



Northern Ireland
**Council for
Racial Equality**

**A SUBMISSION TO THE
NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE
ON
CUSTOMER SUPPORT & TENANCY
SUSTAINMENT STRATEGY
2019-2022
CONSULTATION**

FEB 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Council for Racial Equality (NICRE) was officially set up on 27 February 2017 when the previous NICEM, the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities was under voluntary administration on 7 November 2017 due to cash-flow crisis. Ethnic minority groups strongly feel that the loss of NICEM is a setback on the policy work gained over the last two decades. After reflections and meetings, they are determined to continue the policy work previously by NICEM.
- 1.2 NICRE welcomes the publication of the Customer Support & Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2019-2022 and extend the consultation for full 12 weeks period. This is an important document to highlight a lot of works done as well as benchmark the progress and data collection in order to get an improvement in delivering the strategy. We are pleased to see two additional pillars built upon this new Strategy, namely Proactive and Response Support for At Risk customers and Neighbourhood/Community Support.
- 1.3 NICRE appreciates NIHE's great achievement as outlined in the Consultation document. At the same time, there are some gaps in the proposed Strategy 2019-2022. Therefore, our submission is based on the gaps only and support the entire documents which is a good Strategy to move to the next stage of development.

2. Who is at risk of Tenancy Failure?

- 2.1 We would like to suggest a new category "**Hate Crime**" in which categories the current hate crime against all different vulnerable groups in our society, including sectarian hate crime. We need to draw the distinction between anti-social behaviour and hate crime which is not equivalent in terms of criminal law and context. The current Independent Review of Hate Crime law in Northern Ireland by Judge Marrinan will shake up the whole concept and areas of hate crime. We await his report which will be published in summer this year.

3. Key Achievements of the Customer Support and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2016-2019

- 3.1 We acknowledge the achievements under Communities and Cohesion category on funding project to deal with anti-social behaviour and hate crime. At the same time we have serious concerns how far these projects were delivered by the local BME groups due to lack of capacity and in the context

of inequality and social exclusion of unequal playing field to apply for these funding programme. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive should consider set aside capacity building funding programme for BME groups only (led by ethnic minority not by local white) to build incremental from equal partnership with local groups first and then to bid funding independently with local groups from the Housing Executive. This will address the current inequality and not in equal playing field in compare with local voluntary and community sector. The funding programme should link directly or indirectly or integrate into the current strategy such as Community Involvement, Social Enterprise, Community Cohesion, Rural Strategy, etc. as well as complementary to the current statutory and policy of the NI Housing Executive.

4. Strategic Context 2019-2022

4.1 One of the key area affecting the housing landscape in Northern Ireland over the coming years is **Brexit** which will affect negatively in our economic, social and political context as highlighted by huge volume of research reports in the island of Ireland, UK and EU. We should dig out these impacts on the most vulnerable groups in our society whether it is Irish, British, EU migrants, non-EEA citizens, women, LGBTQ, disabled people, and other section 75 groups. In here, we would like to ask the Housing Executive to address the impact of Brexit on these groups and in particular address Brexit and Community Cohesion in light of the current Independent Review of Hate Crime law and the transitional period which will be ended by 31 December 2020 on border and the campaigns of dissident Republicans.

5. Appendix 1: Our Action Plan

5.2 In viewing the above gaps, it is appropriate to develop Action Plan, including performance indicators and evaluation from these gaps with participation from the BME communities in order to develop the best practice to support BME communities. NICRE is more than happy to be involved and to support the processes of capacity building as well as Action Plan development.

If you have any query about this submission, you could contact Patrick Yu, Secretary of NICRE at patrick@nicre.org or write to us at 7 Rugby Road, Belfast BT7 1PS.