

16th December 2020

E-Zine



**Supporting
Communities**
Empowering Society

Welcome to Supporting Communities 156th Edition of E-Zine, bringing you best practice from the community sector including funding and training updates and policy developments in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Republic of Ireland.

This is the last E-zine of 2020 and
all of us at Supporting Communities
would like to take this opportunity to wish you

**A Very Merry Christmas
and
A Happy New Year**

E-zine will be back in 2021, keeping you
up to date with sector news you can use.

Please note, Supporting Communities office closure
will be from Wednesday 23rd December 2020 until Friday 1st January 2021 inclusive



028 2564 5676



www.supportingcommunities.org

Ní Chuilín announces £11.7million support for charities

Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín has announced a second phase of the Covid-19 Charities Fund.

The Minister is urging charities to start making application preparations ahead of the opening of the £11.7million fund on 6 January 2021. She explained: "Organisational support will be available between mid-December and the opening date to give applicants time to prepare their applications. This will provide charities with time to collect the necessary information and consider their application with the help of experts. We have more than 8,000 charities that do invaluable work and provide essential support to people when they need it most. This funding will help those charities facing extreme financial pressures as a result of curtailment to their fundraising activities to continue to deliver critical services."

This phase of the Fund will be delivered on behalf of the Executive and the Department for Communities by Community Finance Ireland.

Pre-application information including eligibility, guidance and a Word version of the application form will be available from Monday 14 December on the Community Finance Ireland website. Advice and guidance is available from NICVA and webinars will be held next week. Book your place on a webinar now by going to NICVA's [website](#).

The Fund will provide financial support to charities that have lost income due to the impact of Covid-19 and are unable to cover unavoidable costs between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021.

The Minister explained further: "Charities will be able to avail of funding up to £75,000. A diverse range of charities have already received financial support from the first phase announced in June and July 2020.

Previous applicants and awardees will be able to apply in recognition that the support applied to a different six month period; it will also allow charities to apply which were previously ineligible due to having received other Covid support funding."

Donal Traynor, Group Chief Executive of Community Finance Ireland said: "In our 20-year history, we have helped more than 500 organisations across Northern Ireland, spanning the arts and culture, faith, sports and the social enterprise sectors. We are delighted to continue our support which saw our team's involvement with the recent Covid Social Enterprise Fund on behalf of the Department for Communities and again today by the announcement of the Covid-19 Charities Fund. We have seen first-hand the force for good behind these organisations and the positive change they make to the communities or end users they serve. We are delighted to collaborate in helping to administer this fund at what continues to be a challenging cash-flow period for the charity sector and change-makers in Northern Ireland.

We encourage all applicants to click here [Community Finance Ireland](#) where from 14 December they can start to prepare their paperwork and co-ordinate the information required in advance of the January submission deadline."

Commenting on the pre-application support that they can provide, Chief Executive of NICVA Seamus McAleavey said: "NICVA welcomes a further tranche of this much needed funding. NICVA is here to help guide charities in making their applications, starting with a series of webinars next week. Book your place now by going to the NICVA website."

Covid-19 Charities Fund applications can be submitted from 6 January to 22 January 2021.



News from the Chartered Institute of Housing

Applications are now open for the biggest celebration in the housing sector!

2020 has brought some of the biggest challenges we'll face in a lifetime. But throughout the uncertainty, the housing sector has shone through, showing incredible dedication to communities, adapting bespoke practices, rolling out amazing new innovations and always endeavouring to work around difficult restrictions.

To celebrate the fantastic achievements across housing in 2020, we are delighted to bring you this year's all-Ireland Housing Awards! We want to take this opportunity to recognise the enormous effort of housing professionals and organisations who have gone above and beyond the call of duty during these unprecedented times.



There are 10 categories to choose from, which recognise a wide range of best practice from across the sector. So, whether you want to showcase your organisation's work, or celebrate the work of colleagues or partners, there's no limit to the number of categories you can enter.

Click below and take a look and see which ones are best for you!

[CIH housing awards 2021 - Chartered Institute of Housing](#)

Communities Minister's £6.5m additional support for vulnerable people over the Christmas period

Communities Minister Carál Ní Chuilín has allocated a further £6.5million to support those most severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.



The programmes will be delivered in partnership with local councils, health trusts, charities and the community and voluntary sector, to ensure support is directed swiftly to those most in need.

The Minister said: "Throughout this pandemic my priority has been to help those most in need. These additional allocations will allow me to continue to do that as people face the added financial and emotional pressures of Christmas and the New Year.

"This additional funding will help provide access to food, access to support around period poverty and will help to keep people 'warm, well and connected' at a particularly difficult time of the year.

It will be directly targeted at the most vulnerable, including children and young people; carers; older people; people living with a disability; and anyone who has lost income as a result of Covid-19.

"I am acutely aware of the detrimental impact the pandemic has had on people's emotional and physical wellbeing, so addressing loneliness and isolation, emotional wellbeing and financial hardship relating to household bills, is a key focus of this support."

Minister Ní Chuilín continued: "My Department will continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure we get support to those people to address their most basic needs.

"I want to pay tribute to the many organisations and individual volunteers who have been working tirelessly to support our communities and will continue to do so over Christmas and into the New Year."

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has also contributed £100,000 to the Warm, Well and Connected programme.

Anyone in need of support should contact the Covid-19 Community Helpline, which is managed by Advice NI, freephone number 0808 802 0020. You can also get in touch by [email: covid19@adviceni.net](mailto:covid19@adviceni.net); text: ACTION to 81025, or by [completing a form on the Advice NI website](#).

Further details will also be available through the programmes' lead partners: councils; health trusts, charities and partnered community and voluntary groups.

NI ASSEMBLY UPDATE

Assembly Round-up

Assembly Round up shares news, photos, and resources with you about what's happening at the Northern Ireland Assembly and how you can get involved.

You can go directly to the Assembly Round-up page at; <https://blog.niassembly.gov.uk/>

Assembly Business

The most recent plenary sessions of the Assembly considered The draft Marketing of Plant and Propagating Material (Legislative Functions) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, The draft Plant Health and Diseases of Animals (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, Intergovernmental Agreement on Criminal Justice Cooperation, North/South Ministerial Council: Inland Waterways and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 13) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The report of the plenary sessions of the Assembly are available at; <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/officialreport.aspx>

Committee for Communities

The minutes of meetings of the Communities Committee are available at; <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/communities/minutes-of-proceedings/session-2020---2021/>



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Special Focus

The 'Perfect Storm': The Impact of COVID-19 on Private Renters in Northern Ireland



A new report on the impact of Covid-19 on private renters in Northern Ireland is launched today. The research uses evidence from case records relating to clients who contacted Housing Rights during the period March-June 2020 and shows that those living in the private rented sector have been disproportionately affected, caught in the 'perfect storm' of low incomes (often as a result of job losses, furlough or reduced hours), job insecurity and tenure insecurity.

The economic context

The experiences of private renters are set against the economic context arising from the pandemic and the policy interventions brought about in order to manage the spread of the virus.

The research highlights in particular that:

- Those in lower paid work (including accommodation and food) were more likely to be furloughed – 240,000 workers in NI were on furlough in June 2020 out of a workforce of 790,000.
- There was a 60% reduction in the number of job vacancies in June 2020 compared to the same period in the previous year.
- The claimant count in NI almost doubled in just 3 months between February and May and the rate of new claims from private tenants was more than double that of social tenants.

We know that more lower paid and casual workers live in the private rented sector, including students who rely on their earnings from part time work to pay for their accommodation. All of this suggests that people living in the private rented sector were more likely to be adversely affected by the pandemic.

Our clients' experiences

Looking at Housing Rights case records, the report shows that the majority of clients who were calling regarding issues arising as a result of the pandemic and lockdown were living in the private rented sector.

The report looks in detail at a selection of case studies and finds the following:

- Almost half of those who had affordability issues were fearful of being evicted as a result of the arrears which they were accruing.

A high proportion of those affected worked in hospitality or were self-employed.

- Many people were applying for benefits for the first time in their lives and clients reported finding the system difficult to navigate. Particular elements of the system (such as the five week wait for first UC payment) were difficult to cope with.
- Students who contacted Housing Rights were particularly affected by lay-offs and reduced hours (and income) at work, many of whom relied on their income from part-time work to pay for their rent, with little or no alternative support available to them.
- The support provided for many employees and the self-employed was indeed a lifeline, but it is important to remember that it did not reach everyone affected.

The way forward

The pandemic and the economic shock which has followed has served to expose fault lines in the housing system. However, there is perhaps the potential to use the experience and knowledge gained to aim to address those issues, which have come into sharp focus as a result of the turmoil caused by the pandemic.

More than anything, this research has shown that the pandemic and subsequent lockdown has affected households in all manner of ways, but that those living in the private rented sector have been disproportionately affected.

In part this may be due to the increasing proportion of low income households in the private rented sector and as such a policy change in favour of social and affordable housing will be key to a post Covid-19 recovery.

The research has also shown that the support that many households received has been immensely helpful, but it has also shown us that it is important to remember that we may all be in the same storm, but we are definitely not in the same boat.

[Read the Executive Summary here](#)

[Read the full research here](#)

Supporting Communities
Headquarters
34-36 Henry Street
Ballymena BT42 3AH

T 028 2564 5676
F 028 2564 9729

info@supportingcommunities.org
www.supportingcommunities.org



Publications



Housing Executive Disability Action Plan

The Housing Executive recently updated its Disability Action Plan. To inform the preparation of this revised plan we discussed the plan with a range of representative groups at the Housing Executive's Full Consultative Forum on Equality in May 2019 and engaged with the Housing Executive's Disability Forum in September 2019.

The measures which we propose to take cover the period 2020 to 2025 and are outlined in Appendix 1 of the plan, together with performance indicators and targets.

The Disability Action Plan is a working document and will be subject to change as actions are completed and new actions added during its lifespan. The plan, which is available on the Housing Executive's website can be accessed at the link below.

NIHE Disability Action Plan

If you require any further information about the action plan, please contact Tony Steed, Equality Unit Manager at tony.steed@nihe.gov.uk

Welcome to the CovidWellbeingNI online hub



On this website you will find a comprehensive range of information, self-help guides and ways to access help to support your mental health and wellbeing.

It was created by CovidWellBeingNI a partnership of 15 leading mental health and wellbeing charities and the Healthy Living Centre Alliance representing 28 Healthy Living Centres alongside the Public Health Agency, Department of Health and the Department for Communities.

Our focus is on promoting positive mental health and wellbeing during and after the Covid19 pandemic.

As the guidance around Covid19 changes and/or new ways of accessing support emerge we will be updating this resource weekly to reflect any changes and refresh our information. For the latest news and up to date developments [click here](#).

This resource is designed to be a wellbeing space. If you would like to find out more about Covid19 in Northern Ireland more generally you can get reliable information from the [NI Direct Website](#).

CovidWellBeingNI is an unprecedented partnership of 15 leading mental health and wellbeing charities and the Healthy Living Centre Alliance representing 28 Healthy Living Centres alongside the Public Health Agency, Department of Health and the Department for Communities.

Our focus is on promoting mental health and wellbeing during and after the Covid19 pandemic. Our aim is to work together to ensure that mental health information and support reach as many people as possible.

Law Centre NI has launched a new quarterly Bulletin on Social Security Law and Practice in Northern Ireland



The Law Centre NI has launched a new quarterly Bulletin on Social Security Law and Practice in Northern Ireland. In the first edition, Law Centre introduces a Social Security Hub and looks at recent Case Law and Legislation, including Policy issues that are grabbing attention at the moment. There is also information on upcoming Training and Events at Law Centre NI over the next few months.

If you know of someone who might like to receive this bulletin, feel free to forward it on to them. They can sign up to receive it [by clicking here](#).

Rural Community Network

The latest editions of Rural Brief and the Rural Matters are now available from the RCN.



To access the publications, go to; <http://ruralcommunitynetwork.org/publications/default.aspx>

Catch up on what's been happening at the Board in Policing Matters at the link below. [Policing Matters Issue 12: November 2020 \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](https://nipolicingboard.org.uk)



In addition the Policing Board Engagement Strategy is available on the website at: [nipb-engagement-strategy-2020-2023.pdf \(nipolicingboard.org.uk\)](https://nipb-engagement-strategy-2020-2023.pdf)

Community Relations Council Monthly e-bulletin

Each month CRC releases its e-Bulletin which contains news about CRC funded groups, as well as events and activities happening around Northern Ireland for peacebuilding and good community relations.



[e-Bulletin & e-News | Community Relations Council \(community-relations.org.uk\)](https://community-relations.org.uk)



Please click the link below to access the October/November 2020 edition of inpartnership – the newsletter for PCSPs which highlights local events and initiatives; <https://www.pcsp.org/sites/pcsp/files/publications/pcsp-inpartnership-octobernovember-2020.pdf>

NI Human Rights Commission

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission E-Newsletter October 2020
<https://mailchi.mp/82bc1ff14290/northern-ireland-human-rights-commission-e-newsletter-april-4861214?e=68dae10861>



NI Environment Link

The Environment News, Research and Analysis newsletter is available at; <https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/cmsfiles/ENRA-Oct-2020-1.pdf> and the Assembly News round-up at; [Assembly-News-November-2020.pdf \(nienvironmentlink.org\)](https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/assembly-news-november-2020.pdf).

The NIEL Annual Report is also available at [NIEL-Annual-Report-2019-20.pdf \(nienvironmentlink.org\)](https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/annual-report-2019-20.pdf)

For other NIEL publications and events, go to; <https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/>



Scope^{NI}

Available online, includes a series of important articles on a range of matters including the potential shift in housing policy initiated by Minister Ní Chuilín, the financial crisis facing the charitable and voluntary sector, pre-school segregation and the future of the transfer test in NI in the wake of the pandemic.

Scope can be accessed at; <http://scopeni.nicva.org/>

Consultations



Small Scale Green Energy Bill

The bill will incentivise the growth of micro renewable energy generation in homes, farms, businesses and community co-ops by requiring major electricity providers to pay a minimum price for electricity generated by small scale green generators.

John O'Dowd, MLA; Sinn Féin.
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FCK26RR>
Closing Date; 15th January 2021

Events



Chartered Institute of Housing; Housing Awards 2021

Date 26 February 2021

Location Virtual **Time** 15:00 - 17:00

2020 has brought some of the biggest challenges we'll face in a lifetime. But throughout the uncertainty, the housing sector has shone through, showing incredible dedication to communities, adapting bespoke practices, rolling out amazing new innovations and always endeavouring to work around difficult restrictions.

To celebrate the fantastic achievements across housing in 2020, we are delighted to bring you this year's all-Ireland Housing Awards!

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There are 10 categories to choose from, which recognise a wide range of best practice from across the sector. So, whether you want to showcase your organisation's work, or celebrate the work of colleagues or partners, there's no limit to the number of categories you can enter.

Take a look and see which ones are best for you!

https://www.cih.org/events/cih-housing-awards-2021?utm_source=The%20Chartered%20Institute%20of%20Housing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11966545_Ireland%20Awards%20email&dm_i=YRX,74HG1,DOFQH5,STFXO,1

Social Enterprise

We can support you to start or grow your business, whether you have an idea on paper or a social venture in practice already.

We offer awards from £500 to £15,000 across three separate start-up packages for social entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland.

- **Try it awards** support social entrepreneurs to test their hunches and ideas
- **Do it awards** provide funding and support to help you get started and create a clear social impact
- **Grow it awards** help social entrepreneurs already thriving to grow their impact and build a sustainable financial model



Award opportunities now open and available for Northern Ireland

To help make your idea for social change a reality; access to training and events and one to one support from a Social Entrepreneur Support Manager: **Apply now for funding.**

We are particularly interested in hearing from social entrepreneurs from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds or from disabled social entrepreneurs.

If you have a new idea - get in touch!



Need anything else?

If you want to reach out to us about your idea or want to talk through an application (or anything else!), please email our Social Entrepreneur Support Manager based in Northern Ireland, [Nuala Smyth](#)

Training

ONLINE TRAINING CALENDAR

AWARENESS LEVEL COURSE LIST
DECEMBER 2020 TO MARCH 2021

WHAT IS 'SOCIAL VALUE'?

- Tuesday 1st December at 10:30 am

ONLINE SCAMS - BE AWARE!

- Tuesday 15th December at 10:30 am

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW DEVICE

- Thursday 7th January at 10:30 am

HOW TO DOWNLOAD APPS

- Wednesday 13th January at 2:00 pm

BOARD TRAINING FOR TENANTS

- Wednesday 13th January at 2:00 pm

ONLINE SAFETY - BE SCAM AWARE!

- Monday 18th January at 10:00 am

USING YOUR DEVICE'S CAMERA & EDITING TOOLS

- Wednesday 27 January at 1:00 pm

SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS

- Tuesday 16th February at 10:30 am

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AWARENESS

- Tuesday 2nd March at 10:30 am

'ADVANCED' ZOOM

- Tuesday 9th March at 2:00 pm

Free Zoom
sessions!



**Supporting
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www.supportingcommunities.org

Full details of each session available online!
To register, contact Aidan Kearney
aidan@supportingcommunities.org

Need help setting up Zoom before you take
a course?
Contact Stephanie McKillop:
stef@supportingcommunities.org

Housing Rights Training Courses

Training & Events

In light of government guidance in response to Covid-19, Housing Rights is no longer operating a face to face training schedule.

Instead the following online courses are offered as online options:

[The Essentials: The Four Homelessness Tests](#)

[Webinar \(recording\): COVID 19: Assisting People who are Homeless](#)

[Webinar \(recording\): COVID-19: Implications for the Private Rented Sector](#)

Housing Rights has been providing the highest quality training to the public and private sectors in Northern Ireland for over 20 years. For more information and to keep up to date on Housing Rights activities, go to;

<https://www.housingrights.org.uk/training-events>

Advice NI Training Courses



Level 4 Certificate and Extended Certificate in Providing Social Security Advice

Advice NI are proud to launch the new Advice NI Level 4 Certificate and Extended Certificate in providing social security advice. These new qualifications allow participants to meet the Northern Ireland Quality Advice Standard and feature a mixture of Live Online tutorials with pre-recorded Anytime Online content.

Learners will gain an understanding of social security benefits and how to advise clients regarding social security benefits' issues, with fully up to date content for Welfare Reforms and legacy benefits.

For more information email training@adviceni.net or visit the link below

<https://www.adviceni.net/content/blended-online-adviser-ni-%E2%80%93-level-4-certificate-and-extended-certificate-providing-social>

liV Essentials – A new, free online tool for groups to help ensure that volunteers have the best possible experience



A new free tool is being made available to help ensure that your volunteers have the best possible experience and can make the biggest difference.

liV Essentials has been developed by volunteers and the staff who support them from across the UK. Volunteer Now (alongside NCVO, Volunteer Scotland and WCVA) are launching this tool to help those of you who want to get started on improving the volunteer journey at your organisation.

Volunteering is one of the most rewarding things people can do; helping people, contributing to the community and changing the world around us.

It can be truly transformative – both for the people that volunteer, and the organisations that benefit from their time and experience. It is incredibly powerful when the relationship works well for both the individual and the organisation.

Denise Hayward, CEO Volunteer Now recognises why this new tool may be particularly useful at this time, *“Volunteer involving organisations are taking a good hard look at how they deliver volunteering programmes in the current climate and reconsidering how they involve volunteers across a range of service areas.*

liV Essentials is an introduction to the Investing in Volunteers quality standard for good practice in volunteer management– it's a simple and easy way to get started on enhancing volunteer involvement in your organisation”.

Focussing on six core areas, you will be guided through a series of questions that will help you define how you support and engage your volunteers, how they contribute to your mission and how they enhance your services for the people who use them.

It is a perfect first step for those groups who want to think about using the full Investing in Volunteers quality standard in the future.

An liV Essentials user involved in the piloting of the new tool shared that, *“The tool has been useful to not only consider the processes and background support that is in place to support volunteers in their roles, but also to consider it from the other side of how the volunteers might experience their roles and what improvements we could make to encourage more engagement and fulfilment.”*

If your organisation would like to use the tool, you can find out more about liV Essentials here <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/tools-resources/investing-in-volunteers-ii-v-essentials>

Funding

Finance Minister, Conor Murphy has launched the £20.5 million Dormant Accounts Fund which will provide vital funding to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors

The Dormant Accounts Fund will be delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund. Multi-year grants of up to £100,000 will be available to build organisations' resilience and sustainability.



Visiting Footprints social enterprise in West Belfast this morning, Minister Murphy said: "The establishment of the Dormant Accounts Fund is great news for the community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors. While the Fund currently is £20.5 million it will increase as further Dormant Funds are made available each year.

"Third sector groups are often limited to annual funding, causing constant uncertainty and hindering long-term planning. By offering multi-year funding, this Fund will give groups a bridge to become more financially sustainable. Ultimately this allows them to have an even greater impact on people's lives."

Alongside the grant fund, the Dormant Accounts Fund will also support larger, strategic projects that will enable collaboration right across the sector and develop new and creative approaches to sustainability. These could be NI-wide or sector specific proposals which might focus on a particular issue such as diversity and inclusion, social finance or volunteering.

Highlighting what the Dormant Account Fund will support, Kate Beggs, The National Lottery Community Fund's NI Director, added: "The launch of this fund is a milestone for the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland. While 2020 has been a year of emergency funding, we know many organisations are trying to plan for the long term and thinking about the changes they need to make to become more sustainable. Those changes require leadership, strategic planning, new skills and strong governance – and also time to stop and think. Those are things for which funding often isn't available and that's where the Dormant Accounts Fund comes in. It will provide flexible, multi-year funding and allow a diverse range of organisations to plan for a more secure future."

The Dormant Accounts Fund will open for applications at noon on Tuesday 12 January.

Further information is available at <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/dormant-accounts-fund>(external link opens in a new window / tab).

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Community Support Grant 2021/22 opens Thursday 10th December 2020

The Community Support Grant Programme aims to financially assist community and voluntary organisations working within the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area on the promotion and implementation of community development related programmes.

Further information and application forms will be available on the Council's website when the scheme opens. Hard copies of the application form can be obtained by contacting the Community Services team from this date at: Bridge Community Centre, 50 Railway Street, Lisburn, BT28 1XP; Tel: 028 9244 7713, Email: community.services@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk

Closing date for completed applications is 4:00 pm on Friday 15th January 2021.
INFORMATION WORKSHOPS – via ZOOM

Organisations interested in applying to the Community Support Grant are invited to attend one of the information workshops:

- Thursday 17th December 7.00pm
- Tuesday 5th January 11.00am
- Monday 11th January 7.00pm

Places are limited, so please book in advance using the contact details above.

