

## Developing properties, developing partnerships

**F**ILOR and Belfast Community Housing Associations are the first Northern Ireland-based organisations to achieve the government-supported third party accredited qualification of Clients' Charter. The Clients' Charter and its implementation means that housing associations will be able to show continuous improvement with measurement in its performance and will lead to better design, quality and delivery, along the way helping to eliminate inefficiency and waste. This can only be good for those stakeholders involved in its implementation and particularly so for the end users – the tenants. The introduction of the requirement for Clients' Charter accreditation for housing associations in Northern Ireland means that the procurement process will be radically altered forever. This entails a change in the culture of Northern Ireland housing associations but even more importantly it will lead to a greater degree of partnering with all those engaged in delivering the social housing development programme in Northern Ireland. This includes consultants, engineers, contractors/developers and even the tenants and the community. To make implementation of the Clients' Charter a success it is essential that the myriad parties involved embrace the ethos of the Clients' Charter. One aim of the Clients' Charter is to ensure that those involved show best practice in the development process, improving value for money over the whole life costs of a project. It is a framework for partnering with suppliers to achieve continuous improvement and greater value for money. Costs and production

time are increasing when delivering schemes, but by implementing Clients' Charter housing associations can show they are attempting to tackle these issues. In this the client must set the context. The Clients' Charter is a partnering pact to eliminate waste (time or materials) and improve value for money. An example of this would be the typical tendering process. The contractor/supplier is often cornered into quoting a price they realistically know they won't be able to deliver on, but have costed using cheaper, less sustainable materials which probably won't deliver whole life, value for money on that project. By looking at features such as incentivisation, innovation in design and delivery, standardisation of product and supply chain management Clients' Charter implementation will seek to address these issues. Implementation of the Clients' Charter will be client-driven and is geared to suit each individual housing association and to emphasise things that are important to that organisation. Each housing association will have its own starting point and over a cycle will be expected to show continuous improvement.



**■ PARTNERSHIP:**  
Dermot Leonard, general manager of Filor with Dermot Curran, chief executive of BCHA

The Clients' Charter and its implementation means that housing associations will be able to show continuous improvement with better design, quality and delivery. Here are some comments from those who are participating in the Charter.

### Dermot Curran, Chief Executive of Belfast Community Housing

"As part of our association's corporate strategy, the achievement of third party accreditation is considered to be clear evidence of our new approach as a developing association. I consider the Clients' Charter to be an important business improvement tool which will bring a new dynamic into our development work. Another clear example of our commitment would be our new build development in Island/Medway on the Lower Newtownards Road when the contractor involved Qmac voluntarily signed up to the Considerate Constructor's Scheme – a first for social housing in Northern Ireland. Developing new partnerships will be an integral element for our continued success and our work with Filor Housing provides clear evidence it is working."

### Achilles Information Ltd

"The Construction Clients' Charter originated in July 2000 when the Deputy Prime Minister challenged the client community to draw up a Charter that would set out the minimum standards they expected in construction procurement with the goal of continuously achieving improved value for money for clients and more efficient buildings. Late last year the scheme was expanded to Northern Ireland. Belfast Community Housing and Filor Housing Association are the first two Registered Social Landlords in the region to achieve Charter status. Achilles hopes to see many more achieving this goal and adopting the principles of the Charter in months to come."

### Edward Hardy Director, Considerate Constructors Scheme

"The Considerate Constructors Scheme was set up to improve the image of the construction industry. By stating that all contractors must sign up to the scheme, Belfast Community Housing Association is demonstrating its commitment to the community in which it works. Together, we can improve the relationship between sites and the neighbourhoods they are in. We will also reward high standards of environmental awareness, as well as monitoring and encouraging better welfare facilities for the workforce."

### Island/Medway New Build Ballymacarett Residents Group on Island/Medway New Build

"Belfast Community Housing have ensured that throughout this scheme the local community are consulted with and participate in this scheme. The contractor has been excellent to date and the local community have no complaints. We will also be part of the post-completion surveys/tenant satisfaction

and defects monitoring and I would like to thank Belfast Community Housing for the way in which they are delivering the scheme in our community."

### Qmac Construction Ltd – contractor on Island/Medway New Build Scheme

"Qmac firmly believes in exceeding customer expectations on every project and utilised the significant skills of their staff to deliver this objective."

### David Farrell member of Belfast Community Housing's Business Improvement Forum

"Belfast Community Housing continues to bring added value to the delivery of services both to tenants and local communities. The Clients' Charter is another clear example of the Association's commitment to becoming a modern, open and professional organisation. I am confident that the accreditation will bring major benefits to tenants, for example through the Considerate Constructive Scheme and also in the association's future developments."

### Clr M Copeland MLA-BCHA New Build Island/Medway

"With a number of social housing properties in dire need of a face lift, Belfast Community Housing are to be commended on their efforts. Considerate constructing, where key stakeholders and those who will ultimately be living in the properties are consulted and involved in the process is the way forward. The ethics of considerate constructing taken on by Belfast Community Housing shows its commitment to principle of listening and responding to the local community's needs and not just the bank balance requirements of the developers. This allows housing to be built for the benefit of all."

### Dermot Leonard, General Manager Filor Housing Association

"An objective of our association is local regeneration by the provision of sustainable housing and the maintenance of settled communities in which its tenants may develop pride in their built environment. To achieve this, Filor applied for and obtained Client Charter status, a government inspired and supported third party accredited qualification that demonstrates competence in all aspects of procurement and building development. Our association continues to develop its partnering relationship with Belfast Community Housing, another accredited Clients' Charter organisation, in matters of joint procurement and mutual interest. Together, both associations look forward to the future with confidence."

## "Big Enough to cope-Small enough to Care"

Filor Housing Association, which was founded in 1978 by Colonel GGH Filor, MBE is located on the Crumlin Road, Belfast and serves the client base within the greater West and North Belfast area.

It has a strong community ethos and many of its staff and Board of Management are representative of the local community.

Most of its 380 properties are of recent construction and meet Government Decent Homes standards. Its rents are set to provide maximum value for money.

An example of the quality service provision may be found in the documented response times for maintenance and repair. EG, the percentage of emergency repair completed within 24 hours is 97.8%. Similarly the percentage of urgent repairs completed within 4 working days is 99.4% and the percentage of routine repairs completed within 7 working days is 99.5%.

Filor Housing Association has Investors In People accreditation and is a CORGI registered Association in respect of its gas installation and servicing works.

Filor are currently undertaking a major development project to two adjoining listed properties which upon completion will provide state of the art purpose built accommodation for male adults recovering from alcohol abuse.

Day to day management of this facility will be undertaken by the Rosemount Committee who have substantial experience in helping people rebuild their lives.

Filor Housing Association is delighted to be providing a much needed facility which conforms to its view that development of properties, communities and people is both an indivisible and integrated process.



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General Manager

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## "Building Homes - Building Communities"

Belfast Community Housing was founded in 1976 in the Lower Ravenhill area as a result of increased local interest in social housing. We are a community based organisation and over the years through amalgamation with Botanic, Willowfield and Ballymacarett Housing Associations, has grown significantly. The Association is keen to engage with other Housing Associations in pursuit of best practice and has formed a close relationship with, among others, Filor Housing Association. Filor Housing Association, like BCHA, is very much community orientated, and Filor was the first Housing Association in Northern Ireland to acquire the government supported national third party accreditation, the Clients' Charter. BCHA became the second in July of this year.

Currently we have approximately 500 dwellings located in:

- Belfast
- Poleglass / Twinbrook
- North Down
- Newtownabbey

Our development portfolio also includes potential opportunities in areas such as Castlereagh, Dunganon and Newtownards along with the areas above. In all these areas it has engaged with the public and communities through a series of presentations to the NIHE's District Community Network groups (incorporating NITAP) as well as engaging individual groups at a local level and even involving political and civic representatives when possible.



We would be keen to meet/explore all potential development opportunities with interested parties. Should you wish to discuss this please contact:

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