



THE COMMISSIONER FOR SURVIVORS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHILDHOOD ABUSE

Via E-Mail

Our Ref: FR/RJ/0019

14 December 2022

John Goudy
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Dear Mr Goudy

The Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA) was established by the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019 and the Commissioner's principal aim is to promote the interests of any person who suffered abuse while a child and while resident in an institution at some time between 1922 and 1995 (both inclusive). Articles 24 and 25 of the legislation sets out the Commissioner's duties and powers to provide advice on matters concerning the interests of victims and survivors and to make representations and recommendations on such matters. COSICA welcomes the opportunity to provide advice on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Draft Corporate Plan 2022/23-2024/25.

COSICA notes that this submission is not intended to be comprehensive but instead highlights the importance of NIHE ensuring that relevant aspects of the Plan take proper account of the interests and needs of victims and survivors of institutional childhood abuse. In recognition of the lasting impact of institutional abuse on victims and survivors, the Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Act 2019 in outlining COSICA's role in encouraging the provision and co-ordination of services for survivors and identifying gaps, set out that this includes the provision of advice relating to housing as well as a range of other issues. The Commissioner's contact with services and direct engagement with survivors has underlined the importance of survivors receiving appropriate support to access and maintain safe, sustainable and high-quality housing that properly meets their needs.

COSICA welcomes the draft high-level priority setting out that NIHE will “work with our partners to deliver innovative housing solutions for our customers and to help reduce poverty and improve Health & Wellbeing” and recommends that NIHE adopts a trauma informed approach to addressing housing needs which will promote a more effective response from NIHE and partners where they are engaging with victims and survivors of institutional child abuse. It is important to acknowledge that NIHE and partners may not be aware that individuals which they are in contact with are survivors of institutional abuse, indeed many victims may never disclose their abuse, and therefore embedding a trauma informed approach is a key step in order to better support victims and survivors, including in relation to housing insecurity which is compounded by potential trauma-related matters and increases the vulnerability of victims and survivors. COSICA notes that NIHE has undertaken work to develop a trauma informed approach in relation to homelessness services and recommends that a trauma informed approach is embedded across all areas of NIHE.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Ryan', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Fiona Ryan
COMMISSIONER