

Department for Communities
Housing Supply Strategy
February 2022
Mid Ulster District Council Response

Introduction

Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Communities Housing Supply Strategy Consultation. Council broadly welcomes the development of the Strategy and its commitment to **Working in new and different ways with local Councils and Community Planning Partnerships to realise opportunities to increase and maintain housing supply and help create sustainable and inclusive urban and rural places**. That said, Council wishes to highlight the following key housing issues that face the community in Mid Ulster.

The Mid Ulster Housing market has experienced a great deal of change over the last 20 years with a significant increase in population and growth. Mid Ulster population growth has outpaced the NI average between 2001 and 2013 as population grew by 19% (compared to a NI growth of 8%). The number of households increased by 18% between 2001 and 2010. There is a projected Housing Growth Indicator new dwelling requirement of 10,300 for the period 2016 to 2030 for the district, which is well above the NI average of 7,709. The levels of growth, particularly in Dungannon, has had an impact on housing demand and rental values. This and the limited increase in social housing stock has led to issues of poverty in the area.

Mid Ulster has one of the highest levels of social housing need and this is reflected in the level of housing stress. At March 2021, there were 2,158 applicants on the waiting list for Mid Ulster with 1,267 in housing stress and only 283 allocations over the year. Housing stress in rural areas is also increasing on an annual basis since March 2016. At March 2021, there were 650 applicants on the rural housing waiting list for Mid Ulster with 353 in housing stress and only 115 allocations over the year. Demand for intermediate housing aimed at low income households in Mid Ulster is estimated at 1,350 units between 2020-2030.

Mid Ulster has the second lowest number of NIHE and Social Housing properties across all districts. Up to March 2021, NIHE and Housing Associations have sold 7,651 units under the house sales scheme, leaving 3,855 of NIHE housing stock in the district. NIHE has identified a social housing need of 718 units required for the 2020/2025 period. There were 30 units completed and 93 units onsite at March 2021; and 217 units programmed for the 2020/2023 period, falling well short of what is required by 2025. Almost 60% of all units required are in the Dungannon and Coalisland.

Affordable and social housing provision is a key strategic issue identified for Mid Ulster as part of its Community Plan. As the allocation of housing is a central element in achieving many of the objectives detailed in the Community Plan, it is difficult to consider it in isolation of the other key areas, including poverty, regeneration, health and wellbeing and prosperity. Mid Ulster Community Planning has identified a number of actions to address the housing crisis in the District

Strategic Framework

Objective 1: Creating Affordable Options

Affordability

Local affordable housing needs are determined on financial affordability i.e. the ability of a person or household to access financial support whether it is through co-ownership, shared ownership or right to buy, or other alternative financial supporting mechanism. Affordable Housing cannot be measured in '*residential units*', it must be measured on the individual householder(s) need to access a decent home.

Within Mid Ulster, the Council has acknowledged that there is a major issue regarding the affordability of rent whether it is social rented homes or private rented homes. This is causing a distinct rise in homelessness, including hidden homelessness. Exortionate rent prices and exponential increases are being imposed on tenants renting within the sector, resulting in immense suffering by residents who are enduring such rises on restricted or decreasing income levels.

A basic analysis of private sector rents in Dungannon at March 2021 indicated average costs of between £625 - £650 per month for a three bedroom semi detached/terraced house. These are often ex-NIHE dwellings. The Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance is set at £102.00 per week for a three bedroom property. This leaves tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit, who have rental costs of £650/month, having to find a shortfall of £208 per month. This is in comparison to an average rent of £550 per month for similar privately rented properties in Enniskillen, Lurgan, Portadown and Omagh. Many people simply cannot afford £650 per month or cannot enjoy a decent quality of life if most of their wages are spent on housing costs. Some newer private rented houses in Mid Ulster can cost between £700-£900 per month, way beyond the reach of most tenants, and most definitely those in receipt of benefits.

Dungannon sits within the Broad Rental Market Area of Lough Neagh Lower. The Broad Rental Market Area boundaries are not reflective of the market rents being charged and as a result, tenants in the private rented sector face significant day to day hardship trying to meet their housing costs. Almost nine in 10 private rented sector claimants experience a shortfall between their weekly rent and the amount of Housing Benefit they receive (NI Broad Rental Market Areas Scoping Study and Impact

Assessment January 2019). This is particularly challenging in the current climate, with people navigating their way through Covid19, job losses and the rising cost of everyday living. Delays in processing Universal Credit can contribute to rent arrears building up and result in a reluctance by private landlords to accept tenants in receipt of benefit. The Bedroom Tax mitigation measures have been helpful but will be an expensive hurdle for many when this ends. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) must be reviewed to take account of variations in rent charges within Broad Rental Market Areas. Council recommend that rental market areas be re-defined to reflect actual rental charges across all areas. Recognition is also given on the impact of LHA on the number of new social homes being built.

Housing Associations need to ensure they are charging rents based on the Local Housing Allowance levels. While there is a need for Housing Associations to secure private finance investment to build homes, this may be funded by charging higher rents contributing to housing pressure. The average Housing Association rent in 2021 is £98.34 per week (£106.28 for a three bed property) in Mid Ulster. These figures do not include service charges or rates and are significantly more than the average rent charged by NIHE at £68.27 per week, excluding rates.

Greater support for Housing Association's to bring forward affordable housing is required. Unlike social housing provision, Housing Associations currently shoulder 100% of the financial costs and liability of affordable housing schemes. This can make such schemes high risk and therefore unattractive to Associations. In order to increase the supply of affordable housing, measures to alleviate the financial risk to Housing Associations, will need to be considered.

Co-ownership is a welcome, but limited initiative given the cap of £165,000 on the value of the property that can be bought as a co-owner. Many private developers can achieve much more than this on the open market for their properties, and it is therefore not a cost effective solution for them to sell to a Co-ownership scheme especially in a buoyant market. Schemes which provide an incentive to developers to participate in shared ownership developments are required as is more flexibility for Housing Associations to increase purchase offers beyond the current cap. Restrictions should be placed on a Co-ownership property to prevent it being sold on to a private landlord, with a requirement to offer it back to the Housing Association for first refusal.

Intervention in the Private Rented Market

The private rented sector across the district has seen an unprecedented increase in its tenure share. The impact of COVID19 on rising levels of unemployment, lending restrictions and growing social housing waiting lists will ensure that demand for the private rented sector will continue grow.

Rental values in Dungannon and to a lesser extent Cookstown are very high and there is significant difference between actual rental charges and Local Housing Allowance

amounts. In addition, the largest number of housing benefit claimants are living in properties belonging to the private sector. There is a real need for intervention. If a solution is not found, the social housing crisis will continue to escalate and the social issues heighten. It will also cause further problems with regard to housing allocation in terms of meeting need, vulnerable people, family unity, strong communities, etc. MUDC advocates for Executive intervention in the rental market to monitor rental values in our main hub towns and cities (which are where the populations are concentrated) and to intervene where the market is creating real issues of poverty and social deprivation. Intervention models have been developed in the South of Ireland in the form of Rent Pressure Zones and in other EU countries such as Germany, whereby rules introduced in 2015 prevent landlords in certain towns and cities from setting rents for new tenants any higher than 10% above the local average from the previous four years. However, it has been noted that in examples such as Dublin, these interventions were implemented too late, when rents had risen well beyond the affordability of many, which has reduced their potential impact in addressing the issue.

Public Sector Asset Mapping

Mid Ulster District Council is committed to the release of public sector land for the provision of social housing where possible and are working with NIHE to identify appropriate land for same. Council has already made land available to Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid for the development of supported housing. We also continue to encourage other statutory partners, through our Community Planning partnerships, to identify unused land assets for social and affordable housing. Assets mapping of the entire public sector will be hugely beneficial for the supply of social and affordable housing across the region. MUDC supports NIHE efforts to **extend the scope of the Government Land and Property Register (GLPR) Programme to digitally map all land and property holdings for both Central Government and Local Government in NI.**

Land Availability

Land banking is an issue in Mid Ulster with a number of developments having gone through the Planning process but not materialised in buildings on the ground. This has an impact on the analysis of waste water and sewerage capacity by skewing the figures, which in turn impacts on the approval of future housing schemes. This issue is mainly experienced in Dungannon, adding further stress to housing demand.

Creating the right policy and legislative environment, including better utilising the powers already in place to support new supply and reuse/adapt existing buildings, should include the greater use of land vesting by NIHE. This will ensure the release of necessary lands for the development of social and affordable housing as well as discouraging other landowners from banking land and holding up the supply of housing.

Waste Water & Sewage Infrastructure

Seeking the prioritisation of water infrastructure for new housing in areas of most acute housing need is most welcomed by Mid Ulster District Council. The issue of water and wastewater management in Mid Ulster will have detrimental impact on the district achieving a number of key housing outcomes. Many people living in the Mid Ulster District Council area are facing significant housing stress because of house building not keeping up with housing demand. New housing developments particularly in our urban towns and key settlements are being refused by NI Water, due to lack of upgrading to Waste Water Treatment Works and new water mains not being delivered. Significant Waste Water network capacity issues are emerging in our five main hub towns including Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Maghera and Coalisland. These towns have been identified within the Area Plan for Mid Ulster for growth status. Mid Ulster is currently completing on the development of the Area Plan and has estimated a need for approximately 10,950 new houses by 2030. In addition to the Waste Water Treatment Works, waste water network capacity issues are emerging in 20 areas across the district. Because of this, new connections are being declined in parts of the catchment.

A significant collaborative effort is required to address a problem of this magnitude. Starting with central government to provide the necessary financial resources to upgrade the current waste water infrastructure; but also at a local level with NI Water, NIHE and local councils to develop local solutions. More sustainable solutions such as SUDs need to be explored, to offset rainwater capture to alleviate pressure on the sewerage system re capacity.

Skills - Local Market Partnerships

Mid Ulster Community Planning welcomes proposals from DfC to create Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) in each council area, allowing for tailored interventions to address the district's particular issues. Key areas for delivery would be the retraining of sectors no longer providing sustainable employment, an issue that has been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Any work regarding **upskilling, reskilling, delivery of apprenticeships**, through this strategy, should be delivered in Partnership with the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership to ensure a holistic approach to skills and employment in the district.

Objective 2: Prevention and Intervention

Housing and Poverty

More low-income families tend to live in the private rented sector, which tends to be more expensive with poorer living conditions. The gap between housing benefit and local housing allowance which has grown since housing benefit cuts were introduced in 2011 has resulted in worsening levels of poverty and pressure on the family budget. Investment in social housing and the removal of the gap between rents and benefits

is a necessity to help those caught in the poverty trap caused by housing. Housing costs must not push our residents into poverty. Government bodies have a responsibility to the citizens of Northern Ireland to intervene in both failing social policies and commercial markets when this happens. People should live in homes that are of a good quality and standard to ensure good physical and mental health, social wellbeing, cohesion and the prosperity of society as a whole. Alleviating poverty, through addressing the impact of increasing housing costs on people's incomes should be a key priority of this Strategy.

Mid Ulster Community Planning is fully committed to reducing poverty and the impact of poverty on individuals and communities within Mid Ulster. In 2019, in the absence of a Regional Anti-Poverty Strategy, Mid Ulster Community Planning partners came together from statutory agencies, business and community to look at a range of priorities impacting on poverty; with the aim of creating an Anti-Poverty Plan that seeks to identify strategic actions for partner delivery. A number of poverty issues were identified through the development of the Plan for Mid Ulster including, *"People living in deprived areas are more likely to be in a house that is of a lower standard of quality living e.g. house standard and heat etc"*. One of the key objectives of the Anti-Poverty Plan is to *"Provide everyone with a quality home for life, through affordable rents via rent interventions of increased rent support, adequate social and affordable house provision in mixed tenure developments and quality environments"*. Mid Ulster Community Planning is fully committed to working with all Government departments to fulfil the actions of the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan and the Regional Poverty Plan.

Homelessness

Even though Mid Ulster may seem to have a low level of rough sleeping, it has the high number of chronic homeless people (this is evidenced by figures provided by NIHE District Offices). Whilst many homeless people are not presenting on the streets they are 'sofa surfing', relying on friends and families to provide accommodation in houses that are already at full capacity, causing further stress to other family units. NIHE research estimates that 5-10% of the homeless population suffer chronic homelessness. These levels of homelessness/chronic homelessness are unacceptable, and as the Housing Executive and Department for Communities has referenced, there is a need for robust action.

There is a body of information that indicates chronic homelessness is associated with people who suffer a range of complex support needs. However, there are further associated issues, including in Mid Ulster the inability of tenants to pay rents that are beyond reasonable levels. Homelessness caused by affordability of rental properties is becoming a major issue, particularly in the Dungannon town area and as a result many tenants are experiencing recurring homelessness. For people experiencing prolonged and serial homelessness, housing affordability barriers are often compounded by issues of poor mental health, addictions, social exclusion and financial stability. Against this background many individuals/families are leading

unstable and chaotic lifestyles by living in unsuitable B&B, hostel, emergency and temporary accommodation in areas which are unfamiliar and away from family support. There are instances where families and children are being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Furthermore, social housing providers are making housing allocations without consideration of support needs for the individual/families. This often worsens their situation and exacerbates their dependencies resulting in recurring temporary placements and serial housing failure. Council are of the opinion that changes must be made to the Housing Selection Scheme to enable mixed housing allocations that take account of family togetherness, community cohesion, and access to transport services, education and employment with the view of providing an integrated holistic approach to long-term housing sustainability.

It is fundamental that homelessness is addressed through a multifaceted approach involving statutory, voluntary and community sectors to ensure that people experiencing chronic homelessness are provided with appropriate permanent housing in their areas of choice along with tailored support to meet their individual needs. It is imperative that the NIHE, Housing Associations and partner agencies are committed to eradicating the homeless problem by investing the necessary resources so that the causes of the repeat homelessness becomes known, and appropriate action taken to ensure individuals/households have access to settled, affordable and suitable housing in their areas of choice. Models include buying up single properties in areas where there is stock coming to the market rather than relying on large developments. Council recommends legislative changes be made to place a Statutory Duty on relevant agencies to co-operate in an interdepartmental approach in providing the required resources, housing and support mix for people who are threatened or already experiencing homelessness.

Supported Housing

Council welcomes a commitment to **Develop and implement new policies that will support the delivery of a more diverse range of housing types/alternative models of housing to meet all housing needs.** The 2021 annual update of the Housing Investment Plan for Mid Ulster states that the gross, three year (2021/24) SHDP contains no supported housing schemes for Mid Ulster as there is currently no identified or known requirement for supported housing in the district. However, Mid Ulster Community Plan has identified a need for supported housing across the District. Supported housing need has been identified for people with disabilities, older people and vulnerable women who are victims of domestic violence. A need was also identified in Dungannon for people with learning disabilities. This has been brought to the attention of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust who recognised the need but stated that there is no current funding. There has been no supported housing provision in the last number of years, which would call into question the suggestion that there is a lack of need whilst other plans and engagements with the sectors have identified a real need. There is confusion around whether need or lack of resource is

driving the agenda. Council would seek a review of supported housing needs for people between those who are responsible for identify the need and those who are responsible for providing the financial resources.

Council also considers that there needs to be a Government focus on the housing needs of older people. In the context of an ageing population, it is important that provision is made for affordable, specialist accommodation which caters for the elderly in our society who are in need of care due to a reduced ability to perform some tasks. A government focus on housing provision for this section of society would help reduce pressure on the demand for general social rented housing. Such specialist housing would also be likely to provide health and well-being benefits and reduce feelings of isolation for residents.

Council is currently working with Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid on the delivery of much needed Move On accommodation for their clients in Cookstown as the next step back to normal housing situations. A considerable number of women, children and young people are at risk of domestic violence are unable to get into the Mid Ulster Women's Aid Refuge because of lack of capacity. The need for such services is increasing and is reflected in police crime statistics. Such developments address the specific needs of those affected by violence and release other properties to address the wider social housing need in the area.

Intimidation Criteria

Council has recently lobbied to the DfC Permanent Secretary to ensure that Women and their children experiencing Domestic Violence are eligible to gain Intimidation Points, in the same way that they are applied to victims of sectarian, racial or disability abuse. Whilst Women's Aid works tirelessly to source these families suitable accommodation, this can be extremely difficult with housing demand significantly high in the district. Often, they can only source accommodation for the families outside the area they currently reside in. However, because many mothers are reluctant to uproot their children from their schools, families and friends, as this would have an even greater negative impact on the children, they often return to the abusive relationship. The NIHE guidance states that organisations can confirm if there is a danger to life. However, in order to ensure that the most vulnerable families are protected from further abuse and violence and provided with the best opportunity to access accommodation in an area where they feel safe and is positive for their wellbeing, In order to **deliver housing solutions for citizens who are most in need**, Council advocates that these families be afforded the maximum points available.

Council also has concerns with the application of Intimidation Points to providing housing for those that are involved in Anti Social Behaviour and criminality, over other citizens, including young families and older people. This application of points has often resulted in provision on social housing in well established, peaceful communities that has brought with it ASB and criminality. Council welcomes the Ministers commitment

to implementing the 18 recommendations of the Review of the Common Selection Scheme and the Strategy's objective to **examine further options on the issues of intimidation points and interim accommodation points.**

Objective 3: Quality

The Department of Communities' urgent measures under the Private Tenancies (Coronavirus Modifications) (Northern Ireland) Act 2020 to provide additional protections for private rented tenants from eviction during the COVID-19 outbreak are welcome. However, evictions by the 'back door' are still common. Unscrupulous landlords are essentially evicting tenants by increasing rents to extortionate levels. Tenants who cannot afford to pay find it impossible to remain in the property. This is particularly evident when tenants have asked landlords to make basic improvements or repairs to the property. Some houses are still being rented with single glazed windows and outdated heating systems, causing dampness, extra fuel costs and health related problems. While tenants have the right to carry out work themselves and deduct the cost from their rent, some have faced the consequences of this, quickly receiving notice of a substantial rental increase soon after.

A single independent body responsible for assessing and enforcing housing quality standards would be beneficial, as would more awareness of tenants' rights and encouragement to report underhand practice and poor quality housing in the private rented sector. Rent regulation measures would help to eradicate unfit and ensure that tenants live in a healthy and safe environment. This particularly applies to the regulations covering Houses in Multiple Occupation across the private rented sector. There are a considerable number of, mostly unregistered, HMOs in Mid Ulster. The current regulation of HMOs is based on the Belfast model, mainly occupied by the student population. This is not appropriate for Mid Ulster, where the majority are occupied by the migrant worker population, many of whom have been wrongly told they will be deported if they report concerns about overcrowding and housing unfit. The regulations covering Houses in Multiple Occupation should be strengthened across the private rented sector with rent regulation used as a lever to bring substandard properties up to standard, including energy efficient standards.

House quality does not just relate to new housing, but to existing provision. There are quite a number of people renting in poor accommodation. The repair grant is still available in NI but it is very hard to access. To be eligible you must have a statutory notice from Environmental Health to apply.

Council welcomes the Strategy's commitment to **strengthen enforcement powers to uphold standards.** There is need for a greater legislative remit and provision of associated resourcing for the inspection of housing conditions to ensure they are fit for purpose for health and wellbeing. Many lung related conditions and asthma that

have a long lasting impact on health and wellbeing, life expectancy and the resource burden on the health service can be linked to people living in houses of poor quality.

The majority of responsible landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector would welcome more definitive standards and stricter regulations. Additionally, a wider range of grants available through the NIHE would provide significant encouragement for landlords to keep properties up to standard.

Council also seeks to ensure the Planning gain of adequate green space provision in housing; that green space are not edge strips of green around an estate but a central space that is accessible to all. Evidence would show that where our social housing provision has been well planned with good space and green space provision there are less social issues in the longer term. Green space needs to be integral to the design for social and affordable housing and to the allocation of the housing grant to build developments with good open space. NIHE needs to have a greater say in the final design that allows for good practice.

Mid Ulster Community Planning has initiated a pilot Housing and Regeneration Place Shaping Plan in Dungannon, in partnership with NIHE. This plan will identify 'Place Shaping Principles' that we will seek to have adopted and implemented by NIHE and Council when assessing social housing applications, based on complementing the priorities for regeneration for Dungannon town. Council would welcomes the Department's support to replicate this partnership and process across all hub towns.

Objective 4: Better Places

Place Shaping

The Mid Ulster Community Plan completely supports the Strategy's focus to **Putting place-shaping at the heart of our actions by developing policies that will support delivery of housing led regeneration, encourage mixed tenure and promote shared Housing.** The central principle of Community Planning is the wider integrated impact of one policy on another and on resources. It is important that housing provision takes account of the long term sustainability of areas and lifetime homes. Housing is one of the basic hierarchy of needs for people. The provision of suitable homes for people is critical to all elements of wellbeing. Families should have adequate space for children to grow and develop in all areas of life. This is similar in the allocation of housing to people who are separated and have children for part of a week. Maintaining the family unit and bond with parents is invaluable to the wellbeing of the child.

MUDC wants a greater balance achieved between town centre regeneration and the provision of social and affordable housing. It is unarguable that Mid Ulster has a high level of social housing need but addressing that need cannot come at the expense of

other areas of society, like our town centre viability and growth. Recently, a number of Housing Associations have been granted permission and provided with grants to build social housing (mainly apartments) in streets primarily dominated by retail and leisure. The provision of social housing in such locations is not viable, nor is it addressing real need. Not only does it have an impact on the retail and leisure economy of our hub towns, but the properties are often occupied by young families living in 1st or 2nd floor apartments, with no garden or space to play and near bars, restaurants or gambling establishments. This is a cheaper option based on easy provision and does not take account of families in real need on the social housing list.

As previously stated, to address these issues of quality social housing provision, Council is developing a Pilot Place Shaping Plan for Dungannon, with a set of corporate Planning principles. The Place Shaping Plan aims to complement planning policy, development management, and housing policy and investment by creating a framework and guidance to create homes and neighbourhoods which:

- meet the needs of those requiring social and affordable housing
- are of enduring good quality
- have appropriate open space
- are conveniently located for access to jobs, facilities and amenities
- are future-proofed for climate change

The set of draft principles include:

1. Protection of the town centre retail core. Existing shop fronts should be maintained. Town centre housing should take the form of LOTS apartments, apartment developments setback from the street or town houses that complement the streetscape in terms of footprint, density and height.
2. Family housing should not be developed close to premises associated with the night-time economy.
3. House type should be appropriate to the Zone. LOTS apartments in the town centre, semi-detached houses and bungalows at the edge of the town centre and suburbs.
4. All housing development should align with the current Dungannon townscape and built environment - appropriate footprint, density, scale and height, as detailed in this Plan
5. All housing should provide for a good quality of life, designed with outside green space or pocket parks at the core of town centre apartment developments, semi/detached properties with gardens, close to amenities and facilities, with access to sufficient parking
6. Housing should be developed to the highest environmental standards (climate change, energy efficiency, technology)
7. All housing at the edge of the town centre and suburbs should be developed on the basis of mixed tenure and mixed type to promote social cohesion

8. All housing schemes should have a minimum 2-bed requirement to facilitate family living except properties specifically designed for single people with no access rights to dependents.

Mixed Tenure

There is strong evidence that highlights the benefits of mixed developments in promoting quality housing, social cohesion, reducing social exclusion and creating stronger communities. This requires a two tier approach; one through the delivery of the social and affordable housing provision and through private developer schemes via planning. **Ensure the planning system, including Local Development Plans, help support the delivery of the appropriate supply of housing** is hugely important. There is a great deal of inconsistency in the requirements for social housing ratios in new build sites across NI Council areas. New Planning Regulations should be put in place setting a standard and regionally consistent ratio for the number of social housing units provided in every new development. Quality management of delivery of such provision is essential, requiring an oversight body to ensure that adequate provision of social and affordable housing remains a priority. There is a definite need for mixed tenure developments in rural areas that provide choice for those who do not wish to leave their own rural communities and families but have to move to urban areas where housing is available. Sustaining rural communities and ensuring they continue to thrive is a necessity and should be a priority. Council welcomes the commitment to the **development of a mixed tenure policy**.

Mid Ulster Council support ideas to acquire existing market stock in areas of consistent unmet need. Council feel that this is an underutilised scheme that should already be better used to ensure social housing provision for rural areas. It is the view of the council that there appears to be a reluctance of Housing Associations to acquire homes in this way, as the low and sporadic numbers they would have to manage in a small rural areas may not financially appeal to them.

Housing Supply in Rural Areas

Enabling the provision of affordable rural homes is a key priority for MUDC, given the district rural make up. Many people are still completing housing applications by stating their preference of location based on where they know the housing is going to be and not where their family are located or where they would choose to live. This not only puts further demand and burden on social housing developments in our towns, where the necessary infrastructure required for development is already at capacity. It also creates further social issues relating to childcare and family support and isolation.

Mid Ulster Council have been working with NIHE to carry out Latent Demand Tests in rural areas of Mid Ulster. We have been looking at how the process is communicated to the local communities and using Council's Community Development contacts to engage with local community groups and elected members to help with this communication and messaging. The aim of this work is to ensure that best response

to the Latent Demand Testing and evidence clearly the true demand for both social and affordable housing in the area.

Even with this positive partnership work between organisations, it still is not translating into housing provision in our rural areas. There are examples in Mid Ulster, where there has been positive responses from local communities to Latent Demand Tests in their area, only to be told that there is still not enough need to bring forward a social housing scheme. Or instances where the NIHE have demonstrated need for an affordable housing scheme but Housing Associations declining to develop. Mid Ulster District Council would advocate for a more robust link between housing supply and housing need, through this Strategy. How need is assessed, for both social and affordable housing must be reviewed to ensure that it is a true reflection of the housing needs of communities across the region, with particular attention paid to rural areas, where hidden need is most prevalent. It then requires a duty from those who provide the housing, to fulfil what has been clearly identified as a need.

Objective 5: Decarbonisation

Commitments to improved energy efficiency within housing stock alongside considering solutions for the future de-carbonisation of household heating systems are positive developments, as this is an urgent challenge facing those responsible for housing provision here.

We support a major retrofitting campaign, to increase minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) minimum ratings within our housing stock. Whilst reducing carbon emissions is important, tackling fuel poverty and maximising thermal comfort for citizens should also be a reason to create more energy efficient housing. This is particularly important when viewed in the context, that the rate of fuel poverty in the north of Ireland is 22%, and that housing here accounts for 13% of greenhouse gas emissions. Statistics on the incidences of fuel poverty within lower income households is incentive enough for DfC to make this a matter of absolute priority within the Housing Supply Strategy, across both rural and urban settings.

Delivery

As previously stated, housing and housing supply are a key objective within the Mid Ulster Community and as such Mid Ulster District Council, as lead facilitator of the Community Plan, have established a Mid Ulster Housing Forum, made up of Housing Associations, NIHE, NI Water and MUDC Planning. In addition to this, we also have an elected member housing working group.

As part of wider Community Planning delivery, a community engagement structure also exists in Mid Ulster. This is a 2 tiered approach. Firstly, networks have been established in each of the seven District Electoral Areas (DEAs) within the district. The networks are made up of community & voluntary groups operating in each DEA, as well as the local elected representative for that area. The next tier comprises of a Strategic Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) Forum, made up of CVS groups and organisations that operate across the district. A number of members of the Strategic CVS Forum participate in one of the four Community Planning Thematic Working Groups, where they will support the delivery of the Mid Ulster Community Plan.

As already mentioned in this response, Council were able to utilise our DEA networks in partnership with NIHE in carrying out Latent Demand Tests. We looked at how the process is communicated to the local communities and using the DEA networks to engage with local community groups and elected members to help with this communication and messaging. The aim of this work is to ensure that best response to the Latent Demand Testing and evidence clearly the true demand for both social and affordable housing in the area.

As clearly outlined above, there are already established networks in Mid Ulster that would facilitate the delivery of the Housing Supply Strategy at a local level. Council believes that the Strategy needs to be delivered at a local level, by local organisations and communities, potentially through local action plans.

At the same time, whilst Council welcomes the need for cross departmental endorsement to the Strategy, we believe that there must be one accountable body for the delivery of the plan. Responsibility by various departments for delivery specific elements of the plan and responsibility for ensuring that the whole plan is delivered to ensure **“Everybody has access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home that is appropriate for their needs and is located within a thriving and inclusive community”**, must be separated. The Council seeks the commitment from DfC to act as this responsible department.

In addition to the above point, although MUDC welcomes a Framework that incorporates key statutory bodies in the delivery of housing in areas of identified need, that includes NIHE and Councils, it holds the view that the NIHE must provide the strategic lead for social and affordable housing provision in the region. Council believes it is crucial that NIHE sets the strategic principles and best practice examples for social and affordable housing provision for others to follow. It is important that the Strategy underlines and reinforces this.

Conclusion

Northern Ireland is experiencing a significant shortage in the provision of Social and Affordable Housing. It is clear from the Social Housing Programme that housebuilding is not keeping up with housing demand resulting in rising housing stress, homelessness and chronic homelessness figures. New ways for increasing the supply of social housing must be prioritised. Council recommend the following action:

- Purchase of land and development of mixed housing types and tenures in both urban and rural areas by the Housing Executive;
- Widening the offering of 'Affordable Housing' by Housing Associations, enabling people the opportunity to avoid rental market pressures and accessing low cost home ownership;
- Flexible models to support and increase the purchasing of new and existing housing from the open market by social housing providers, particularly in rural areas.
- Regionally consistent policy on mixed tenure ratio on new build private developments to ensure delivery of social and affordable housing at appropriate rate based on housing need;
- Further consideration must be given to future sales of social housing stock. The current 'Right to Buy Scheme' amended to 'Buy Back Scheme' where purchasers are obliged to sell the property back to social housing landlords in the event of disposing.

Theme	Sub Theme	Action	MUDC Progress		Community Planning Partner Progress	
			Lead	Update	Partner	Update
Cross Cutting	All Themes	Raise awareness and promote the Council's Anti Poverty Actions and promote the message that 'Poverty is not inevitable'.	Ursula Mezza	Promotion as an when actions developed and underway.		
Economic Growth	Income and Benefits	Partners to review use of zero-hours contracts and living wage implementation. Review good practice in zero contract hours and living wage.	Marissa Canavan	The Council agreed to become a living wage foundation employer approximately 4 years ago which is higher than the national living wage. Council implements the NJC salary scales which are higher than both the living wage foundation and national living wage. In leisure we have moved away from casual workers and implemented contract hours for part-time employees therefore we have few casual workers.		
Economic Growth	Income and Benefits	Lobby and seek partner support for implementation of a living wage, to include those in training/reskilling programmes.	Community Planning			
Economic Growth	Income and Benefits	Promote and provide benefit advice and debt support to maximise income and reduce debt. Continue promotion and provision of local advice service and targeted debt support to vulnerable people.	Claire Linney	Ongoing – contract being reviewed at present for a new 3 year term. Adapting a blended balance of advice provision with both face to face and virtual options available.		
Economic Growth	Income and Benefits	Lobby for continued mitigation and increased support by the Northern Ireland Executive to universal credit claimants (partner DFC for implementation).	Community Planning			

Economic Growth	Income and Benefits	Engage the local credit union network on the provision of low or no interest loans for those on low income/ benefits, money management support for teenagers and young adults and the provision of banking type facilities for community groups.	Claire Linney	Credit Union Network meeting 20 October 2021 with ILCU and UFCU on youth money management, bank facilities for community groups. Proposal for DFC Funding to CU network approved by Council in December 21. Workbook available free to download for all NI post primaries but physical copies have been delivered to NI Schools. https://www.young-enterprise.org.uk/resources/your-money-matters-financial-education-textbook-ni/		
Economic Growth	Employment and Skills	Review 'Return to Employment' models (e.g ACE, Job Guarantee Scheme etc.) to advocate for local implementation of best practice model.	Economic Growth	To be considered by LMP		
Economic Growth	Employment and Skills	Lobby and seek partner support go review initiatives and investments through public procurement to consider social clause for public monies linked to working conditions and zero hours contract. (Engage Buy Social NI and partners for Public Procurement to consider social clause linked to working conditions / zero hours contract.)	Linda Ferguson Catriona McGinn	Comprehensive review currently being undertaken of the MUDC Procurement Policy and there is a proposal to include social clauses in this document. Direction is required from SMT in relation to the recently issued DoF PPN and to what extent MUDC will implement social clauses, when, how and who will be responsible for implementation. Procurement to consider what assistance/guidance can be provided by Buy Social NI.		Social Clauses discussed with all partners in Anti Poverty Plan update meetings.
Economic Growth	Employment and Skills	Lobby for the development of affordable and flexible childcare models, the provision of 30 hours per week free childcare for 3 years plus, in line with other UK regions; an employer tax incentive to support onsite childcare provision. Link to the DFC Childcare Strategy.	Community Planning			
Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Lobby and seek partner support for an independent body, (under NIHE), to set local rent values (social/private), in line with area affordability.	Community Planning	Included in consultation response made to PFG March 2021 and response made to DfC Housing Supply Strategy July 2021		

Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Review the statutory asset and land base for affordable and social housing provision. Develop a Council model for the provision of surplus Council land for social housing development, in partnership with key agencies.	Claire Linney	In discussions with NIHE; pending full asset base review.		
Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Lobby for Planning Policy to make provision of adequate recreational space in all developments, with central spaces for children to play safely and in plain sight of homes.	Claire Linney	Dungannon Pilot Housing and Regeneration PlaceShaping Plan - draft received, consultation pending.		
Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Lobby for greater enforcement for Environmental Health to ensure quality housing conditions.	Community Planning	Included in consultation response made to DfC Housing Supply Strategy July 2021.		
Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Extend the affordable warmth scheme in partnership with DfC making it accessible to all on low income.	Environmental Health			Minister Hargey changed the Affordable Warmth Scheme eligibility criteria in order to help more households who are in fuel poverty. The income threshold was increased from £20,000 to £23,000. Certain benefits were dis-applied from the calculation of income; DLA, PIP, Carer's Allowance and Attendance Allowance.
Economic Growth	Housing and Housing Welfare	Lobby for home improvement and energy grant schemes.	Community Planning	Included in consultation response made to DfC Housing Supply Strategy July 2021		

Health and Wellbeing	Early Years	Lobby to extend Sure Start and early years' intervention models and programmes (parental support, oral health initiatives etc.) to those most vulnerable and on low income.	Community Planning		<p>DE has allocated £1.56m in 2021/22 to enable temporary expansion of Sure Start catchment areas to include an additional 22 SOAs in the 25% most disadvantaged areas but do not currently receive Sure Start services. As estimated by HSCB, the funding will enable Sure Start services to be received by an additional 2,354 children in areas of disadvantage. The 22 SOAs will be brought in on a temporary basis until a policy decision can be taken on whether to amend existing geographical targeting of the programme. This decision will be taken following a review of Targeted Early Years Interventions planned in 2021/22. Libraries NI Libraries NI - Rhythm and Rhyme Sessions for 0-3year olds available in all libraries. Southern Trust - HENRY (Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young) is a childhood obesity prevention programme that supports families with young children to develop healthy lifestyles. The programme is for families with children aged 0-5. and is being offered across the SHCT area via health visiting services. PWB Locality Manager invited to Mid Ulster Anti-poverty Virtual Network on 15th of September. 7 week Mellow Bump Programmes for Mums and Dads to Be available. Roots of Empathy Recovery Programme available to Primary Schools. Incredible Years programme</p>
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Education and Skills	Early Years	Encourage and promote recycling schemes for high cost family items e.g. baby items, IT equipment. Map and promote local charities and schemes which provide high cost items.	Claire Linney	Foodbanks can assist with this. Mapping exercise to be completed in early 2022. Partnership project with Save the Children and the Northern and Southern Trusts to provide support for families with young children in financial hardship under their Family Support Initiative. The referrals to the programme would be via the Mid Ulster Advice Service STEP. A support worker will engage the families in need and provide a wrap around service of support with provision for early learning educational toy packs for children, support re accessing services, and support for basic provision such as food and essential household vouchers and support on engaging children early on worries etc. (up to a maximum of £340 per family).		
Education and Skills	Education Affordability	Review good practice models addressing school education costs (branded uniforms, extracurricular activities, trips etc.).				
Education and Skills	Education Affordability	Promote uniform grants and deliver recycling initiatives uniforms and IT equipment	Barry O'Hagan	Project in Progress. Computers being gathered up and software to securely wipe these has been bought. Link with CD to charity or community organisation that want the form factor (hard drives) and screens.		
Education and Skills	Education Affordability		Claire Linney	Plan for all schools Spring 2022. The school uniform recycle model is something the Council continues to promote via schools and organisations. CYPSP promotion. Foodbanks promote and deliver recycling initiatives.		
Education and Skills	Education Affordability	Promote Free School Meals and lobby for increased threshold	Claire Linney	DE currently reviewing FSM and possibility of Free For All. MUDC will make a response to consultation		

Education and Skills	Education Affordability	Promote breakfast clubs in schools and look at potential to link to social economy cafes, youth programmes etc. Develop and promote Fareshare schemes in schools in areas of high deprivation. Develop and promote social café models.	Claire Linney	Fare Share scheme information shared with all schools, positive level of interest and a number of schools have now registered with the scheme. Information shared with EA.		
Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	Lobby and seek partner support for the review of the school funding formula to ensure all young people can avail of the most appropriate educational pathway for their needs.	Fiona McKeown	Response submitted to consultation on Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: 'Skills for a 10x Economy' in August 2021. Funding approved to host a 4C UR Future Live Event in June 2022 targeting Year 11 pupils. Local Area Learning Partnerships have been invited to nominate representatives onto Mid Ulster LMP.		
Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	To work in partnership with Mid Ulster Skills Forum to develop apprenticeship programmes across the district, targeted at areas of disadvantage.	Fiona McKeown	1. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering) - MEGA Degree Apprenticeship (UU Magee / MEGA) In conjunction with Ulster University attained £33,213 from the Department for the Economy Challenge fund to develop Northern Ireland's first Degree Apprenticeship in Manufacturing Engineering. 14 apprentices commenced the course in September 2021 (12 are placed in a Mid Ulster manufacturing company).		
				2. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering). - Industrial Training Centre (ITC) – Welding Academy 4/9 Cohorts have been delivered. Cohort 5 started in September. 43 trainees have successfully completed the course and 38 are still welding.		

			<p>3. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering) - MEGA Apprenticeship Booklet An Apprenticeship booklet has been published to highlight the range of apprenticeship courses within local Mid Ulster manufacturing companies. This has been circulated to all post primary schools in Mid Ulster and is available on the MEGA website. There are 117 apprenticeship places at various levels of entry.</p>		
			<p>4. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering) - MEGA Education & Industry Engagement Manager A new post 100% funded by industry has been created. They will work with the 19 Post primary schools in Mid Ulster and coordinate the Mega Ambassador Programme.</p>		
			<p>5. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering) - Proposal submitted to create a Pre-Apprenticeship Programme (HLA) Targeted at students dropping out of university after Christmas. Embed short training programmes into the course e.g. welding, hydraulics.</p>		
			<p>6. Promote investment in apprenticeships and vocational training to meet local industry needs (manufacturing and engineering) - Mentor The Mentors Training Collaborating with SWC to provide mentor training for 24 company reps to ensure industry enhance the apprentices learning with quality off the job training. (Flexible Skills Fund). The aim is to provide smaller companies with additional support in establishing apprenticeships.</p>		
		Marissa Canavan	<p>Council apprenticeship scheme developed in September 2021. To align with the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership Action Plan around skills development.</p>		

Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	Link the Steps to Success training and support programme to the Mid Ulster Skills Forum, for a local industry led approach. Establish and facilitate a multi-agency Local Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and action plan of skills development.	Fiona McKeown	Mid Ulster LMP established using the Mid Ulster Skills Forum as a delivery vehicle. Work has commenced to develop an Employability Action Plan for the Interim period 2021-23.		
Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	Extend the Area Learning Support model and intervention programmes targeting low attainment. Improve educational attainment in schools with disadvantaged young people through best use of targeted resources, EA partnership.	Community Planning			
Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	Develop a Primary School Homework Club model in areas of disadvantage. Develop pilot after-schools, home-work clubs and exam support initiatives. Lobby for afterschool's programmes.	Community Planning	(CD) Grant aid being considered to PTAs to after schools on a voluntary basis (free at point of access)		

Education and Skills	Skills and Educational Development	Consider a libraries engagement programme for vulnerable groups including migrant women, and children in areas of disadvantage.			Libraries NI - Partnership with The Junction, STEP Dungannon – tour of the library for refugees, membership and information sessions. First Steps Women’s Centre, Dungannon. Surestart – Regular Rhythm & Rhyme for disadvantaged groups. Free membership and access to computers – Digital Hubs in all libraries with Zoom software, headphones and camera/privacy and acoustic screens for attending interviews, training, social reasons. Browsealoud on each computer which adds speech, reading and translation tools to websites and online content. Translate into other languages/helps those with dyslexia and low levels of literacy Future events November 2021 Booker Prize promotion – shortlisted books available to borrow in Dungannon Library Homeless Awareness Week 14-20 November December 2021 Christmas Reading Challenge January 2022 Festival of Learning – Give it a Go Month. 10-31 January – various events and activities in all libraries. Blue Monday 17 January. February 2022 Children’s Mental Health Week 4-11 February. NI Science Festival 14-27 February. Fact February Month – promotional of factual, non-fiction books. Harry Potter Day March 2022 Literature Month World Book Day 4 March World Poetry Day 21 March Shakespeare week 14-20 March
Education and Skills	Young People’s Mental Health & Resilience	Promote the first thousand days research & actions re impact on mental health.	Claire Linney	Included in consultation response to Mental Health Strategy March 2021. Exploring potential options for roll out of the Schools for Hope model; awaiting Business Case model from Venturei consultants.	
Education and Skills	Young People’s Mental Health & Resilience	Lobby for the co-ordination and quality checking of mental health programmes available to primary and post primary schools to ensure the right provision.	Community Planning	Schools for Hope Programme – UUJ Research paper. Write to DE re Schools for Hope linking with Covid19 recovery MH funding.	All FE students have access to mental health and counselling support 24/7 from Inspire Wellbeing.

Education and Skills	Young People's Mental Health & Resilience	Develop 'Education for Life' courses for young people to include money management, driving, positive relationships, mental health and wellbeing etc. Develop coaching, life guard, first aid courses, etc. for young people to increase youth leisure skills and employment opportunities.	Kieran Gordon	Proposal developed. Funding to be sourced. CP shared Martin Lewis Financial Education Textbook initiative to all post primary schools. Engagement with the Credit Union Network took place in October 2021. DFC funding allocation proposal to CU's to Council December 2021.		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Review reduced rates for leisure activities, with support to engage, people in poverty. Increase use of and access to leisure facilities for disadvantaged young people, partner EA Youth. Provide access to leisure services facilities for young people, at key times, for £1.00 per session.	Kieran Gordon	5,743 participants in the £1 reduced leisure sessions scheme during Summer 2021. Southern Trust - Contracts established with Dungannon Leisure Centre and Care Experienced Young People are able to access activities that are free at the point of contact. Up to 40 Care Experienced Young People will have increased levels of physical activity through contracts established with local leisure centres. Investment of £3,000 between June 21 – March 2022. These young people will also receive vouchers to buy appropriate sportswear and equipment.		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Provide free leisure during set times in the summer for children/young people on FSM/ low income. Food Poverty: Partners to ensure coordinated approach on food poverty programme delivery. Deliver a pilot voucher scheme for older children aged 12 – 18	Kieran Gordon	4000 vouchers issued - 188 vouchers used. Analysis of possible reasons for non-usage - transport limitations, times when vouchers could be used, stigma attached to free vouchers. Instead of the Free Voucher scheme, the focus will move to the promotion and delivery of the £1 reduced rate session scheme each year as this has proved to be		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Encourage/support play development in disadvantaged communities to support wellbeing of children. Include disadvantaged areas in the Play Near Me scheme for annual play activity (potential Peace Plus).	Claire Linney	Pilot Free Play Summer Scheme delivered in July and August 2021 to 650 children aged 7 to 11 in 6 primary schools and 4 external facilities with food provided each day. Engagement with all partners re summer scheme delivery. Engagement for 2022 has commenced.		

			Kieran Gordon	No Play Near Me events were held in 2021 due to Covid19 pandemic, plan to hold small scale events in 2022. Leisure's Participation paper to Council -Sept 2021. Sports Small Grant (Threshold £1,500) To support recognised Sports NI sports clubs (affiliated to their governing body of sport) to develop and promote their sports and recreation provision within their club and to seek to increase participation through a range of activity including the target groups; Women & Girls, People with Disabilities and Areas of Social Need complementing general Sports Development. Funding will also support activity in promoting lifelong participation in sport, health & wellbeing and the non-competitive side of sport that characterises the added value of what many clubs involve themselves in (eg Club Health Plans)		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Encourage sports clubs to offer greater informal sporting opportunities (e.g. walking clubs, over 50's games) for hard to reach groups, through targeting sports grant funding. Give consideration to streamlining <u>Community Sports Grants and amend</u>	Kieran Gordon	Already integral to Sports Grants Assessment and awards.		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Health and Wellbeing House Checks - agree with partners a whole house check and key contact point for all health and wellbeing (targeted at those in poverty and most vulnerable).	Environmental Health	Close linkages HAP/EE/Affordable Warmth including signposting to other agencies as required		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Work towards the development of Health Hub in each area of disadvantage (Gortgonis Health Hub model). Develop Health Hubs in areas of disadvantage – (Dungannon West, Coalisland, Pomeroy, Maghera, Ardboe).	Kieran Gordon	To be developed.		

Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Support local community mental health organisations in the district, including low cost/no cost counselling, which contributes to people awaiting statutory provision. Support and network the existing community counselling services in the district.	Claire Linney	7 Community led Counselling organisations supported with DFC monies in a pilot project- all have been signposted to the DOH mental health support fund. A Community Led Counselling network has been formed and groups are being supported with any suitable funding. DOH consulted on Draft ten year Mental Health Strategy NI designed to improve mental health outcomes for people in Northern Ireland. This includes commitment to enhance talking therapy hubs aligned to primary care to increase provision of psychological therapies		
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Co-ordinate a holistic approach to mental health through partnership with the key agencies.				
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	To review and develop a pathway model (for different levels of intervention) for addressing mental health. Mental Health Strategy 2021-31 – lobby and seek partner support for the delivery of a pathway model (for different levels of intervention) for addressing mental health.	Community Planning			

Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Consider the services which are required locally in response to the new Substance Use and Mental Health Strategies			DOH leads on the New Substance Use Strategy launched "Preventing Harm, Empowering Recovery" launched October 2021. Outcome A – Through Prevention and Reduced Availability of Substances, Fewer People are at Risk of Harm from the Use of Alcohol & Other Drugs across the Life Course; Outcome B – Reduction in the Harms Caused by Substance Use; Outcome C – People have Access to High Quality Treatment and Support Services; Outcome D – People Are Empowered & Supported on their Recovery Journey; Outcome E – Effective Implementation & Governance, Workforce Development, and Evaluation & Research Supports the Reduction of Substance Use Related Harm. New NI Mental Health Strategy 2021 – 2031 launched June 2021
Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Lobby and seek partner support for the continued review of the regulatory laws on the gambling industry particularly access by young people.	Community Planning	Info sent to all Post Primary Principals and EA Youth Service on GamCare who offer gambling support and awareness training to young people and teachers.	The first "significant changes" in 35 years will be made to gambling laws in Northern Ireland. The legislation will: Create new offences in relation to allowing children to play gaming machines. Create powers to impose a statutory levy on gambling operators. Establish a mandatory code of practice for those holding gambling licenses. Broaden the definition of cheating to include attempted cheating. Make gambling contracts enforceable in law. Phase two will require a much longer timescale and will include a completely new regulatory framework which will regulate online gambling, including gaming machines.

Health and Wellbeing	Leisure and Wellbeing	Address Health Inequalities in Deprived Areas in line with DoH Health Inequalities Annual Report 2021 Priorities. Develop programmes with partners to address Health Inequality gaps in Mid Ulster for Men's Health, Year 8 Obesity, Respiratory Health in targeted areas of disadvantage	Environmental Health		<p>Young men's health programme planned for late January 2022. Two Cancer focus health check days completed in NR areas, 4 more health days planned for February with the Chest heart and Stroke organization. Holistic programme working with homelessness support group working on Mental Health, Nutrition, Domestic Violence and self-esteem ongoing. Programme completed with BAME community focusing on personal health, mental health, Take 5 nutrition and skills development completed in NR areas. Linking with SPN network in relation to drug and alcohol and signposting for relevant groups. Programme with Action Mental Health and Men's Alliance in relation to young men regarding self esteem and domestic violence. Promotion of PANTS campaign in partnership with local community groups. Delivery to 9 schools and 1400 children Daily mile messages, programme to be expanded in 2022. Take 5 ambassador training planned in partnership with SHSCT x3 for 2022 (session 1 in March). Rurality programme underway in rural community, focusing on male health, Take 5, daily mile and nutrition components. Current development and linking with SHSCT sexual health lead on a period poverty initiative with an emphasis on the BAME community.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Target programmes to vulnerable groups at higher risk of poverty. Seek to continue fuel support to families living in poverty.	Environmental Health	Affordable Warmth scheme helps address fuel poverty and targets low income households. Delivery of 80 warm packs to various community support groups within both NR and Rural areas. The Energy Efficiency Advice scheme provides tailored support for clients including the generation of referrals to other available support schemes.	

Leisure and Wellbeing		Partner organisations to ensure facilities and services are accessible to the most vulnerable eg Age Friendly, Dementia Friendly, Autism Friendly and Financially Accessible. Facilitate and deliver disability showcase performances and targeted programmes.		New Arts Outreach Plan developed which will facilitate and deliver disability showcase performances and targeted programmes. 1. Increase availability of virtual productions for schools. 2. Source theatrical productions that are relevant to the School Curriculum and apply child rate ticket pricing. (schools/parents do not incur additional transport/food costs). 3. Deliver Outreach Street Art and Community Theatre in disadvantaged areas, targeting young people. 4. Align Carers' policy across Departments ie free entry for accompanying carers to performances.		
					SHSCT	SHSCT provide an online Incredible Years Autism & Speech & Language Delay Programme (2-5 years) for families awaiting diagnosis with Autism Services. SHSCT progressing training to provide a Parents Plus programme for families of children/young adults with special needs(11-25 years)
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Support the delivery through partnership of social housing for people experiencing domestic violence, including access to supported housing	Claire Linney	Women's Aid Move On Accommodation Scheme progressing. Positive Relationships programme in all post primary schools, delivered annually (led by PCSP).		
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Co-ordinate partner delivery which assists people experiencing domestic violence; including access to supported housing.	Claire Linney	MUDC and CMU Women's Aid working on Move On Housing project in Cookstown.	SHSCT	SHSCT have a Workplace Policy On domestic abuse policy and guide to raise awareness and identify the impact of domestic abuse on employees
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Lobby partner organisations to ensure facilities and services are affordable to	Environmental Health	MUDC currently persuing WHO Age Friendly Status for district	SHSCT	Southern Trust area has an established Access to Information service.

		the most vulnerable eg Age Friendly, Dementia Friendly, Autism Friendly.			Libraries NI -	Libraries offer face to face Knit and natter/book groups/tea and newspapers/Rhythm and Rhyme, Lego club activities/digital help/study space. Free access to books and library computers. All events and activities can be found at Events (librariesni.org.uk). Digital Poverty. Free membership and access to computers – Digital Hubs in all libraries with Zoom software, headphones and camera/privacy and acoustic screens for attending interviews/training/social reasons. Browsealoud on each computer which adds speech, reading and translation tools to websites and online content. Translate into other languages/helps those with dyslexia and low levels of literacy. Online computer sessions/monthly Zoom classes/one to one IT help available virtually and in libraries. Available on our computers is Access to Research – research papers for study. Health Literacy Read yourself Well collection. Books available for all ages. Dementia Friendly Collection of books. Reminiscence sessions. Reading Well for children collection recommends reading to help children understand their feelings and worries and cope with tough times. Libraries NI Health Activities July 2021 – March 2022 online health events. As part of Libraries NI's Take 5 steps to wellbeing, opportunity to take part in a
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Support partners to target programmes to vulnerable groups at higher risk of poverty.	CP	Community Development - NIHE Discretionary payment info shared with foodbanks and counselling networks and on MUDC Emergency Support Chart.		
Health and Wellbeing	Vulnerable Groups	Review the existing Health Improvement Programme Model (eg Make a Change, Energy Efficiency) in partnership with PHA to ensure that programmes target poverty in Mid Ulster.	Environmental Health	Progress monitoring reports to PHA include details of how the programmes have targeted inequalities in health.		

Health and Wellbeing	Food Poverty	Coordinate support for front line poverty charities including financial support and development of foodbanks. Co-ordinate and support a food poverty network. Partners to ensure coordinated approach on food poverty programme delivery.	Claire Linney	Ongoing foodbank networking meetings - 15 Sept 2021.		
Health and Wellbeing	Food Poverty	Encourage Social Supermarkets and Community Food Cupboards in the district. Develop social supermarkets and community food cupboards in partnership with DfC.	Claire Linney	CD ongoing engagement with DfC re resourcing for social supermarkets. Funding received - £74k from DfC.		
Health and Wellbeing	Food Poverty	Lobby for continued summer food support for those on Free School Meals	Community Planning	DE currently reviewing FSM and possibility of Free For All. MUDC will make a response to consultation		