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Jacqueline Irwin	Community Relations Council
Tony Kennedy	Community Relations Council
Bebhinn McKinley	Community Relations Council
Grace Hamilton	Community Relations Council

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for coming to this seminar on the issue of Shared Housing. There was an obvious signal, in his attendance that the Minister for Social Development recognises that shared housing is an important issue in relation to the conflict and in respect of how the peace process develops. Without the Minister's input this would have been a very different, and less valuable, event.

I would also like to thank Dave Wall from the DSD for supporting the organising of this seminar.

Thanks also to the speakers, Grainia Long, of the Chartered Institute of Housing Northern Ireland and Jennifer Hawthorne, from the NIHE, for their extremely well thought out and beneficial presentations.

This seminar was a sobering experience which has left us all with a lot to think about and reflect on the challenges that still lie ahead. It has also been a positive experience in that there is a recognition and desire to form serious and practical thought, conversations and action around this area of work.

The Community Relations Council, along with others will play an active role in exploring how we might move the discussions and recommendations that emerged through this seminar forward into practical and meaningful proposals for the new Assembly and Executive.

Thanks to Dympna McGlade, Bebhinn McKinley and Grace Hamilton from the CRC for organising this event and finally thank you to the delegates attending today's conference for your invaluable contributions to the discussions and to the development of recommendations for future action.

Tony Kennedy OBE,

Seminar Chair

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Foreword

Alex Attwood MLA
Minister, Department of Social Development

I am pleased to contribute to this Shared Housing Report which brings together a diverse range of housing practitioners as well as representatives from the voluntary and community sector.

Tackling the separation that exists in our social housing has been central to the New Housing Agenda launched by my predecessor Margaret Ritchie MP and has remained close to the heart of the Department for Social Development's endeavours in housing. Whilst this has produced some very positive outcomes in both new and existing neighbourhoods, in the 13 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement there appears to have been much less movement on normalisation in terms of where people choose to live with over 90% of social housing still segregated along religious grounds.

The Shared Housing Seminar raises many important questions particularly in relation to how we achieve the change in housing provision that 8 out of 10 people state they wish to see, that is housing provision that provides real choice for those who want to live in mixed neighbourhoods. This sits uncomfortably with the slow pace of progress.

We know from the extremely successful Shared Neighbourhood Programme that shared housing helps create more sustainable neighbourhoods and creates a space in which people can constructively challenge their belief systems. So I believe the time is right to move beyond the 'pilots' and to start mainstreaming shared housing provision. A lot of the work to achieve the existing shared communities has taken place "below the radar" and with good reason. But such challenging work needs a wider audience to truly be effective in its ultimate goal of changing attitudes and the way in which we live. I now think the time is right to put the provision of shared housing at the top of the public agenda.

It is not a coincidence that the neighbourhood renewal areas that include our most disadvantaged communities are largely separated. I have attempted to redress the problem of historical funding reinforcing separate community structures by ensuring that every new build housing scheme is

deemed to have 'shared' potential as well as through my support for the Shared Neighbourhood Programme which has supported existing estates to share within and between their communities.

In my short time in office I have sought to leave traces to help shape the future direction of travel in housing. If the largely separated nature of social housing is to be addressed, prospective residents of mixed estates will want to be assured of their own safety, of access to public services and of appropriate education and youth facilities. None of this is in the gift of the Department for Social Development alone. However, I leave office reflecting positively on work of the Department whilst recognising the limitations imposed by the absence of top-down participation by the Northern Ireland Executive in shaping a shared future in Northern Ireland

Going forward, the strongest advocates for shared housing will be the residents who live in those communities. We have to ensure that their voice is heard in unison with the voices of the 80% of people canvassed in the NI Life & Times survey who are on record as stating they would prefer to live in mixed neighbourhoods. It is vital that seminars like this keep asking the difficult questions to challenge both Government and the wider political establishment on the shape of future housing provision.

I would like to thank the Community Relations Council for organising this thought-provoking seminar and for keeping the issue of shared housing very much to the fore as we strive to create a new civic norm. I wish the Council well in progressing this important debate and would like to assure them of my continued support going forward.

SETTING THE SCENE

Duncan Morrow
CEO, Community Relations Council

If this morning is to set the scene in terms of Shared Housing, the question is to ask why we are discussing this issue again. This is a perennial issue.

The first question that we need to address is how far has this debate got? So far, we have lined up the philosophical debate, in terms of questions.

Secondly, where do we take this and where does this agenda go? At CRC the primary question is always how do we achieve change and I hope that this is the question that we can address to the Minister later today.

There have been a number of frustrations in regards to this issue, particularly in regards to how to move this issue forward. We need to set out a number of ideas. This is not just a question of physical builds but a question of anxiety and fear. There is the underlying notion of choice beyond the pale – this creates a pattern of choice based on premises and parameters.

We need to go back to how the question of choice operates, in terms of choice within premises, and the elements of anxiety and safety limits these choices. There are two elements to consider in regards to this. First of all due to the Catholic/Protestant divide in Northern Ireland it is not that there is ownership of just a house, but there is ownership of a territory and this is engraved in the consciousness of people in Northern Ireland.

The second element to this is that those with the resources move as far away as possible from having to make that choice. The choices are instead increasingly made by people everyday.

The level of fear that exists is a systematic question and we need to move the debate away from it being in terms of individual choice to what it actually is, constrained choice.

The fundamental core of the issue is that in regards to housing in Northern Ireland, choice is not a separate issue to equality. This is being presented as a good relations issue but it is an issue as to what can be done to achieve equality of choice. Equality of choice challenges inequality and tackles inequality and discrimination. Choice is not about deciding where to live based on what is safe. Presently in North Belfast, there are areas equivalent in housing conditions as to the context of the call for housing rights in the 1960s amidst the start of the Troubles.

The main three messages therefore as a background to this is that:

1. We do not have a choice as to where we live
2. Shared Housing is not just a Good Relations issue it is an Equality issue
3. Essentially the issues are not going away addressed quickly.

Housing encompasses more than a physical build as it is about the personal space people inhabit. It is about people.

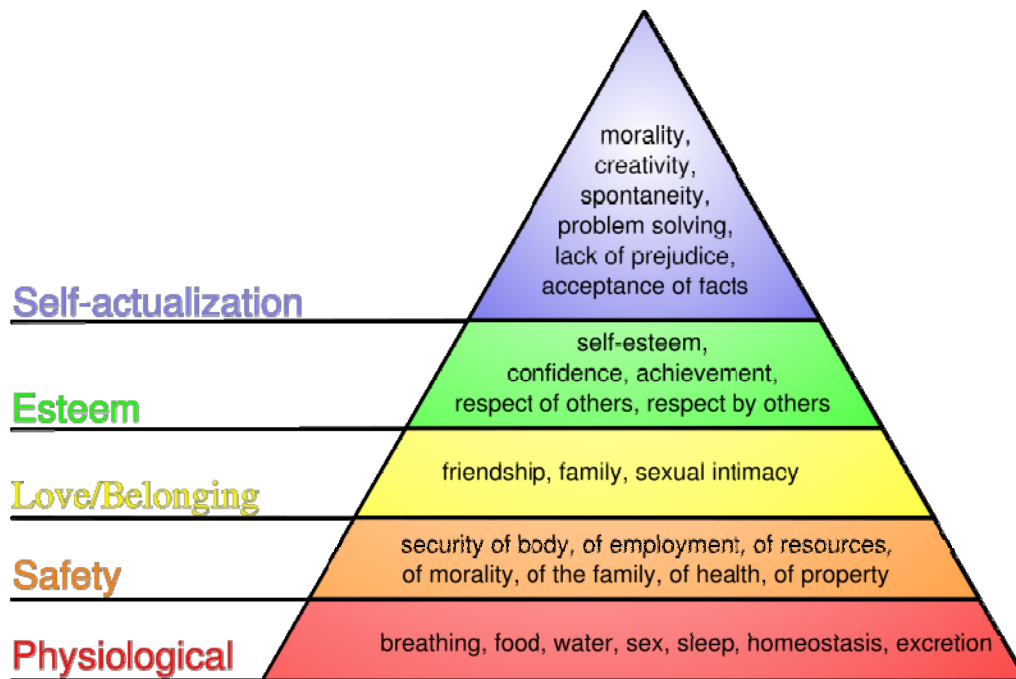


Fig 1 – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

The question around this is the reason we cannot address this – because it may impact the political balance.

In Northern Ireland separation has become normalised and therefore normality can only be engineered, as abnormality is considered normal. Organisations such as the CRC are therefore accused of being ‘Social Engineers’ as in looking at shared housing, that goes beyond what is considered the normality of living in separate zones.

Anxiety is permanent, it is not just crime that is the issue but also fear of crime and that fear is not going away, it is waxing and waning, an illustration of this is at the Interfaces. A debate therefore needs to be instigated as to what fear looks like in these particular areas? In segregated communities, there is an embedded sympathy for community defence which takes the form of vigilantes, and this continues to be implicit and has a huge impact on the structure of community development.

70% of issues relating to this fear are not classified as sectarian or racist but as paramilitary. This percentage is non-declining. People who do move into these communities move into communities that have terrorism and paramilitarism firmly embedded within their mindsets.

Another aspect to bring forward to this debate is that we have not tracked the amount of decisions that have been motivated by the fear and segregation. As of the economic climate and as we enter

into a time of inevitable massive cuts, the question is what will be cut? Will there still be separate schools? Inequality of access is created and this creates inequalities across the system which is a 'civic disgrace'.

There is no political dynamic present around these questions and concerns and therefore people do not believe that the concept is real and so there needs to be that plausibility factor involved. Policy needs to be addressed to how we can break this concern in regards to plausibility.

Whilst Shared Housing looks like a periphery issue it is in fact a massive issue with the economic consequences being enormous. The level of debate in terms of Shared Housing can therefore change the whole level of how other things are discussed.

Out of the issues that I have brought forward, I would suggest three main areas:

1. There is a need to recognise that separate housing is not a separate issue from equality.
2. There is a requirement to spend to save, and a visionary approach, with a degree of planning. I believe that it is preferable to ask the UK Government for £200million for this planning as opposed to spending the same amount as intervention money.
3. There is a need to talk about indicators along the way, including milestones and positioning. In regards to that the different Governmental Departments do need to work together.

In terms of models of practices, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has begun to look at this. From this then there is a need to address whether this contradicts or delivers equality. There is a need to deliver equality.

To date, we have had money pumped into Northern Ireland and from that there have been a number of good pilot schemes developed, but we must move beyond pilots. There is a need to break down the implications of Shared Housing and depart from the 'pie in the sky' mindset and replace this with actual design.

This will not happen without management.

HOUSING AND SOCIAL COHESION

Grainia Long,
Director, Chartered Institute of Housing, Northern Ireland

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the Professional Body for Housing Associations. The question of why we are here as a professional body is to address that this can be a less complicated process than it firstly appears. It is our job at the CIH, day in and day out, to think in terms of design and planning; we are staffed by skilled planners and architects.

I have worked with the CIH in Northern Ireland for six years and beyond those years; I have never seen the level of housing policy as I have since I started working in Northern Ireland.

The Post Devolution Policy Context

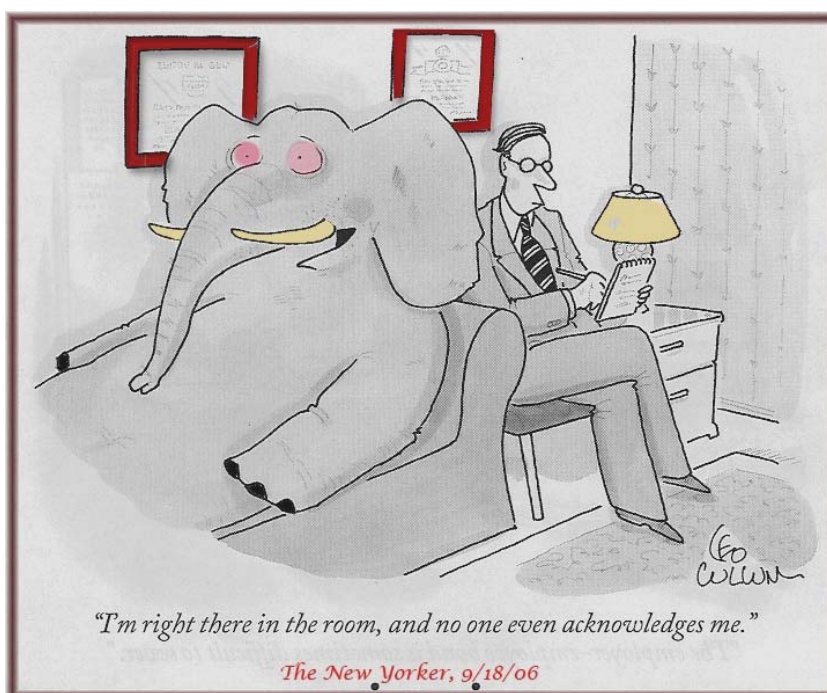
- Scale of market volatility- changes to housing and land markets. The plummeting prices of houses have had a major effect on the allocation of housing. Issues such as the cost of land have had been huge contributing factors. We are living in a very volatile market which is going up and then down.
- The affordability crisis, to the repossessions 'peak'
- The housing need that never went away... the 'inbetweeners' who have no choice... the persistent under-occupation
- The economic value of housing: when the market is rising, the economy benefits- when the fall comes, it's an inhibitor for growth
- From a public expenditure 'high' to a dramatic change in the public funding model for housing
- An effective housing system equals social benefits which include higher educational standards, good health and well-being. A change in benefits will affect housing dramatically. With all benefits being merged into the one lump sum and the upper maximum of benefits per week that can be received being £500, housing comes last. If benefits are determined as £350, for disability living allowance, child allowance and so on, that leaves on £150.00 housing allowance. However, this will not hit us in Northern Ireland as deep as it will hit in London, where within ten years the poor living in London will have to move out of the city completely and thus moving a generation back in terms of segregation in London in terms of the rich and poor divide.

We will still be talking about this issue of Shared Housing in 30 years, no matter how successful we are.

The Big Squeeze

In Northern Ireland, housing level needs have never relented. At present those aged in the 20-35 age group will only be able to access private rental properties and not be able to access social housing or purchase a property as of the banks not lending money.

- Lack of confidence in housing
- We have undervalued housing. We have come to see housing as a commodity and we need to learn lessons from this.
- The deficit will drive everything. There is a real need for the input of other narratives from different sectors such as educationalists and the health sector identifying the advantages of shared housing. We have to consider where people want to live and where they wish to move to. Politicians will better understand the economic element of housing planning therefore there is a need to link job markets to housing.
- Almost nothing is protected - Over the last 18 years there has been a generous public investment in housing, now dramatic cuts need to be made, we must be prepared for this.
- Housing will be offered up
- Inequality of Space: demand and supply issues. This is fundamental to the equality debate. There is a deep inequality in terms of space in Northern Ireland with both under occupation and over occupation of areas existing. Therefore questions that surround this need to be highlighted, such as how much space do we need as individuals?



There is of course an elephant in the room in regards to any discussion on housing and that is Sectarianism.

Acknowledging the impact of Sectarianism on Housing

This makes Northern Ireland stand out from everywhere else. However we do not talk about it enough and conversely there needs to be a recognition of the issue by Housing Associations.

- **It reduces choice for households... We are not meeting the aspirations of today and future generation.** Recognising the effect of Segregation – We are not meeting people’s aspirations. People out there are repeating that they do want shared housing and we are not meeting this request. Segregation is automatically factored in to decisions but there is no acknowledgement of it. We are terrible when it comes to speaking to each other in regards to housing and planning.
- **It artificially skews the housing market**
- **It creates a built in dysfunction into the housing and planning systems.** Policy Making is recognition – an example of this is Scotland in which there is more choice as to social housing or private tenancy as to where a person can live. This is not only something that can be addressed by the Government but also through planners, developers and all housing professionals understanding their role in this as being a central role.
- **It makes investors nervous.** My impression following a range of meetings with investors and banks is that they are nervous when it comes to Northern Ireland. Anyone thinking of investing in Northern Ireland will automatically factor in the idea of segregation and therefore segregation is costing us money.
- **In housing management terms, it can lead to inefficient duplication of services.** There is a duplication of services and sources and anyone who is an economist will support that this is a waste of public land. We now have the change to better address this, in that public cuts may be the lever that we need. Ultimately we need a long-term strategy for housing.
- **It prevents the best use of public land and housing assets**

Making the case for Housing

‘Housing policy and practice should not force people to come together. But neither should the housing system force people to live apart’.

Explicitly we have stated that we are not forcing people to live together. Implicitly we are forcing people to live apart.

- A 'fit for purpose' and effective housing system is undermined when people are separated on the basis of religion, income or tenure
- Social cohesion through mixed tenure/mixed income communities
- Cohesion and integration must be understood in the broadest terms and encompass mixed income and mixed tenure.

My dream for housing is that irrespective of whether someone lives in social housing or private tenancy that all houses will look the same. One of the difficulties in delivering housing in Northern Ireland has been building social pockets – this used to work, but it does not work anymore. Sometimes these pockets are built with walls around them and we need to talk about these forms of walls whether they are physical or mental.

NOT ALL IS BLEAK, THERE ARE ANSWERS:

Where to next?

- Policy makers should ensure that an opportunity is not missed to meet housing aspirations and support meaningful integration - Need to share the opportunity to mix
- Integration should inform the called-for Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland – with clear targets and timescales and we hope has a front and central focus on Integration
- Government should publish an annual statement of progress on integration across a range of indicators which includes religious mix and tenure/income mix.

We need to question where the developers and planners from the last few years property boom have gone and to give them a fundamental duty to provide to their communities. In the past this duty has been 20% monetary investment but should be beyond that and actually a provision of social housing. Planners have a particular role to play and should be asked how much they do contribute. To do this we need to develop policy.

- Community Land Trusts and other forms of mutual and co-operative housing should be considered as a means of creating opportunities for shared housing projects. We have missed out on this opportunity in Northern Ireland of bringing communities together to build on their own land together.
- The Common Selection Scheme and allocation process for social housing should be reviewed to encourage greater social cohesion rather than inhibit integrated living

Local Councils are now being provided with planning powers and therefore there are new opportunities. There is the potential that they could start from day one with integration being their number one policy.

Partnership

- Further exploration of the costs of segregated housing that examines the financial implications of resources being used to manage a problem
- A study of how greater investment in housing management could tackle some of the practical issues of mixed-tenure/mixed-identity housing
- Advice for housing associations and other providers on available funding streams
- The narrative must be provided by those outside of the housing sector

Finally, the common objective needs to be reviewed, and we need to ask ourselves, what do we want to achieve from this?



A PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

Jennifer Hawthorne,
Head of the Housing Executive's Cohesion Unit

In 2004, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) took the risk, when there was no policy and significant resistance, to take forward a Pilot Shared Housing Agenda. We decided to do this as there was nothing else there that would help shape Northern Ireland for a shared future. Seven years later there is still no public policy.

Context:

The Housing Executive was established 40 years ago, initially set up as housing was being allocated on the basis of background. Our role was then to take the politics out of housing and this is where we started in 1971. In terms of looking at the context, this is a particularly difficult thing to do.

From day one we have had to deal with highly volatile situations, including the largest population shift in Europe, when 60,000 people were forced to leave their homes between 1969 and 1973. Also 14,000 homes were destroyed in 1972 as people fled to areas that they felt safe in.

Housing then became deeply segregated and in particular the Social Housing sector. Today, housing is more segregated than it was at any time during the Troubles, with 90% residential segregation across Northern Ireland and 94% in Belfast (NIHE 'Mapping Segregation Report)

We became used to picking up the pieces of conflict and segregation and continue to have incidents of intimidation resulting in homelessness. For instance during the Shankill feud, 300 families had to be relocated. People still do not feel safe in their own homes and the levels of paramilitary intimidation have actually increased, with the majority of this being intra-community resulting in people leaving their homes.

We have moved from rapid response to a pro-active role.

There has been invisible mind-mapping in areas that are now Interfaces – with 88 peace walls currently existing in Belfast.

However despite this bleak context, people do want shared communities and things are changing, albeit slowly. In the Life and Times Survey, 8 out of 10 people that were questioned responded that they would like to live in mixed neighbourhoods. However in the same survey it showed that the amount of people that wanted shared education had decreased.

Housing Executives Good Relations Strategy

The NIHE demonstrated its commitment to improving community relations by establishing the Community Cohesion Unit in 2004 to deliver what was carefully worded as, a shared housing where it was “where practicable, desirable and safe”.

The 2005 Shared Future Policy was then introduced and the provision of shared housing was included as an action.

We were working in regards to Good Relations on the ground for instance in 2006 the first shared new build scheme was launched as Carran Crescent in Enniskillen.

Addressing the issue of segregation is not only about delivering shared housing, but looking at a range of issues:

1. Residential Segregation
2. Race Relations

3. Flags, Emblems, Murals, Memorials and Bonfires
4. Interfaces areas
5. Communities in Transition

Residential Segregation

This has worked on a twin track in that the opportunities and ideas to change are presented to the Housing Associations. The most recent example of this being Ballynafeigh

Approach 1 – New Build Programme

Since 2006 there have been a total of eight Schemes across Northern Ireland developed by our Housing Association partners, with a further four on track for this year.

Referring back to what Duncan Morrow previously said in regards to socially engineering, we have been unable to mix as equality legislation has prevented us from doing so and to add to Duncan's point I believe that there is a need to socially engineer when normality is wrong.

The unique feature of these schemes is the 'Voluntary Charter' in which new tenants sign up to a set of principles and values to respect difference in their community. The approach is therefore organic, and as one resident put it; "it is about how we live."

We now work under a new delivery model that "all new build schemes are deemed to have Shared Future potential"

Screening for selection is undertaken by the Cohesion Unit and there is work promoting the model as an attractive way to live.

Approach 2 – Shared Neighbourhood Programme (SNP)

This programme was set up by the NIHE in order to work within established housing estates and have a greater impact than just small scale new build schemes. This followed the model of existing shared estates such as Ballynafeigh and Springfarm.

This is a Good Relations Programme that is to be delivered **through** the Communities and not **to** the communities – subsequently the communities drive the programme and not us.

From its inception in 2008, 30 estates have agreed to participate in this new programme, this now includes 60,000 people.

The concept has been established through this is that 'sharing is good' and shared neighbourhoods are good places to live within.

We have also been shortlisted for the Housing for Heroes Award and Wallace Consultancy has just completed a positive appraisal of the SNP:

"the shared neighbourhood approach is really valued. The connection to the Cohesion Team is worth more than the £8000 budget."

“It’s about sustaining estates, because it’s with the Housing Executive, they won’t just walk away from us”.

“I saw the SNP as a success, it sparked an idea and the community took up the challenge and ran with it.”

“It’s an interesting thing for the Housing Executive to do. They don’t have to do it....you might expect CRC or OFMDFM. The Housing Executive is like an honest broker...it’s a good place for it...they should do it, but they don’t have to.”

Different ingredients make a successful recipe in terms of the work that we are doing.

Theme 2: Race Relations

In regards to this there is a huge basis upon third party reporting. South and East Belfast are two particular successful areas in terms of this.

Examples of work undertaken:

- We contribute to and participate in BCC’s ‘Tension Monitoring System’. This system provides upstream information of community dynamics and areas of potential conflict.
- The Hate Incidents Practical Action Scheme (HIPA) delivers practical support to the victims of hate crime.
- The Housing Executive supported a Bi-Lingual Advocacy Scheme which provides two advocates for the Chinese and the Polish Communities to work to enhance good relations. We also have provided LGBT Advocacy worker.
- A community welcome pack has been produced to improve access to information and services and to improve social inclusion at a neighbourhood level.
- We hosted the NI Intercultural Achievement Awards.
- The BME Housing Forum engages directly with BME support groups and we are promoting their direct involvement in the Housing Community Network.

Theme 3: Flags, Emblems, Murals, Memorials and Bonfires.

These are displays of community background and are mainly found within Housing Association Estates. However, people do not feel safe, and there exists a ‘chill factor’ due to these displays and ‘marking out’ of territory.

We have rolled out a reimagining programme along with the Arts Council for which we received funding from the European Peace Programme. We have also held proactive negotiations and small scale NIHE funding schemes of flags and murals initiatives.

We are establishing a way of celebrating culture in a non threatening way and to achieve this have been carrying out single identity work in order to build community capacity. This has also been supported through the new approach to bonfire funding and management.

Theme 4 – Interface Areas

There are 88 peace walls in Belfast and these are mostly within Housing Executive areas. We are in the process of developing a visioning tool through our new programme to integrate the two communities and allow them to imagine their communities without barriers. The prevalent message is that people still do not feel safe and are not at the stage in which they feel ready for the walls to come down.

We need to further look at how the physical landscape can be changed in these areas that without the militaristic peace walls presence but at the same time to retain that feeling of safety within the interface communities.

Theme 5 - Communities in Transition.

We have a small budget in regards to this but it is transformative. We have used this to support local estate based cohesion projects. These small scale local good relations projects however can have a significant impact within communities.

Last year we also secured £78,000.00 additional funding from the NI Community Fund (Proceeds from Crime) to support programmes in our shared neighbourhoods and hard to reach estates.

Yet, the former budget comes from Housing Associations and not from OFMDFM and in these times of economic difficult, this budget is under threat.

Conclusion

We know that a lot still needs to be done and we have been hugely rewarded by the benefits that we have seen on the ground.

We continue to develop the Shared Neighbourhood Programme and we are excited to be moving forward in the Bric Programme in building relationships in communities and putting good relations at the centre of this. We are developing and implementing a programme of work for the new £3.5 million Peace III funded project “Putting Good Relations at the heart of Social Housing”. This includes training of key NIHE staff and working in 80 estates on good relations projects and training.

We do not want shared housing to only be within the social housing domain but throughout all levels of housing and therefore there remains a lot of good relations proofing work to be done. We need to demonstrate why developing better community cohesion is a good thing to do in order to get more agencies and Departments involved in practical programmes and on the ground.

Finally, it is up to us to tell people what benefits there are in shared housing for them and to drive this forward.



Duncan Morrow

CEO, Community Relations Council (CRC)

I thought that the presentations by Grainia and Jennifer were incredibly useful. There are tactical things that we can do and begin to do. We have to bridge aspirations with practicality

Secondly, there is the issue of economy and lack of joining up and this is vital in addressing the issue of shared housing, particularly as we are in an economic crisis.

Thirdly, we have to make our case and will raise issues such as space. We need to start fanning the flames in terms of the economy and how we can make arguments in regards to these. We need to free up the existing housing stock.

The group here needs to pick up on the Minister's comment on leaving traces and the group needs to think about that now as to what they can do in future.

Three main things have arisen from today's seminar.

1. **Reporting those traces** – I would look now to what reporting tools could be used between now and the installation of the new Government.
2. **Budget** – Looking at anything that can be defined as savings so that it can be directed into what we are talking about in regards to shared housing
3. Organisations using the Community Relations Council as their '**Critical Friend**', we can provide a role in reporting and work as your critical friend and report to the DSD on your behalf to champion this. Consider setting up a contact between your organisation and the CRC.

Those that have been charged with political development in Government have simply continued with the way things have been done before. The issue is that there is a problem in terms of how this becomes real with politicians. There is an interface between taking the responsibility of persistence and us. A joined up political policy is the only way that we can go forward and as yet there is only the silo process.

Summary of Seminar Recommendations

1. Develop a vision for housing which includes social shared housing. Include this vision with CSI and its delivery structure and within the Programme for Government.
2. Develop incentives for the building of shared housing developments.
3. Produce cross-departmental sustainability plan for shared neighbourhoods based on learning to date.
4. Form Assembly All Party Group to provide opportunity for MLAs to discuss progress and the future of shared neighbourhoods.

