

## “Your Chairman - Your Board - Serving Your Need”

*(N.I.H.E. Chairman)*

This year's Annual Community Conference held in Cookstown was, as previous years, an impressive event. Community Groups from across Northern Ireland enjoyed a day packed with displays, presentations, videos and entertainment. The day showcased the wide variety of innovative and exciting community led projects happening right on our own 'doorstep'.

In addition to the information boards and stands displayed by nominated Groups from each of the 35 District H.C.N.s, which were located around the main Conference Room, Groups from the 5 N.I.H.E. Areas each presented their individual projects on the themes of Environment, Education, Intergeneration, Partnerships and Social.

N.I.H.E. Chairman Brian Rowntree, on officially opening this year's Community Conference, highlighted the existing pressures on housing due to the current global financial crisis. Stating that the 'credit crunch' is a direct result of overspent portfolios of certain organisations, he assured delegates that Northern Ireland does not want to go 'down that road' and that portfolios in Social Housing will hope to expand the sector in the next 5-10 years.

“We are in the middle of huge challenges in social housing and the political arena,

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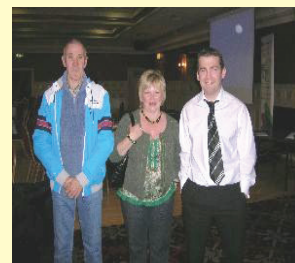


*Left: Delegates at this years Annual Community Conference held in October.  
L-r Richard Williamson (N.I.H.E. Belfast East District Manager), Lewis Lee (KNIGHTS Mens Group), Ernest Bradley (East Belfast Seniors) and George Harkness (KNIGHTS Mens Group).*

*Right: Viewing the many Community Group Display Boards at this years Community Conference are l-r: Geoff Cardwell (Cunninghams Lane Cross Community Residents Association, Dungannon) Amanda Millar (Inter-Estate Partnership, Antrim), Patricia McQuillan (Central H.C.N.) and Eric Cumberland (Cunninghams Lane Cross Community Residents Association, Dungannon)*



## Inside This Issue



*l-r Jim Doherty (Glebeside Community Association, Ballymoney), Louise Watson (Balnamore & District Community Association, Ballymoney) with Seamus Kearney (S.C.N.I. Liaison Officer)*



*l-r: Lynette Mahaffy (Central H.C.N.), Pat Bowen (S.C.N.I. Liaison Officer), Laverne Mawhinney and Alice Douglas (Whitehill Community Association, Bangor)*



*l-r: Gordon Blevins (PLACE, Portadown), Cyril Moorehead (PLACE), Colin Ross (N.I.H.E. Craigavon District Manager) and Richard Mealey (PLACE)*



**Headquarters Staff  
(028) 2564 5676**

Director: Brian Holmes

Head of Administration: Theresa Patton  
Administrators: Karen Marks  
Patricia Bibby  
Elizabeth Steede

**Support Services:**

Funding: Caroline Speers  
Training: Stephanie Kenny  
Laura O'Dowd  
Information/ Research: Sheenagh McNally

**Belfast/South East/North East Team**

Hilary Kyle Area Manager  
(028) 2564 5676

Joanna Donaldson Belfast  
(028) 9023 6116

Conor Flanagan Belfast  
(028) 9023 5205

Murray Watt South East  
(028) 9048 2956

Pat Bowen South East  
(028) 9145 4289

Martin Quinn North East  
(028) 2766 5596

Seamus Kearney North East  
(028) 2766 5596

**South/West Team**

Colm McDaid Area Manager  
(028) 8676 5838

Orla McCann South  
(028) 3834 2792

Karen Brewster South  
(028) 6632 9677

Julie Bell West  
(028) 8676 5838

Roisin McCorrison West  
(028) 7776 7722

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the world of social housing will change, with new ownership ... we will not travel unless we travel with you ... we are an open book and an accountable book ... we want to hear your views. I am your Chairman, on your Board which wants to serve your need”.

The Chairman further explained that the Housing Community Network has an integral role in ensuring the effective delivery of future housing services and indicated his intention to attend Central, Area and indeed many District Housing Community Networks over the next 12 months.

He commented that the Annual Conference is the most important day in the Housing Executive's calendar and declared .. “there is no point in building houses if there is no community; the world is changing and the support of all in this room is essential to us, as an organisation. We all need to think about energy efficiency and how we can change our environment. We need to open our minds and hearts to ways of dealing with matters such as anti-social behaviour and we are encouraged by the role played by the Inter-community Network in bringing issues such as flags and emblems to the forefront”.

In his introduction in this year's Housing Community Networks Annual Report, Mr. Rowntree states that the Housing Executive fully endorses the emphasis placed on the role of communities within sustainable development. To this end and in partnership with Supporting Communities NI and the Housing Community Network a working Community Involvement Strategy 2008-2011 has been produced and endorsed by the Housing Executive. This Strategy sets out a definitive Action Plan for the next 3 years.

**COMMUNITY WEBSITE AWARD**

Since April this year a programme of digital inclusion training has been rolled out through all District Housing Community Networks and S.C.N.I. Liaison Officers. The aim of the training was to offer Community/Residents groups a free website including software licences. The design and implementation of this programme has been established in conjunction with MYGroupNI, Department of Finance & Personnel and S.C.N.I.

At this year's Conference Lorraine Campbell, N.I.H.E. Assistant Director of Housing & Regeneration presented an award to the Group which has made the most effort to update its website since undergoing the initial training. The award was made to **Dhu Varren Community Action Team, Portrush.**

Mrs Campbell explained the numerous benefits to community groups participating in this initiative. *“There is a very low percentage of community groups with inter-net access and we felt the H.C.N. was ‘ripe’ to roll this project out, with the obvious partner S.C.N.I. We hope to get all groups online enable them to access training materials, factsheets S.C.N.I.'s Community Funding Bulletin. We plan to Discussion Board to allow groups to discuss current share messages and comments with each other. In be direct email contact with S.C.N.I. and N.I.H.E. which communication”.*

For further information on the digital inclusion initiative contact Caroline Speers (S.C.N.I.) 028 3834 2792



Lorraine Campbell (N.I.H.E.) outlines the Digital Inclusion Initiative

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONFERENCE DELEGATES**



l-r: Debra Cox, Ian Cox and Jim Jackson, East End Residents Association, Newtownards



Above: Winners of the Digital Inclusion Award for the best Website. l-r: Christopher Dallat, Betty Martin and Angela Young from Dhu Varren Community Action Team, Portrush



Above: Conference delegates represented Community Groups from across the province



Laura O'Dowd (S.C.N.I.) with Alfred Abolarin N.I.H.E. Community Cohesion Unit



l-r: Martin Quinn (S.C.N.I.), Avril McAuley, (Coleraine N.I.H.E. District Office) and Hilary Kyle (S.C.N.I.)



l-r Ann Loughran (Riverside & Blackhill Community Association, Cookstown, Mary Brady and Una Rehill (Carrowshee & Sylvan Hill Community Association, Lisnaskea



l-r: Murray Watt (S.C.N.I.) with Seamus Kelly, Bawnmore & District Residents Association, Newtownabbey I District



l-r: Annette Nolan, Susan Downes, Margaret Kennedy (Glenbawn Community Association, Belfast, Conor Flanagan (S.C.N.I.), Kate McCormick (Glenbawn Community Association) and Danny Cochrane (N.I.H.E. Dairy Farm District Office)



l-r: Stella And Cathal McCauley, Shantallow Residents Association, L'Derry with Roisin McCorrison (S.C.N.I.)



l-r: Front row Bobby Magee, P.J. O'Hare and Gerry Crawford (Downpatrick H.C.N. and Good Morning Down). Back row Liam Gunn (N.I.H.E. Downpatrick District) and Joanna Donaldson (S.C.N.I.).

**INNOVATE : CREATE : TRANSFORM**  
**COMMUNITIES ACHIEVING**  
**EXCELLENCE**

This year's Annual Community Conference adopted a slightly different format from previous years by presenting 1 community project from each of the 5 N.I.H.E. Areas, with each area focusing on its own particular theme. S.C.N.I. Director Brian Holmes introduced each project as follows:-

**NORTH EAST AREA - ENVIRONMENT THEME**

**Balnamore 'Cuts the Carbon' Project**  
**Balnamore & District**  
**Community Association**

Louise Watson from Balnamore & District Community Association presented this unique project to the Annual Conference. Louise explained that the Community Association supported the local Mill Youth Club to build on its already successful recycling and environmental awareness raising initiatives.



This new programme implemented an ambitious plan to involve young people in a variety of activities which aimed to create a practical understanding of what can be accomplished through simple changes in lifestyle.

Over a 6 month period the local young people helped make draught excluders for distribution to members of the community and also assisted in the making of worm composters, being prizes in monthly draws for those using a mini-re-cycling centre set up in the Community Centre.

Other activities included a 'Walk to School Day', 'Fuel Poverty Roadshow', Making and Distributing Efficient Watering Devices, Encouraging Smart Shopping and Fair Trade and Promotion of Eco Energy, with every household signing up and receiving low energy light bulbs.



Left: l-r Jim Doherty (Glebeside Community Association), Louise Watson (Balnamore & District Community Association with Seamus Kearney (S.C.N.I. Liaison Officer)

**SOUTH EAST AREA - PARTNERSHIP THEME**



Above: l-r Alison Methven (N.I.H.E. Bangor), Laverne Mawhinney and Alice Douglas (Whitehill Community Association and Lynne Mulligan (N.I.H.E. Bangor District). Inset: Skipperstone Glen as it is now



**Skipperstone Glen Project**  
**Whitehill Community Association**

Whitehill Community Association, Bangor prides itself in achieving its long term goal of transforming a neglected piece of land known as the Skipperstone Glen, prone to vandalism and dumping, into the place of natural beauty it once used to be.

Through its quarterly Inter-agency meetings and the setting up of a Project Team involving a number of Statutory and Voluntary Agencies the Community Association applied for and was awarded funding for this project from the Big Lottery/U.T.V. Peoples Millions Competition.

The result is the establishment of a beautiful park-like area to be enjoyed by the entire community. A trim trail including exercise equipment was installed, a dipping pond and wildflower meadow were created and the river was cleaned up and now flows clear and without pollution.

The Community Association recognises the importance and value of working in partnership with all relevant agencies in conjunction with local people. By doing so ensures long term sustainability and maintenance of the area and local people taking a pride in the area.

**S.C.N.I. WISHES TO THANK THE SPONSORS OF THIS YEARS COMMUNITY CONFERENCE**

**SOUTH AREA - INTERGENERATION THEME**

l-r: Gordon Blevins (PLACE), Cyril Moorehead (PLACE), Colin Ross (N.I.H.E. Craigavon District Manager) and Richard Mealey (PLACE)



**PLACE Initiative Project**  
**Portadown Local Action for**  
**Community Engagement**

This project involved bringing together members from the local community, Police, Fire Service, Housing Executive and Education Board to present a 'Road Show' around local schools to address issues around bonfire safety and related matters.

As well as making children aware of the dangers of bonfires, the 'Road Show' advised on the impact of burning certain materials, the costs associated with the clean up of bonfires and the need to have general respect for the entire community.

The results of this initiative show a reported reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents, with bonfires supervised by local volunteers. This in turn has led to an increased sense of community pride and a reduction of feelings of fear and intimidation amongst the elderly population.

**WEST AREA - SOCIAL THEME**

**'Breathe Out' Project**  
**Cookstown Community**  
**Youth & Sports Club**

This year's Conference audience was blown away by a performance from a group of very talented children from Cookstown Community Youth & Sports Club. Musical extracts from 'The Wizard of Oz' were performed by the key characters of Dorothy, Tin Man, Scarecrow, Lion and many others.

This was not the childrens debut performance as the production is the outcome of a month of rehearsals through the innovative programme 'Breathe Out' and a performance for their families and friends.

The 'Breathe Out' programme provides warm up games, breathing exercises and singing lessons for children from various backgrounds and meets on Saturday mornings in Cookstown Leisure Centre.



Children performing at the Conference

**BELFAST AREA - EDUCATION THEME**



Above: Students with their Tutors at the presentation evening for Lenadoon Community Forum Training & Education Project's E.C.D.L. course

**Education & Training Project**  
**Lenadoon Community Forum**

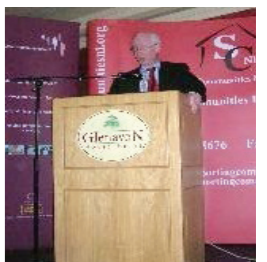
This innovative programme aims to address the employment needs of local long term unemployed, women returners and disadvantaged people living in the Glencolin area of West Belfast. The ethos of the project is to address the learning needs of adults in order to improve their educational attainment and enhance the employability of those individuals who might otherwise be excluded from the labour market. Over the past 13 years this programme has had a total of 3,200 participants.

In addition to the courses on offer, one to one training is provided if required. Students can also access individual needs assessments, C.V. skills, job search techniques, I.T. training, numeracy and literacy support, work advice and job search assistance.

Lenadoon Community Forum has also developed strong links with employers who have benefited by tapping into the pool of qualified students coming through the project.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

Colm McCaughley (N.I.H.E. Director of Housing & Regeneration) on closing the Conference, highlighted some of the issues the Housing Community Network would be considering at future meetings. These include:-



N.I.H.E. Director of Housing & Regeneration, Colm McCaughley

- Mystery Shopping
- Tenant Led Inspections
- Digital Projects
- Hard to Reach Communities
- Disability
- Rural Village Voices
- Inter-community Network
- Young Persons Forums.

Mr McCaughley thanked participants, sponsors and delegates and concluded by praising the valuable work of the H.C.N

## Housing Benefit: - Changes to Backdating Rules

There may be some circumstances when a client is entitled to Housing Benefit for a period earlier than the date on which they have actually submitted a claim.

In such cases, the rules allow a claimant to apply to have their Housing Benefit backdated where they can show that they had 'good cause' for not having claimed the benefit when they should have done so.

The government recently introduced some changes to the rules for backdating. Prior to 6 October 2008, a claim for Housing Benefit could be backdated for up to 52 weeks. However, since 6 October 2008 this has been reduced to 6 months, for claimants of a working age, or, in the case of claimants who are of the age to claim Pension Credit, 3 months.

These changes apply to claims for backdating made on or after 6 October 2008. The government intends to eventually reduce the time limit for backdating to 3 months for all claimants.

### Working Age Claimants

Claimants of working age can apply to have Housing Benefit backdated for up to 6 months. Under the Housing Benefit rules such claimants will have to show a good cause for having their claim backdated i.e. for not claiming the benefit when they should have.

### Good Cause

Good cause is not defined in the Housing Benefit legislation. However, a Social Security Commissioner defined good cause as: "...some fact which, having regard to all the circumstances... would probably have caused a reasonable person of his age and experience to act (or fail to act) as the claimant did."

The onus is on the claimant to prove that they have a good cause for getting their Housing Benefit backdated. However, the Housing Executive has to look at all the circumstances of the case before reaching a decision. In making their determinations, the Housing Executive uses guidance which gives examples of what can constitute good cause, including:-

www.housingadviceNI.org



the home of  
housing advice in  
Northern Ireland

Produced by Housing Rights Service in partnership with Shelter.  
Supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

For further information on backdating see Chapter 9 of the Housing Rights Manual.

Advice can also be sought from Housing Rights Service  
028 9024 5640

Monday - Friday from 9.30a.m. to 1.30p.m. or by visiting

[www.housingadviceNI.org](http://www.housingadviceNI.org)

- ✓ The claimant's state of health
- ✓ Unfamiliarity with the benefits system
- ✓ Misleading information from official and unofficial sources
- ✓ Language barriers.

### Claimants Aged 60 or Over

All claimants aged 65 or over, and women aged 60 or over, will have attained the qualifying age for Pension Credit. Where a claimant has reached the respective qualifying age for Pension Credit a claim can be made to backdate Housing Benefit for up to 3 months. Claimants in this age group do not have to show a good cause for backdating.

Men aged between 60 and 64 are considered to be of working age but can also claim Pension Credit. In these circumstances if a man aged between 60 and 64, or his partner, is claiming Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) he will be treated as a claimant of working age and will come under the rules for backdating for up to 6 months.



**S.C.N.I. WISHES ALL 'ROUTES'  
READERS  
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

The following information is now available from S.C.N.I.  
For your free copies tick appropriate boxes, cut off slip and forward to S.C.N.I.

### Group Development

- Building a Successful Community Group
- Introduction to New Members
- Understanding Your Constitution
- Community Development
- Conducting a Survey
- Annual General Meeting
- Charitable Status
- Records and Book-keeping for Community Groups
- Producing Community Newsheets
- Planning & Promoting Your Events

### Community Buildings

- Developing a Community Building
- Community Bases

### Projects

- Improving Your Environment
- Developing Play Areas
- Playground Survey

### General

- Insurance Information
- Producing a Business Development Plan
- Redevelopment
- Functions of the Council
- V.A.T.
- Understanding Your Neighbours
- Banks and Building Societies
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Setting up a Company
- Jargon Buster
- A Summary of S.C.N.I. Factsheets

### Funding

- Preparation for Fundraising
- Local Fundraising Ideas
- A Fundraising Strategy
- Council Funding
- Trust Funding
- Lottery Grants
- Statutory Funding
- A Guide to Businesses Funding
- Business Support Funding
- Health and Social Care Trusts

### N.I.H.E. Schemes

- Please give name and type of Scheme

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tele. No. \_\_\_\_\_

All S.C.N.I. Factsheets are available in large print on request

## S.C.N.I. FUNDING SERVICE - Help Us Help You

S.C.N.I.'s Funding Service aims to provide specialist information and advice to community groups regarding potential sources of funding and guidance on the overall fundraising process. A range of Funding Factsheets have been developed including 'Preparation for Fundraising' and 'Local Fundraising Ideas'. There are also Factsheets providing more specific information on accessing Business, Council and Trust support. You can obtain copies of these Factsheets by completing the form above and returning to S.C.N.I. Head Office.

S.C.N.I.'s Funding Enquiry Service enables groups to access information on funding sources for specific costs or projects. A form can be downloaded from the Funding Service section of S.C.N.I.'s website, or simply telephone Head Office. Once submitted, your request will be researched using computerised funding packages which will produce a list of potential funders.

Housing Community Network members are able to obtain a monthly **Community Funding Bulletin** which provides details of Charitable Trusts, Foundations and Statutory Organisations which offer grant support. S.C.N.I.'s Funding Service helps groups secure grants totalling around £1 million each year.



If your group has already obtained funding through the information provided by the Funding Service please let us know. In order to evaluate the service we provide and keep a record of funding successes, we would be grateful if you would send details of your successful grant application as follows: the name and address of your organisation, the name of the funding organisation the money was obtained from, the type of project funded, the date of the grant application and the grant amount obtained. This will help us ensure that the information we provide is benefiting the community and that our service is fulfilling its aims. General funding information is available on the Funding Service section of S.C.N.I.'s website. If you require further assistance please contact the Funding Officer, Caroline Speers using the contact details listed in this magazine.

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# Supporting Communities NI

34-36 Henry Street  
Ballymena  
Co. Antrim  
BT42 3AH

## ENDING HATE IN OUR COMMUNITIES TRAINING

Are you interested in increasing your understanding of the extent of bias, harassment and hate crime in the community? Are you interested in developing the skills required to deal with bias and harassment?

INCORE and the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence (C.P.H.V.) U.S. have worked in collaboration to deliver Ending Hate in our Community Training in Northern Ireland. There are currently 45 trainers throughout Northern Ireland who are available to conduct a 3 hour 'Ending Hate' Workshop free of charge.

The objectives of the training are to:-

- understand the extent of bias, harassment and hate crimes in the community
- explore the impact of bias and harassment on those who are targeted
- learn practical skills for response and prevention.

If you know of any group or organisation who would be interested in receiving training, please contact:-

**Alfred Abolarin – Assistant Principal Community Cohesion Officer - 02890318842 or email [alfred.abolarin@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:alfred.abolarin@nihe.gov.uk)**



## ENERGY SAVING TRUST ADVICE CENTRE LAUNCHED

Minister for Social Development Margaret Ritchie was joined by M.L.A.s at Stormont recently to launch the Energy Saving Trusts new Advice Centre.



One freephone number is now available for all householders to access free, impartial and independent energy saving advice. This includes information on renewable energy technologies, grants to help make our homes more energy efficient and a route to other services, for example those specifically tailored to assist citizens with specific fuel affordability issues and for Housing Executive tenants.

*Head of Energy Saving Trust in N.I. Noel Williams with Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie in Stormont at the launch of the new Advice Centre*

The Minister said "I very much welcome the new Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre and encourage constituents, customers and consumers to utilise this excellent service".



**Freephone number for the Advice Centre is 0800 512012**