

## Public Health Agency Draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Public Consultation Questionnaire

Welcome to the draft Public Health Agency (PHA) Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Preventing, protecting, improving; Better health for **everyone**. Our new draft plan is open for public consultation.

### Overview

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has developed a draft Corporate Plan for the period 2025-2030, setting out the strategic direction for the PHA for the next five years. This draft plan takes account of engagement and discussion with a range of stakeholders, the vision set out by the Minister of Health in Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together, Department of Health (DoH) priorities, especially the Making Life Better Public Health Framework and the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2024-2027 within the context of financial constraints and Health and Social Care (HSC) reform and restructuring.

### Priorities and Approach

The PHA's objectives apply to everyone in the population, aiming to address health outcomes across all demographics, including diverse backgrounds and needs. Achieving these outcomes will require determination, innovative thinking, and collaborative efforts across HSC, government and the community and voluntary sectors. We must make partnership, involvement and engagement central to our work, explore new and different ways of doing things and make the best use of our combined resources.

We recognise our work cannot be done in isolation and requires a whole system, cross government approach with robust engagement with the public. Cognisant of this, we have now published our draft corporate plan for public consultation from Thursday 28th November 2024 until Friday 28th February 2025.

## Respondent Information Form

Please use this questionnaire to share your views on the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030. You can email your response to [phacorporateplan@hscni.net](mailto:phacorporateplan@hscni.net) or return to us by post to PHA Corporate Plan Consultation, Public Health Agency, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor South, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS.

## Here to Help

Please get in touch via contact details above if you require assistance, an alternative format or have any questions with regards to completing your consultation response. We would be happy to receive any other comments you feel do not fit into the questions set out in this survey.

Details of in-person consultation events taking place in the new year will be announced in due course on the [PHA website](#).

The draft PHA corporate plan 2025-2030 aims to have wide reaching effects. We would welcome views on how delivering this plan may affect any particular groups in society. The draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030, an initial draft equality screening and rural needs impact assessment are available via the [PHA Website - Current Consultations section](#)

Have your say now by completing our consultation survey. Please make sure to share your thoughts before the consultation deadline **4pm, Friday 28 February 2025**.

Thank you for your contribution to this consultation and joining us in building a healthier Northern Ireland for all.

## Consultation Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to help you respond to the Draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030 'Preventing, protecting, improving: Better health for everyone. Written responses are welcome either using this questionnaire template, via [online survey](#) or in an alternative format which best suits your response.

Please answer the following questions and note your comments and views in the text boxes provided.

### About You

*(Please tick the relevant box)*

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?  
(required)

☐ Individual – Please complete Section 1, 2 and 4

☒ On behalf of an organisation – skip to Section 3  
'Responding as an Organisation' – please complete  
section 3 and 4

## Section 1 - Responding as an individual

1.1 Please provide your contact details below:  
Your name and email address are required for validation purposes.

Name: (required)

Email address: (required)

- 1.2 Can we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation?  
This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify.

(required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

- 1.3 Can we contact you in future about the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030? For example, to provide you with a link to the results of this consultation, to inform you of further consultations or provide update information on the plan. (required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

- 1.4 To support transparency in our decision-making process, we will publish a summary of the consultation feedback on the PHA website. This will sometimes include the responses themselves and may mention names of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals responding on a personal capacity will only be published where consent has been given. Please note we will not publish contact details. (required)

☐ **Yes**, I consent to my name being published with my response

☐ **No**, please remove my name before publishing my response

#### [PHA Privacy Notice](#)

Feedback provided may be subject to publication or disclosure under access to information laws like the Data Protection Act 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If you believe your input should be treated as confidential, please contact us by email, so that this may be considered should we receive a disclosure request.

Email: [phacorporateplan@hscni.net](mailto:phacorporateplan@hscni.net)

## **Section 2 –** (Monitoring Information for individual responses only)

The Public Health Agency (PHA) is committed to providing equal opportunities for everyone. This makes sure everyone has the chance to participate in our survey groups regardless of gender, marital status, disability, age, religion, political views, ethnic origin, caring responsibilities or sexual orientation.

By answering the following questions, you will help us understand who we are reaching and how we can better serve everyone in our community.

Your response to these questions is **optional** and answers will be **anonymised**.

### **2.1 What is your sex?** By sex we are referring to your current sex.

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Identify in a different way
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you identify in a different way, please specify below:

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### **2.2 What is your age?**

- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 65 to 74
- ☐ 75 to 84
- ☐ 85+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

## 2.3 What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single, that is, never married and never registered in a civil partnership
- ☐ Married
- ☐ In a registered civil partnership
- ☐ Separated but still legally married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Separated but still legally in a civil partnership
- ☐ Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved
- ☐ Surviving partner from a civil partnership
- ☐ Prefer not to say

## 2.4 Which council area do you live in?

- ☐ Antrim and Newtownabbey
- ☐ Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- ☐ Belfast
- ☐ Causeway Coast and Glens
- ☐ Derry City and Strabane
- ☐ Fermanagh and Omagh
- ☐ Lisburn and Castlereagh
- ☐ Mid and East Antrim
- ☐ Mid Ulster
- ☐ Newry, Mourne and Down
- ☐ Ards and North Down
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**2.5 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last for 12 months or more?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you answered 'Yes', does your condition(s) or illness(es) reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

- ☐ Yes, a lot
- ☐ Yes, a little
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Prefer not to say

**2.6 What is your religion?**

- ☐ No Religion
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ Church of Ireland
- ☐ Methodist
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Free Presbyterian
- ☐ Brethren
- ☐ Protestant - not specified
- ☐ Christian - not specified
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

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**2.7 Which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?**

- ☐ Heterosexual or Straight
- ☐ Gay or Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

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**2.8 Do you have responsibility for caring of any of the following groups?**

- Care of a child
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to say
  
- Care of a person with a disability
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to say
  
- Care of a dependant elderly person
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to say



## 2.9 What is your ethnic group?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Irish Traveller
- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ White and Black African
- ☐ White and Asian
- ☐ Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other Asian background
- ☐ African
- ☐ Caribbean
- ☐ Other Black/African/Caribbean background
- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

## 2.10 Do you think of yourself as a unionist, a nationalist or neither?

- ☐ Unionist
- ☐ Nationalist
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

If you have selected Other, please specify below:

## Section 3 – Responding as an organisation

### 3.1 Please provide your organisation contact details below

Organisation name and email address are required for validation purposes. (required)

Organisation name: **National Energy Action Northern Ireland (NEA NI)**

Organisation email address: [shannon.montgomery@nea.org.uk](mailto:shannon.montgomery@nea.org.uk)

### 3.2 Which of the following best describes the sector you work in?

*(Please tick the relevant box)*

This will assist us in monitoring the range of respondents the consultation has reached.

- ☐ Statutory or Regulatory Body
- ☐ Arm's Length Body (ALB)
- ☐ Organised interest Group: e.g. Education, Health, Business, Creative Industries, Environment, Community, Voluntary & Third sectors
- ☐ Business operator
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ Government Department
- ☐ Trade Union
- ☐ Church or faith group
- ☐ Media
- ☐ Academia
- ☒ Charity
- ☐ Political Party
- ☐ Other (please specify):

3.3 **Can we contact you to discuss your response to this consultation?** This may be to follow up any specific points we need to clarify. (required)

☒ Yes

☐ No

3.4 **Can we contact you in future about the draft PHA Corporate Plan 2025-2030?** For example, to provide you with a link to the results of this consultation, to inform you of further consultations or provide updated information on the plan. (required)

☒ Yes

☐ No

3.5 To support transparency in our decision-making process, we will publish a summary of the consultation feedback on the [PHA website](#). This will sometimes include the responses themselves and may mention names of the responding organisation (if applicable). However, names of individuals responding on a personal capacity will only be published where consent has been given. Please note we will not publish contact details. (required)

☒ **Yes**, I consent to my organisation name being published with my response

☐ **No**, please remove my organisation name before publishing my response

## Section 4 - Have your say

The following questions focus on the core elements of the draft PHA corporate plan 2025-2030.

Our purpose, vision, values and strategic outcomes are set out below and in the document.

**Purpose:** Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.

**Vision:** A healthier Northern Ireland.

**Values:** The PHA endeavours to translate the Health and Social Care values into its culture by putting individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do, acting with **openness and honesty** and treating people with dignity, respect and **compassion; working together** in partnership to improve the quality of life of those we serve, listening to and involving individuals and communities; valuing, developing and empowering our staff and striving for **excellence** and innovation; being evidence led and outcomes focused.

Over the next five years, as we work to fulfil our purpose and advance towards our vision of a healthier Northern Ireland, we will focus on delivering a number of key public health priorities under the following strategic outcomes:

- **Protecting Health** - protecting the population from serious health threats, such as infectious disease outbreaks or major incidents
- **Starting Well** - laying the foundations for a healthy life from pre-birth, infancy, early years, childhood to adolescent years
- **Living Well** - ensuring that people have the opportunity to live and work in a healthy way
- **Ageing Well** - supporting people to age healthily throughout their lives

Each outcome sets out our ambition and a number of priorities for the years ahead. These are aligned with the draft Programme for Government Framework 2024-2027 and the strategic direction outlined in key departmental strategies.

Using the scale, please indicate using a cross (x) or a tick (✓) to what extent you agree or disagree with the content in each of the sections

#### 4.1 Do you agree with our purpose? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				X

Please include any comments in the box below:

NEA NI strongly agrees with the purpose to *“Protect and improve the health and social wellbeing of our population and reduce health inequalities through leadership, partnership and evidence-based practice.”*

Fuel poverty is a significant determinant of health that disproportionately affects vulnerable and low-income households. Cold, damp homes can cause and worsen physical and mental health conditions, contribute to excess Winter Mortality, and place additional strain on already overstretched health and social care services. Addressing fuel poverty is, therefore, critical to achieving the purpose and outcomes outlined in the PHA’s draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030.

We warmly welcome the draft Corporate Plan’s commitment to partnership and evidence-based practice. NEA NI is pleased to work in partnership with the PHA through its **Northern Exposure Programme**, to deliver initiatives like the Belfast Warm and Well Project.

The **Belfast Warm and Well Project (WAWP)**, coordinated and delivered by NEA and supported by the PHA and the Belfast City Council

Community Planning Partnership, helps local people struggling to keep their home warm. The project offers advice, practical support and where appropriate, financial assistance to stay warm and well. This involves distributing the Belfast City Council Cost-of-Living Hardship Fund.

Through the development of a trusted stakeholder network, **the Belfast Warm and Well Project supported over 1000 households in Belfast in 2024 alone**. Support is offered directly to the public, focusing on low-income households, people aged 65 years or older, people living with disability or long-term physical or mental health conditions, pregnant women and households with young children, and to organisations working directly with people living in fuel poverty.

Additionally, on behalf of the PHA, NEA NI manages organisations in five of the top eight Belfast wards experiencing the highest levels of deprivation to deliver a targeted programme of support. This targeted programme delivers access to warm spaces and activities designed to improve physical and mental health, foster skills, and reduce social isolation through inclusion.

This collaborative approach exemplifies the type of partnerships needed to tackle fuel poverty and, in turn, protect health and reduce inequalities. By continuing to work together, we can effectively support the delivery of the commitments outlined in the PHA's draft Corporate Plan 2025–2030.

## 4.2 Do you agree with our vision and values? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree;  
4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				<b>X</b>

Please include any comments in the box below.

NEA NI strongly supports the PHA's vision of "*A healthier Northern Ireland*" and its accompanying values. We believe that addressing fuel

poverty is an essential component to achieving this vision, as the links between cold homes, poor health, and health inequalities are well-documented and widely recognised.

For example, in 2013, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) began developing guidance aimed at preventing cold-related ill-health and reducing winter deaths. This led to the [2015 NICE NG6](#) guidelines on excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes<sup>1</sup>, subsequently endorsed in NI in 2016<sup>2</sup>.

NI faces significant challenges in our Health and Social Care System, including the longest hospital waiting times in the UK, highlighting the urgent need for long-term solutions to improve population health and wellbeing. Fuel poverty exacerbates these challenges. In winter 2022/23, the seasonal increase in mortality in NI was an estimated 940<sup>3</sup>. Studies show a clear relationship between Winter Mortality, low thermal efficiency of housing, and low indoor temperatures<sup>4</sup>.

Cold homes can cause and worsen cardiovascular diseases, respiratory conditions, poor mental health, dementia, and hypothermia, while also exacerbating existing health conditions<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, cold homes are more prone to damp and mould, which can lead to serious respiratory illnesses and, in severe cases, death – as tragically demonstrated by the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

[Polling for NEA NI](#), conducted by LucidTalk in September 2024, further underscores the impact of fuel poverty, with 31% of respondents reporting that rising energy costs had negatively affected their or their household's health and wellbeing. Impacts included deteriorating mental health (21%), worsening physical health (13%), and increased strain on healthcare services, with 5% requiring more GP or hospital visits.<sup>7</sup>

The Department for Communities' (DfC) [draft Fuel Poverty Strategy](#) aligns closely with the PHA's goals. Its vision of "A warm, healthy home for everyone" emphasises the vital connection between housing, health,

<sup>1</sup> NICE, (2015). ['Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes'](#).

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health, (2024). ['Endorsed NICE Public Health Guidelines'](#).

<sup>3</sup> Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, (2023). ['Winter Mortality, 2022- 2023'](#).

<sup>4</sup> Marmot Review Team (2011). ['The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty'](#).

<sup>5</sup> Alice Lee, Ian Sinha, Tammy Boyce, Jessica Allen, Peter Goldblatt (2022). ['Fuel poverty, cold homes and health inequalities'](#). London: Institute of Health Equity.

<sup>6</sup> GOV.UK, (2024). ['Understanding and addressing the health risks of damp and mould in the home'](#).

<sup>7</sup> LucidTalk, (2024). ['NI Attitudinal Poll – NEA NI'](#).

and wellbeing. The draft strategy explicitly acknowledges that *“protecting human health from the detrimental effects of living in cold and damp homes is the primary driver for tackling fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.”*<sup>8</sup>

We commend the PHA for recognising the importance of partnership in addressing these issues. We strongly encourage meaningful engagement with the DfC to support the implementation of the new Fuel Poverty Strategy. Furthermore, robust implementation of NICE NG6 (‘Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes’) and recommended guidelines on tackling excess winter mortality is vital. A review is needed to assess the standard to which NICE NG6 is being implemented, with improvements made as necessary. These recommended actions will help the PHA achieve its vision of *“A healthier Northern Ireland.”*

#### 4.3 Referring to the draft plan, do you agree with Outcome 1: Protecting Health and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				<b>X</b>

Please include any comments in the box below.

We strongly support the priority to “scope existing evidence for public health approaches to protect people and communities from the public health impacts of the environment, including climate change, and develop a PHA climate action plan.”

When developing its climate action plan, we urge the PHA to **consider fuel poverty as a significant environmental hazard** that causes and exacerbates physical and mental health conditions, increases vulnerability to infectious diseases, and deepens health inequalities.

<sup>8</sup> Department for Communities, (2024). [‘Consultation on a draft Fuel Poverty Strategy’](#).



#### 4.4 Referring to the draft plan, do you agree with Outcome 2: Starting Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree;  
4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				<b>X</b>

Please include any comments in the box below.

NEA NI supports the 'Outcome 2: Starting Well' and the ambition that all children and families in NI have the healthiest start in life. Addressing fuel poverty is essential to achieving this, as households with children face the highest prevalence of fuel poverty, accounting for 40.3% of all fuel-poor households in the UK.<sup>9</sup> We recommend the PHA **includes the percentage of children living in fuel poverty as an indicator** to measure success of Outcome 2.

The 2022 report by the [Institute of Health Equity](#)<sup>10</sup> and the 2024 report by [Barnardo's](#)<sup>11</sup> highlight the severe risks posed to children by cold homes, including worsened respiratory illnesses, increased vulnerability to infections, and negative impacts on mental health, education, and overall development.

We urge the PHA to **consider the role of affordable, warm homes** as part of its efforts to support families and protect children's health.

#### 4.5 Referring to the plan, do you agree with Outcome 3: Living Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree;  
4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

<sup>9</sup> Alice Lee, Ian Sinha, Tammy Boyce, Jessica Allen, Peter Goldblatt (2022). ['Fuel poverty, cold homes and health inequalities'](#). London: Institute of Health Equity.

<sup>10</sup> Alice Lee, Ian Sinha, Tammy Boyce, Jessica Allen, Peter Goldblatt (2022). ['Fuel poverty, cold homes and health inequalities'](#). London: Institute of Health Equity.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Cooper and Patrick McNulty, (2024). ['Empty Plates and Cold Homes'](#). Barnardo's.

1	2	3	4	5
				X

Please include any comments in the box below.

NEA NI supports *Outcome 3: Living Well*. We welcome the plan's mention of fuel poverty as a factor that impacts health and wellbeing. To further strengthen the plan, we encourage the PHA and Department of Health to review the standard to which NICE NG6 ('Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes') is being implemented and make improvements as necessary.

**We recommend that the rate of fuel poverty in NI be explicitly included as an indicator under *Outcome 3*** to better monitor and address the health risks associated with cold homes.

**4.6 Referring to the plan, do you agree with Outcome 4: Ageing Well and the priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?**

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree;  
4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				X

Please include any comments in the box below.

We welcome the recognition that fuel poverty impacts health and wellbeing throughout life, particularly as we age. Addressing fuel poverty is crucial to achieving *Outcome 4: Ageing Well*, as older people are especially vulnerable to the long-term effects of living in cold homes, which can exacerbate both physical and mental health conditions.

This outcome is even more important in light of recent changes to the Winter Fuel Payment. Under the policy changes, only pensioners receiving Pension Credit or means-tested benefits are eligible. While there may have been some rationale for better targeting of support, the new eligibility criteria is far too restrictive. The policy changes will leave many pensioners, particularly those just above the eligibility threshold, without support, increasing their risk of living in cold, damp homes.

**Polling commissioned by NEA NI**, conducted by LucidTalk in September 2024 highlights the scale of fuel poverty. It found that 40% of households in NI are spending at least 10% of their total household income on energy, classifying them as being in fuel poverty. Older people are disproportionately affected, with nearly half (49%) of those aged 65 and over living in fuel poverty.

To address these challenges, we recommend that the PHA **include the percentage of older people living in fuel poverty as a key indicator** for *Outcome 4: Ageing Well*. This will help monitor and address the risks of cold homes, to ensure older adults can live in safe, warm, and healthy environments.

#### 4.7 Referring to the plan, do you agree with our organisation ambition and priorities listed? If not, what alternative do you suggest?

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree;  
4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

1	2	3	4	5
				<b>X</b>

Please include any comments in the box below.

NEA NI particularly welcomes the PHA's commitment to **"Partnership"** and the focus on collaborative working, including with voluntary and community organisations. As highlighted in section 4.1, NEA NI is pleased to work in partnership with the PHA through its **Northern Exposure Programme**, to deliver initiatives like the **Belfast Warm and Well Project**. This project, coordinated and delivered by NEA and

supported by the PHA and the Belfast City Council Community Planning Partnership, helps local people struggling to keep their home warm.

The support provided by the PHA is crucial to the success of this initiative. Through partnership we are working to ensure that everyone has access to a warm, safe, and healthy home. By continuing to work together, we can effectively support the delivery of the commitments outlined in the PHA's draft Corporate Plan 2025–2030.

**4.8 Is there an outcome you feel is missing or is not sufficiently reflected?**

Yes [ ☐ ]

No [ ☒ ]

Please include any comments in the box below:

**4.9 Have you any other comments or suggestions to improve the document as a whole? If so, please outline these in the box below.**

**Consultation process and [PHA privacy notice](#)**

The PHA will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process on the PHA corporate website. The responses will be used to amend and further develop the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request, in line with Freedom of Information legislation.

**Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this questionnaire. We very much value your input.**