



# Draft Supporting People Strategic Intent 2026-2031 Public Consultation Questionnaire

## **Overview**

Supporting People are undertaking a Public Consultation from Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026 to seek feedback on the Draft Supporting People Strategic Intent 2026-2031.

We would like your views to help shape the direction of the Programme for the next five years and to prioritise our objectives, inform our operational plans and deliver our Strategic Intent.

## Section 1 – Personal/Organisation Details

1. What sector is your organisation in? *(Required)*

- Statutory
- Charitable/Voluntary
- Private
- Housing Association
- Health Trust
- Other (please specify)

Charitable/Voluntary

2. Name *(Required)*

Patricia Devlin

3. Organisation

Extern Organisation

4. Postal Address *(Required)*

3 McKinney Road Newtownabbey BT36 3PE

5. Post Code *(Required)*

BT36 3PE

6. Email Address *(Required)*

Patricia.devlin@extern.org

## Section 2 – Consultation Questions

### Strategic Aims and Priorities

7. Which of the four Strategic Aims of the Strategic Intent document (Closing the Gap, Improved Outcomes, Financial Efficiency, Collaboration) do you believe is the most important? *(Required - select one)*

- Working Towards Closing the Gap Between Need for Service and Supply
- Improved Outcomes for Service Users
- Drive Financial Efficiency and Agility in the Programme
- Collaborate with Strategic and Commissioning Partners, Including Health, to Improve Programme Impacts Extern agrees that all strategic aims are important but with the ultimate emphasis on accessibility of services and improved outcomes for service users. An appropriate level of funding able to facilitate delivery of services which produce the best outcomes is essential to meeting all objectives. Key to the success of the programme is clear collaboration between Government departments to ensure that there are realistic, appropriate and accessible housing options for services users experiencing homelessness. Without an adequate supply of move on accommodation, achieved by more new builds of social housing, legislative change to regulate the private rental sector and easier access to statutory services to support service users with complex needs, the best outcomes for service users cannot be achieved.

8. Are the proposed Strategic Aims and Priorities clear, understandable, and appropriate? *(Required)*

Yes

No

If no, please provide comments below:

Whilst the proposed Strategic Aims and Priorities are clear, understandable and appropriate, Extern would welcome further clarification on how frontline workers are to be supported to deliver desired outcomes. It is essential that providers are involved in the design and development of a new outcomes framework which is specific, measurable, achievable and realistic. To achieve the desired outcomes Supporting People need to ensure provision of and funding for specialized training in trauma informed approaches, harm reduction and mental health strategies.

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## Actions to Deliver Strategic Aims

### Strategic Aim One - Working Towards Closing the Gap Between Need for Service and Supply

#### Short to Medium-Term Priorities

- Deliver a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) identifying current housing support needs by theme, demographic and geographic areas and mapped against service provision to inform targeted strategic development of Supporting People (SP) services.
- Work with partners on viable solutions to address voids and optimise service utilisation.
- Work to secure funding by submitting evidence-based robust Programme Budget and Monitoring Round Bids.
- Explore opportunities to remodel services in discussion with partners to meet the needs of service users.

9. Are there additional opportunities or actions required in your view to deliver the short to medium-term priorities for Strategic Aim One? **(Required)**

Yes

No

If yes, please detail below: It will be crucial to involve providers from the outset in each of the above actions to ensure that housing support needs are identified through analysis of real-world examples as well as the barriers to accessing services to address complex needs. It is essential that other departments e.g. social work, mental health and statutory providers record and register housing support needs and share with NIHE to capture the reality for service users.

SP/NIHE need to support collaboration between providers to address voids across services.

It would be useful for providers to have further information on what “evidence based” refers to regarding programme budget.

Any remodelling of services needs to be done in full partnership with providers, ensuring that the purpose and ethos of services remain intact whilst adapting supports provided to meet current and emerging needs of service users. Need to ensure that any remodelling of services does not negatively impact on current provision or plunge service budgets into further deficits. Appropriate funding needs to be ringfenced to facilitate any remodelling or adaptation of services.

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## Strategic Aim Two - Improved Outcomes for Service Users

### Short to Medium-Term Priorities

- Identify best practice with regards to Outcomes Frameworks, including monitoring outcomes to ensure that they properly reflect the impact of the services on service users and the quality of the services.
- Develop and test an Outcomes Framework for Young People, which has been designed through a collaborative approach between SP, SPPG, HSCT and Providers.
- Review and roll out updated SP outcomes framework to monitor service user outcomes across service areas.

10. Are there additional opportunities or actions required in your view to deliver the short to medium-term priorities for Strategic Aim Two? **(Required)**

Yes

No

If yes, please detail below:

Desired outcomes need to be determined in full partnership with service providers to ensure that they are relevant, achievable and rooted, bearing in mind the current political, economic and environmental landscape and context that the services operate in and how these impact on providers' capacity to deliver said outcomes. Consideration should be given to looking at Outcomes Frameworks which are sentient to the needs of several service user cohorts e.g. older people, those with physical or mental disabilities and addiction issues, not just young people.

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11. Please share your ideas on how we can capture lived experience to support improved outcomes for service users **(Required)**

- Assertive outreach to services and individual service users.
- Focus Groups
- Incentives to participate in evaluations of services, including SP Programme and NIHE experience.
- Pro-actively commissioning relevant research into issues which impact on and result in service user need being prevalent.

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## Strategic Aim Three - Drive Financial Efficiency and Agility in the Programme

### Short to Medium-Term Priorities

- Develop a revised criteria for eligible costs met by the SP Grant in line with legislation.

- Increase value for money by working with delivery partners to ensure that grant funding is maximised toward frontline service delivery.
- Conduct financial modelling scenarios on client complexity, thematic areas, and service types.
- Explore and propose flexible service and funding models that align with the recommendations from the SNA.
- Initiate the review of governance and administrative processes to support a revised and efficient SP Programme delivery model.

12. Are there additional opportunities or actions required in your view to deliver the short to medium-term priorities for Strategic Aim Three? *(Required)*

Yes

No

If yes, please detail below:

- A robust independent review of all financial arrangements within service and to analyse the source and impact of services' deficits.
- Review of the impact of the increases in National Insurance employer contributions on budgets, especially those in deficits.
- Review to identify the total deficits of services provided by voluntary agencies needs to be action to recognise the additional value delivered by services not covered by SP funding.
- Provider involvement in completion of the SNA to ensure that the recommendations are appropriate.
- Ensure that all provider reporting mechanisms are accessible and fit for purpose to ensure timely and accurate data capture.

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## Strategic Aim Four - Collaborate with Strategic and Commissioning Partners, Including Health, to Improve Programme Impacts

### Short to Medium-Term Priorities

- Work with DfC to enable greater collaboration across Government departments, thus achieving greater strategic alignment and greater value for money.
- Review governance, administration and commissioning structures and identify options that aim to ensure strategic alignment with recommendations from the SNA.
- Continue to work with SP Stakeholders to measure programme effectiveness and ensure continuous improvements.
- Work with key stakeholders to ensure that the SP programme continues to be prioritised at both NI Executive and Ministerial levels.

13. Are there additional opportunities or actions required in your view to deliver the short to medium-term priorities for Strategic Aim Four? *(Required)*

Yes

No

If yes, please detail below:

Extern welcomes the intention to collaborate with other departments such as Health, Education and Justice and believes that Cross Departmental working improves outcomes for service users and effective collaboration between statutory and voluntary sector providers.

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14. What do you consider the biggest challenges in delivering the Strategic Aims? *(Required)*

- The attainment of sustainable funding for services.
- Access to safe and suitable housing for service users – demand far outweighing supply creates “silting up” and lack of throughput within temporary accommodation services, an increase in people rough sleeping and further pressure on all services across the sector.

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## Planning for Implementation

15. Do you consider the current governance arrangements are adequate to support effective implementation of the Strategic Intent? *(Required)*

Yes

No

Whilst we have no objection to the current governance arrangements in place to support the effective implementation of the Strategic Intent, it would be beneficial to have these arrangements clearly outlined for delivery partners. For example, when need has been identified previously with the intention of creating service capacity (i.e. expansion of services) this can often come across as reactive and not necessarily achievable within the budget allocation. The needs assessment should help identify the gaps in services which can support any planning around forecasts for service delivery and perhaps limit the delay between need being identified and business cases for expansions being approved.

If no, please detail below:

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16. Do you consider there is scope for additional stakeholder contribution in the delivery of the Strategic Intent? *(Required)*

Yes

No

As previously mentioned, streamlined enhanced collaboration between statutory stakeholders and the aim of the strategic intent is welcomed. Many of the desired outcomes of service delivery has direct impact on outcomes for housing, health, education, justice etc. Additionally, additional contribution from VSCE in the delivery of strategic intent is welcomed. There is an

opportunity for stronger collaborative relationships. An example of this would be in terms of shared resources. In the consultation workshop provided by Supporting People, we discussed the importance of enhancing the collaboration between VSCE organisations/delivery partners to share knowledge of sector, relevant training and resources.

If Yes, please detail below:

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17. Do you consider there are risks or obstacles to delivering the Strategic Aims? *(Required)*

Yes

No

Funding uncertainty and budget restraints will continue to be the biggest risk and barrier to delivering the strategic aims. As previously mentioned, organisations who carry the financial risks and deficits will be prevented from effective planning. This will impact service delivery as it may impact recruitment, running costs and development of services. Another risk or obstacle will be limited progress on enhancing relationships with Government departments, as we continue to navigate a landscape of budget uncertainties and often working in silos.

If Yes, please detail below:

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18. Are there any other comments or feedback you would like to provide regarding the Strategic Intent document? *(Required)*

Yes

No

Extern welcomes the ethos and vision of the strategic intent and also welcomes the development of a 1 year action plan, in terms of reviewing progress made with intent. We also welcome the clarity around the role of delivery partners in some of the aims outlined in the intent.

If Yes, please detail below:

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