



Connecting for Change: Driving for Solutions

Homeless Connect
Impact Report 2024-2025

homelessconnect.org



Message from the Chairperson and Chief Executive

Everyone at Homeless Connect is grounded in the belief that **having a safe, secure place to call home is a fundamental human right**. As the representative body for the homelessness sector, we work tirelessly to drive systemic change through policy and advocacy. Alongside this strategic role, we deliver essential frontline programmes that directly reduce poverty and prevent homelessness.

This past year has underscored the critical importance of collaboration and focused advocacy in the fight against homelessness. Our work took place against a backdrop of rising cost-of-living pressures and persistent challenges in housing supply, which placed immense strain on both our beneficiaries and our dedicated member organisations.

The system itself is under extreme pressure: we saw record demand for temporary accommodation while service funding remained highly vulnerable to annual budget cycles. The uncertainty surrounding annual budgets created a volatile planning environment for the 40+ homelessness service providers in our membership network.

Despite this demanding environment Homeless Connect, alongside our members, and with direct input from people with lived experience, successfully leveraged our unique position to influence policy and secure vital funding. Most notably, we secured the first above inflation rise for the Supporting People Programme in over a decade, an achievement that protected services against budget instability.

Our mission to prevent and alleviate homelessness across Northern Ireland remains our driving force, anchored by sound governance and a commitment to measurable impact.

Maria Jennings

Nicola McCrudden

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

— Helen Keller

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Operating context

To fully appreciate the impact achieved in 2024-2025, it is vital to acknowledge the operational environment for homelessness services across Northern Ireland.

Homelessness levels continued to rise and the ability of the system to respond was severely tested.

Accommodating shortages

The lack of social housing and affordable private rentals placed increasing reliance on B&Bs and hotels for temporary accommodation, leaving people living in cramped, unsuitable spaces with little privacy, limited facilities, and little support.

Volatile costs

The costs associated with securing and maintaining temporary housing remained high, diverting limited public funds from long-term prevention strategies.

Systemic bottlenecks

The persistent shortage of move-on accommodation meant individuals stayed longer in temporary housing, creating blockages and delaying support for those newly presenting as homeless.

The cost-of-living crisis deepened hardship across Northern Ireland, pushing more households into food insecurity, increasing demand on frontline services, and exposing the fragility of existing support systems.



The operational capacity of our sector was fundamentally undermined by instability in annual budget cycles and pervasive funding pressures from funding gaps — while demand and costs increased, funding did not keep pace.

Strategic and Operational Impact

Policy, Advocacy & Sector Leadership

Our policy work is powered by the expertise of our members and the crucial, authentic insight provided by people with lived experience. During this year we achieved the following.

Securing Housing as a Government Priority:

Following several years of sustained advocacy with sector partners, we cemented social and affordable housing as a policy priority within the Programme for Government.

Stabilising Frontline Services:

Through our coordination of the CRISPP partnership, we secured the first above inflation rise 6.4% for the Supporting People Programme in over a decade, providing crucial financial stability for the entire service network.

Raising Public and Political Awareness:

Homelessness Awareness Week 2024 involved over 40 events across NI and generated 80 media outputs (print, radio, TV), ensuring our message of 'Time for Change' reached millions and influenced government resource allocation.

Centring Lived Experience:

We ran 4 Lived Experience Group sessions, ensuring that policy solutions are directly informed by those with personal experience.

Frontline Network Growth:

The network grew to 270 members and delivered 7 free events for frontline staff, improving professional standards across the sector.

"The Lived Experience Group feels like home to me. Safe. Secure. Calm. Before this, I'd be watching the doors all the time, waiting on something happening. Now I can just sit and breathe. That feeling is priceless."

— Thomas, Homeless Connect

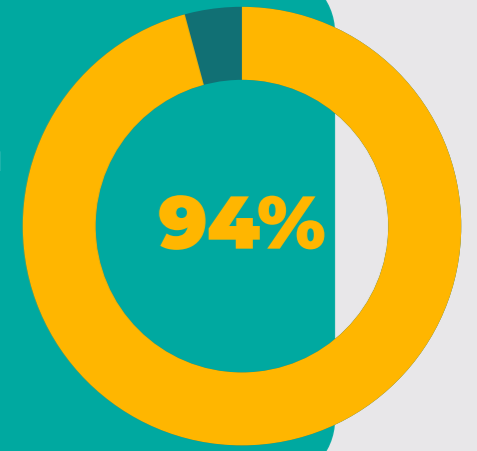
Relief, Prevention & Tenancy Sustainment

Our essential relief programmes provided direct support, stabilising vulnerable tenancies and ensuring dignity for those transitioning into housing.

Home Starter Pack

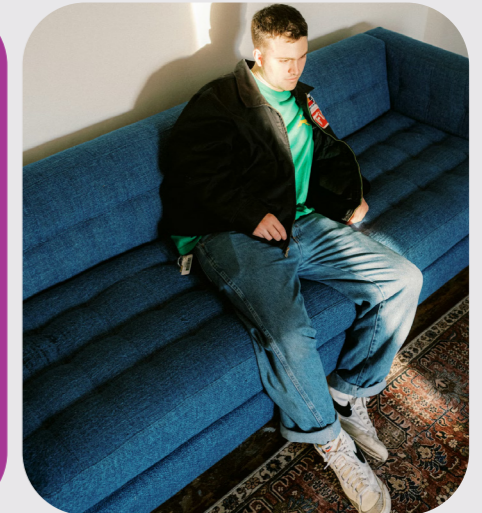
Sustaining Tenancies

We distributed over **1,900 Home Starter Packs** to social housing tenants, exceeding our target. Crucially, **94% of tenancies sustained for over 6 months** after our intervention, demonstrating the value of this support.



Addressing Material Need

We launched a new furniture provision pilot, successfully **distributing 53 furniture vouchers** to help tenants create stable, dignified homes.



Crisis Support

Provided over **2,785 essential packs**, including food and hygiene items, to tenants facing financial hardship.

Strategic and Operational Impact

FareShare in NI: Tackling Food Poverty

The success of FareShare is a testament to strong community partnership and the dedication of our volunteers. This program delivers a dual impact: reducing food waste and improving nutrition for vulnerable individuals and families.



Scale and Reach

We distributed a total of **656 tonnes of surplus food**, equivalent to 1.56 million meals, to 172 charities, schools, and community groups.



Nutritional Impact

A significant focus on chilled food supply resulted in **47%** of the food distributed being chilled, directly contributing to **increased dietary choices for 26,881 individuals**.



Network Growth

Our food donor base was strengthened by **13 new food donors**, and we successfully onboarded **15 new community food members**, expanding the reach of nutritious food into more communities.



Volunteer Power

This massive operation is powered by **55 dedicated volunteers** who **contributed 10,126 hours** over the year, providing the essential operational capacity for distribution and warehousing.

“With the support of FareShare, we have established a very successful Breakfast club providing a healthy, nutritious breakfast for many of our pupils to enhance their concentration and help them achieve their learning potential.”

— Drumragh Integrated College

Organisational Resilience & Sustainability

We continued to demonstrate sound governance through effective financial management and strategic investment, ensuring our operations are robust against the sector’s pervasive budget volatility.

Financial Efficiency

100% of our total expenditure £2,018,475 was classified as investment in charitable activities. This metric is a testament to our lean operational model and commitment to ensuring funds directly support our mission and network.

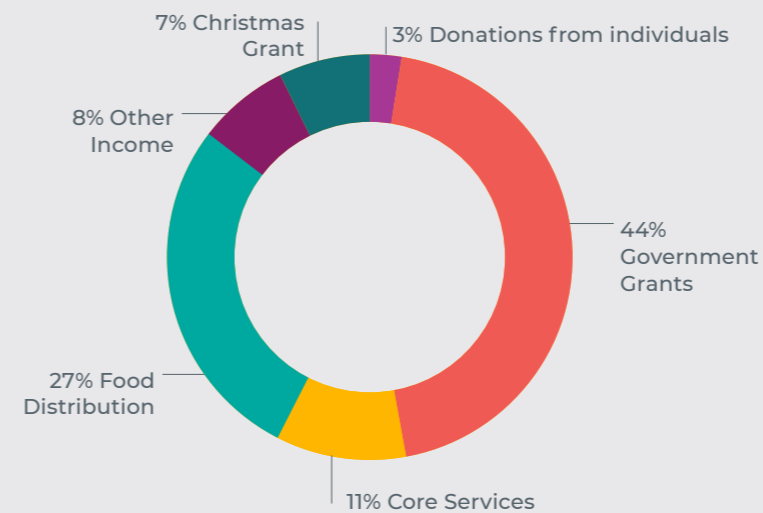
Strategic Funding

We secured significant strategic grants, including £150k from Garfield Weston and £100,000 from the Housing Executive’s Tenancy Sustainment Grants Programme. This mix of multi-year institutional funding and targeted program grants provides essential predictability.

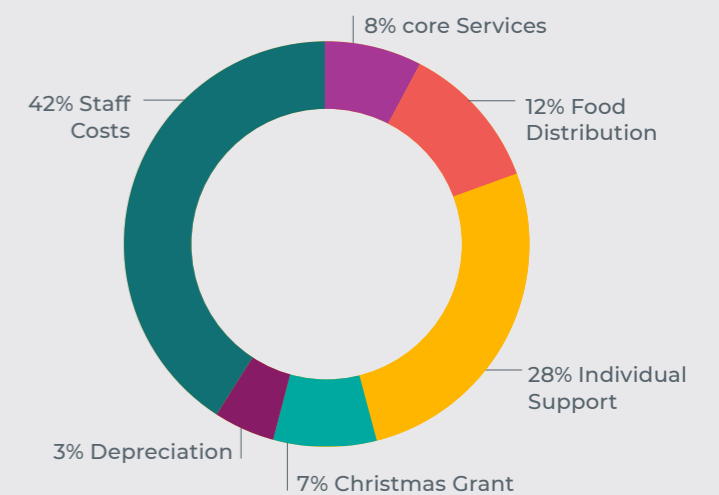
Reserves Optimisation

£750k was placed into a Quick Cash account for investment, strategically growing our unrestricted reserves. This action is critical for financial resilience, providing an essential stability buffer against sudden government budget volatility and allowing us to maintain services even if short-term funding gaps emerge. It signifies a proactive approach to long-term sustainability.

Income



Expenditure



Homeless Connect Board Members

Maria Jennings (Chair)

Simon Geddis (Vice Chair)

Eddie Magowan (Treasurer)

Cormac McArt

Mal Byrne

Anna Lea Hettmansperger

Dermot Murphy

Brenda Parker

Lee-Maria Hughes

Liam Hagan

Homeless Connect Members

Action Ability Belfast

Action for Children

Ark HA

Barnardos Leaving and Aftercare Project

Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid

Belfast Central Mission

Beyond the Battlefield

Causeway and Mid-Ulster Women's Aid

Cedar Foundation

Choice Housing

Crossfire

Depaul Ireland

East Belfast Mission

Extern

FHASS

Foyle Women's Aid

Harmoni

Housing Rights

Larne Community Care Centre

Life Charity NI

Lighthouse Hostel

MACS Supporting Young People

Mindwise

Morning Star

NB Housing

NI Youth Forum

NIACRO

NIFHA

North Down & Ards Women's Aid

North West Methodist Mission

Praxis Care Group

Presbyterian Church in Ireland Council for Social Witness

Queens Quarter Housing

Rosemount House

Salvation Army

Shelter NI

Simon Community NI

The Welcome Organisation

Triangle Housing Association

Westcourt Centre

YMCA North Down



“I joined the organisation nearly 2 years ago and have found it an amazing place to work. The team made me feel so welcome from the outset. It’s clear to see the passion and commitment the staff have towards their work and the belief they have in the work that Homeless Connect does.”

— Paula Maskey, Head of Business Solutions

“We see Homeless Connect as an independent representative of homeless services; able to coordinate/lobby on behalf of the sector. We believe that HC act as a conduit for policy development across the sector.”

— Deirdre Canavan, Depaul



We're on a journey to end homelessness

**HC Homeless
Connect**

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homelessconnect.org

