

**Building Strong Communities**

**Habitat for Humanity in Northern Ireland**
Since 1994, Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland’s local work has focused on reconciliation and building strong communities in which everyone can reach their full potential. More than 30,000 volunteers from across Northern Ireland have engaged in practical projects, locally and globally, which break down barriers and help build a shared future. Habitat NI also raises funds for the global mission, focusing support on long-term partnership programmes which offer families a hand-up out of poverty through simple, decent housing.

None of our work is core funded so it is only possible with the support of individuals, companies, trusts and churches.

**The housing need in Northern Ireland**
Housing affordability, empty homes, social exclusion and the legacy of conflict are key issues facing deprived communities and vulnerable people in Northern Ireland. Almost 40,000 people are on the social housing waiting list, around 20,000 homes are categorised as empty or void in private ownership and more than 92 percent of social housing remains single identity. In poverty, division is absolute.

**Building Strong Communities**

For 21 years our commitment to community building through construction and volunteer engagement has supported community regeneration.

**Habitat Restore**

Since it opened just over 4 years ago Europe’s first Habitat ReStore, in Lisburn has delivered real impacts for the local community in partnership with local people, companies, schools and community organizations.

ReStore delivers real impacts

* enabling local people to improve their homes at low cost (more than 12,000 customers last year, more than 40% from deprived communities)
* providing opportunities for volunteers of different abilities and backgrounds (unique mulit-generational workplace where over 30% of volunteer placements are supported eg people with learning difficulties, mental health challenges, engaged with justice system and disadvantaged young people.
* diverting tons of reusable waste from landfill.

Volunteers have invested more than 50,000 hours in making ReStore successful; for older volunteers it can help tackle the isolation often felt after retirement and that allows us to create a unique inter-generational workplace and the kind of mentor support which we intentionally build in to volunteer programmes.

**ReFurb**

Empty homes cost money and deprive communities of an opportunity for good quality housing. Renovating vacant properties reduces blight, supports community regeneration and helps tackle anti-social behaviour.

Habitat empowers local people to refurb, renovate and transform homes and communities. By working alongside the community to bring empty homes (or indeed community buildings) back to life we create a platform for change; bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds, delivering opportunities to upskill for employment as well as affordable homes. We add value where projects are about more than 4 walls and a roof, but are designed to deliver positive, lasting change for communities and individuals.

We can help deliver on the local Empty Homes Strategy, and at the same time our work aligns with the NI Executive’s Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy and can contribute to the Building Successful Communities programme. Tackling empty homes requires innovative, collective approaches such as Habitat delivers.

**Recent Local Projects**

* 18 empty homes, across Belfast classified as hard to let by Helm HA, were brought back to life by hundreds of volunteers. All the homes are now let, providing much needed affordable housing and helping regenerate areas of blight.
* Developed multi-purpose workshop space in partnership with Welcome Organisation to provide opportunities for homeless people to learn new skills
* Refurbished emergency 5 bedroomed accommodation for homeless women at risk in partnership with Welcome alongside more than 100 volunteers of all ages and backgrounds.

**Catalyst and Partner**

Habitat can work as a catalyst and partner to help tackle empty homes through an innovative, community centred approach which enables the refurbishment and renovation of void public and private sector housing or community buildings.

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