

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/social-development/>



Charity Commission for Northern Ireland consultation on draft equality guidance

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has opened a public consultation on new equality guidance for Northern Ireland charities. The guidance, and information on the consultation, can be viewed on our website at www.charitycommissionni.org.uk

The consultation will run from Tuesday 3rd February 2015, for 12 weeks, closing at 5pm on Tuesday 28th April 2015.

How can you respond?

You can take part in the consultation using any of the following methods:

1. Complete an online questionnaire available at: www.charitycommissionni.org.uk
2. Download a consultation response form from www.charitycommissionni.org.uk complete and either:
 - ◆ Email it to consult@charitycommissionni.org.uk or
 - ◆ Post it to Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, 257 Lough Road, Lurgan, Northern Ireland, BT66 6NQ
3. Contact Ann Breslin, policy and research officer, on 028 3832 0220 to discuss your views
4. Attend one of four panel discussions as detailed below:
 - ◆ Thursday 26th February 2015, 10 am . 12.30pm at Verbal Arts Centre, Bishop Street, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 6PU
 - ◆ Tuesday 3rd March 2015, 2pm . 4.30pm at the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP
 - ◆ Wednesday 25th March 2015, 2pm . 4.30pm at Rural Community Network Building, 38a Oldtown Street, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, BT80 8EF
 - ◆ Tuesday 14th April 2015, 6pm . 8.30pm at Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, 257 Lough Road, Lurgan, BT66 6NQ

All are welcome to attend these panels however places are limited and must be reserved in advance by contacting consult@charitycommissionni.org.uk

Social Housing Reform Programme



Involving Tenants in Social Housing Delivery

The DSD recently launched the Tenant Participation Strategy for Northern Ireland: 2015-2020 on the 15th January 2015. This strategy recognises the existing good practice in tenant engagement and participation in Northern Ireland and aims to:

- ♦ build on the good work already going on
- ♦ work to ensure consistency throughout the sector
- ♦ encourage and support tenants to become involved at a level they feel comfortable with

We want all those with an interest to provide their views on the role tenants can play in shaping the delivery of social housing and the services they receive from social landlords.

As part of the Tenant Participation Strategy Consultation, three public events will be held:

- ♦ **23rd February 2015 – 10.30am at Belfast Central Mission, Grosvenor House**
- ♦ **3rd March 2015 – 10.30am at City Hotel, Derry/Londonderry**
- ♦ **10th March 2015 – 10.30am at Craigavon Civic Centre**

You can register your interest for one of these events at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Public-Events-Invitation-Tenant-Participation-Strategy-NI-2015-2020>

The consultation period will run from 15th January - 8th April 2015



Office of the
**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**
www.ofmdfmini.gov.uk

Ensure Your Voice is Heard - Community Engagement Workshops

Delivering Social Change sets out to improve lives in Northern Ireland in a new, holistic way. It is about collaborative working, not just across government departments, but also with service users, their families and communities, as well as with local stakeholder organisations.

In order to improve future outcomes for everyone here, we need to fully understand the issues that our society faces and work collectively to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities and support throughout their lives.

Delivering Social Change is hosting four half day stakeholder engagement workshops (mornings) during February 2015 in order to explore in more depth a number of key themes that have been identified from earlier meetings.

These workshops will give you the opportunity to discuss these themes in more detail and to contribute to an information gathering process for future policy development and potentially the next Programme for Government.

The workshops will take place on:

Tuesday 17th February 2015
Tara Centre, Omagh

Thursday 19th February 2015
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), Belfast

Tuesday 24th February 2015
Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast

Thursday 26th February 2015
Millennium Forum, Derry/Londonderry

To register for one of the Delivering Social Change Community Engagement Workshops, go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/?sm=BjCvAU6ipjB6jy6qfgQdUQ%3d%3d>

Places are limited so register today to avoid disappointment. Please note this invitation is not transferrable and should you be unable to attend, your place will be reallocated.



SCNI Training Update

SCNI is pleased to announce a number of new courses that are now available through our Training Team:



Effective Conversations

This course aims to guide participants through a structured model for focused conversations. This training walks participants through the process of; identifying the focus of the conversation, gathering the facts, reflecting on personal interpretation, identifying purpose and implications of a conversation, actioning and making decisions and closure and next steps.

Group Facilitation Skills

This course aims to guide participants through a structured model for facilitation of groups. The training walks participants through the process of; identifying the facilitation question, identifying what the group wants to know by the end of the session, setting the scene, generating ideas, clustering ideas into themes, gaining a consensus agreement and confirming an answer to the sessions question.

Level 3 Award in Community Development

Previously the Level 3 in Community Capacity Building, the new Level 3 Award in Community Development is now a nationally recognised qualification. The award is the ideal opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of community development approaches, group dynamics and community diversity.

If you are working in the community and are keen to get new skills, ideas and tools to help do more of what you do best, then this course is for you. The Level 3 Award in Community Development is a nationally recognised qualification that could give your projects a real boost, and provide you with an edge to really set you apart with funders and employers.

For further information on our training or for a copy of our training brochure or manual, please do not hesitate to contact our Training Officers:

Beverley Todd

Tel: 02825 645676

Email: beverley.todd@supportingcommunitiesni.org

Stephanie Kenny-Quinn

Tel: 02866 329677

Email: stephanie.kenny@supportingcommunitiesni.org

Housing Rights Training Course

Housing Advice Training Programme



Common Selection Scheme

Belfast - Housing Rights Service

Thursday, February 26th, 2015 - 10.00am to 4.00pm

5 hours

Accessing social housing provided by NIHE and housing associations is via an assessment made under the Common Selection Scheme. Advising clients regarding accessing social housing requires knowledge of how the Common Selection Scheme operates and the Housing (NI) Order 1988. Advisers need to understand points entitlement under the Selection Scheme and maximise points for clients.

Additionally, they should understand when a client may be eligible for a (management) transfer or require a referral for a complex needs assessment.

This one day course will enable advisors to understand the impact and application of assessment changes on prospective tenants.

The course will focus on:

- ◆ Accessing social rented housing
- ◆ Assessment and ranking of applicants
- ◆ Understand the triggers to refer for a homelessness investigation
- ◆ Definitions of statutory homeless . a full duty applicant
- ◆ Transfers
- ◆ Complex needs assessments
- ◆ Allocations
- ◆ Challenging decisions

Note that these courses are not free and more information including the cost of each course is available on the Housing Rights website at:

http://www.housingrights.org.uk/training-events?utm_source=Housing+Rights+Service+Newsletter&utm_campaign=3e5e03b085-New+Year+New+Courses1+8+2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_39474b94a3-3e5e03b085-368494881

Publications

Scope

New Issue of Scope Magazine

The January edition of NICVA's social policy magazine, Scope, is out now. Articles this month include a look at the Stormont House Agreement, an analysis of the current crisis in our health service and an interview with Frances McCandless from The Charity Commission.

Subscribe to Scope via the website at: http://scopeni.nicva.org/newsletter-signup?utm_source=eNews+subscribers&utm_campaign=f4c406b650-eNews_12_January_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3f6979e667-f4c406b650-313465361

Reform Inform- Newsletter on the progress of local government reform

The department of the Environment has published a further newsletter on local government reform. The September issue details capacity building for new councillors and regulations and statutory guidance. The latest edition can be accessed at; http://www.doeni.gov.uk/reform_newsroom



NIEL EU Matters December 2014

NI Environment Link's Monthly look at European Environmental News is available at: <http://www.nienvironmentlink.org/news/NIEL-EU-Matters-December-2014>

NIEL Assembly News

Keep up to date with all the environment related news and events taking place at Stormont. To see the main agenda items to be discussed this week at the Assembly and view NIEL's monthly review of the outcome of various Statements, Debates and Questions on environmental issues go to: <http://www.nienvironmentlink.org/news/assembly-news/>



Youth Justice Agency Stakeholder E-Briefing

This briefing is designed to keep you abreast of developments right across the Agency. For regular updates, visit the website of the Agency at: <http://www.youthjusticeagency.cyni.gov.uk>

Inpartnership- the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships Newsletter

The latest edition of *inpartnership* now available to view online at the link below.
http://www.pcsp.org/Homepage/final_pdf_-_inpartnership_feb_2015_issue.pdf

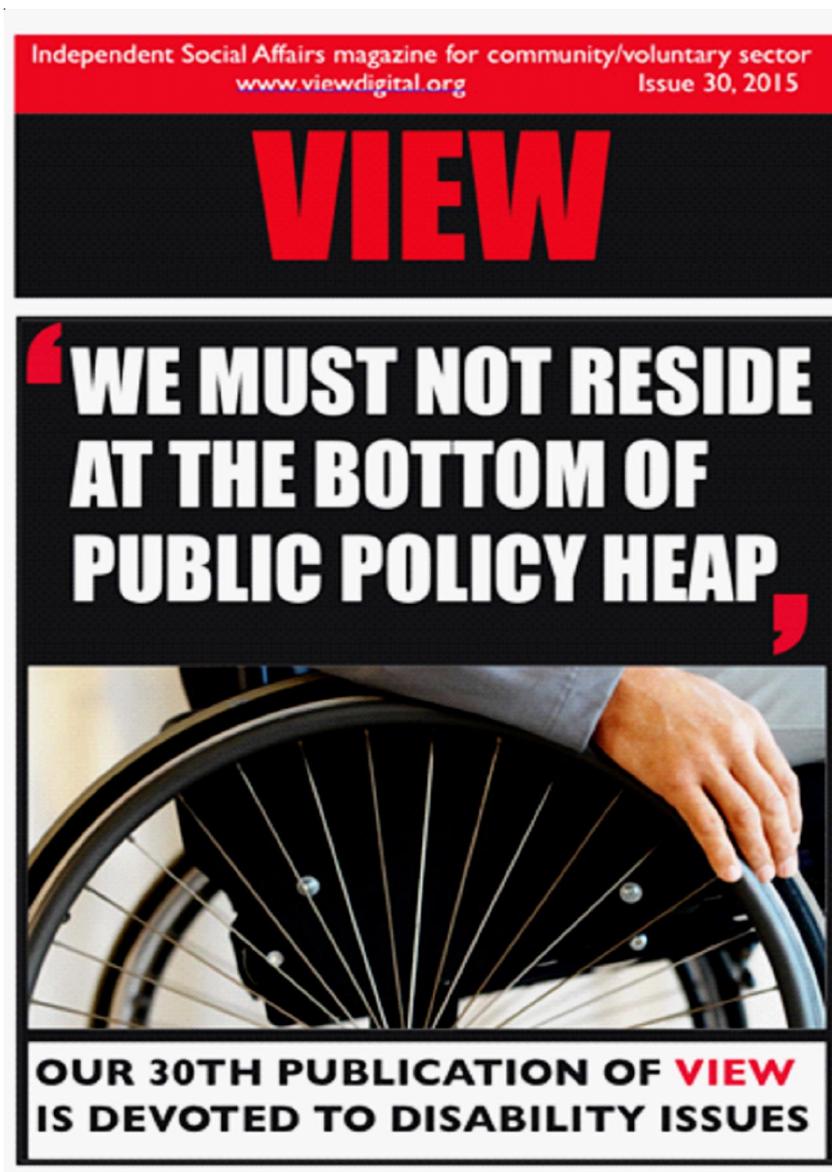
Community Relations Council

The most recent newsletter is available to download at:
<http://www.community-relations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/February2015.pdf>

Community Relations Council



Issue no. 18 of Shared Space containing 13 articles in a larger than usual edition will be available later this month from CRC. To be included on the mailing list contact etomasso@nicrc.org.uk. The text will also be available from the CRC website.



Independent Social Affairs magazine for community/voluntary sector
www.viewdigital.org Issue 30, 2015

VIEW

“WE MUST NOT RESIDE AT THE BOTTOM OF PUBLIC POLICY HEAP”



OUR 30TH PUBLICATION OF VIEW IS DEVOTED TO DISABILITY ISSUES

For latest issue of VIEW visit:

http://issuu.com/brianpelanone/docs/view_30_with_links/0



FUNDING

The Big Lunch Pack Request



The Big Lunch, an Eden Project initiative, is calling on communities to take part in the UK's annual get-together for neighbours by hosting their own Big Lunch events on Sunday 7th June 2015.

Join in by popping your details into the form and apply for your FREE pack. Please note, only one pack can be sent per address and packs will be sent out within two weeks.

If you need any help filling out our new form call on 0845 850 8181 (local rates apply).
For further information - <http://www.thebiglunch.com/about/>

Ireland Funds 2015

The Ireland Funds 2015 Grants Programmes are opening very shortly and will have associated information sessions giving an overview of the grant round, funding priorities and an opportunity for questions and answers.

There are 2 grants schemes:

Flagship Investments Grant Round Opening February 2015

The objective of the Flagship Investments Grant Round is to support exceptional non-profit organisations to become effective, impactful leaders in their fields. Funding may be used to support programme or core operating costs.

**Deadline for Letters of Inquiry
20th February 2015 at 5pm**



THE IRELAND FUNDS

The Small Grant Round Opening March 2015

The objective of the Small Grants Round is to enable as many organisations as possible to fund new and innovative responses to social need.

Information Sessions

19th February 2015

Derry-Londonderry 2-4pm

To book a place at one of these sessions
please visit:

www.theirelandfunds.org/index/grant-round

How to Apply

For more information please visit:

www.theirelandfunds.org/index/grant-round

For general queries, please contact Sandra McDermott or Jordan Campbell.
The Ireland Funds in Dublin
Tel: 00353 1662 7878
E mail: grantsinfo@irlfunds.org

Community Relations Council - Publications Grant Scheme

The Community Relations Council (CRC) provides grants to encourage the production and dissemination of publications in Northern Ireland that will help contribute to a greater understanding and better relations within the community.

Funding of up to £5,000 is available for the publication of original and accessible publication on a community relations theme which addresses one or more of the following objectives of the Council:

- ❑ To support publications which encourage constructive debate on community relations themes and challenge negative stereotypes.
- ❑ To subsidise publications supportive of community relations principles so that they might reach a wider audience.
- ❑ To support the production and dissemination of publications which will create a greater awareness and appreciation of local cultural diversity as a means of increasing mutual respect and understanding.

Community Relations Council



CRC particularly welcomes applications from training and educational organisations aiming to produce relevant print resources which will support community relations learning through taught programmes.

The deadline for applications is 31st December 2015

For more information email Ray Mullan rmullan@nicrc.org.uk or www.community-relations.org.uk
