

# Homes & Communities Manager

Candidate  
Briefing Pack



**Building homes  
and communities  
where people  
can flourish –  
the alpha way.**

## Message from the Chief Executive

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in Alpha's new position of Homes and Communities Manager.

It appears we may now be finally beginning to emerge from the gruelling COVID-19 pandemic. Alpha's mainly older tenants have been hit hard, especially from the loneliness and isolation endured during lockdown. As we emerge from lockdown, Alpha is committed to helping restore the wellbeing of our residents. We also want to consolidate the gains that COVID-19 has prompted, including more flexible working and better use of technology.

Alpha's new Homes and Communities Manager will lead our Housing Department in delivering effective, customer-focused services, innovating where possible. Beyond 'core' housing management and housing support, the postholder will also foster active and thriving communities across our developments. This will include forming partnerships to enable intergenerational engagement, help get our tenants active and create beautiful environments in our schemes and gardens. There will also be opportunities to help pioneer new approaches to providing sheltered housing across NI.

Our new colleague will be a member of Alpha's Senior Management Team. Alpha will be recruiting a new Board Chair imminently and the SMT will then support the Board in developing a new corporate strategy to guide our development and growth over the next few years. This role is therefore a great opportunity to make your mark in an ambitious and growing housing association committed to quality and innovation.

I trust this job pack provides a full overview of Alpha Housing and this Homes and Communities Manager role. Please get in touch for any further information you may require or to discuss this opportunity.

We look forward to receiving your application.



**CAMERON WATT**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron Watt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Introduction

## Who We Are

Alpha Housing was formed in 2009 from the merger of Abode Housing Association and Presbyterian Housing Association. We currently own and manage 973 homes in 40 locations across Northern Ireland. Our homes are mainly sheltered housing, also known as 'independent living', for older people. However, Alpha also provides a small number of family homes.

Alpha's staff team of 64 currently comprises 19 people in headquarters in Belfast, 25 Scheme Co-ordinators and 20 cleaners are based in our sheltered housing schemes around Northern Ireland.

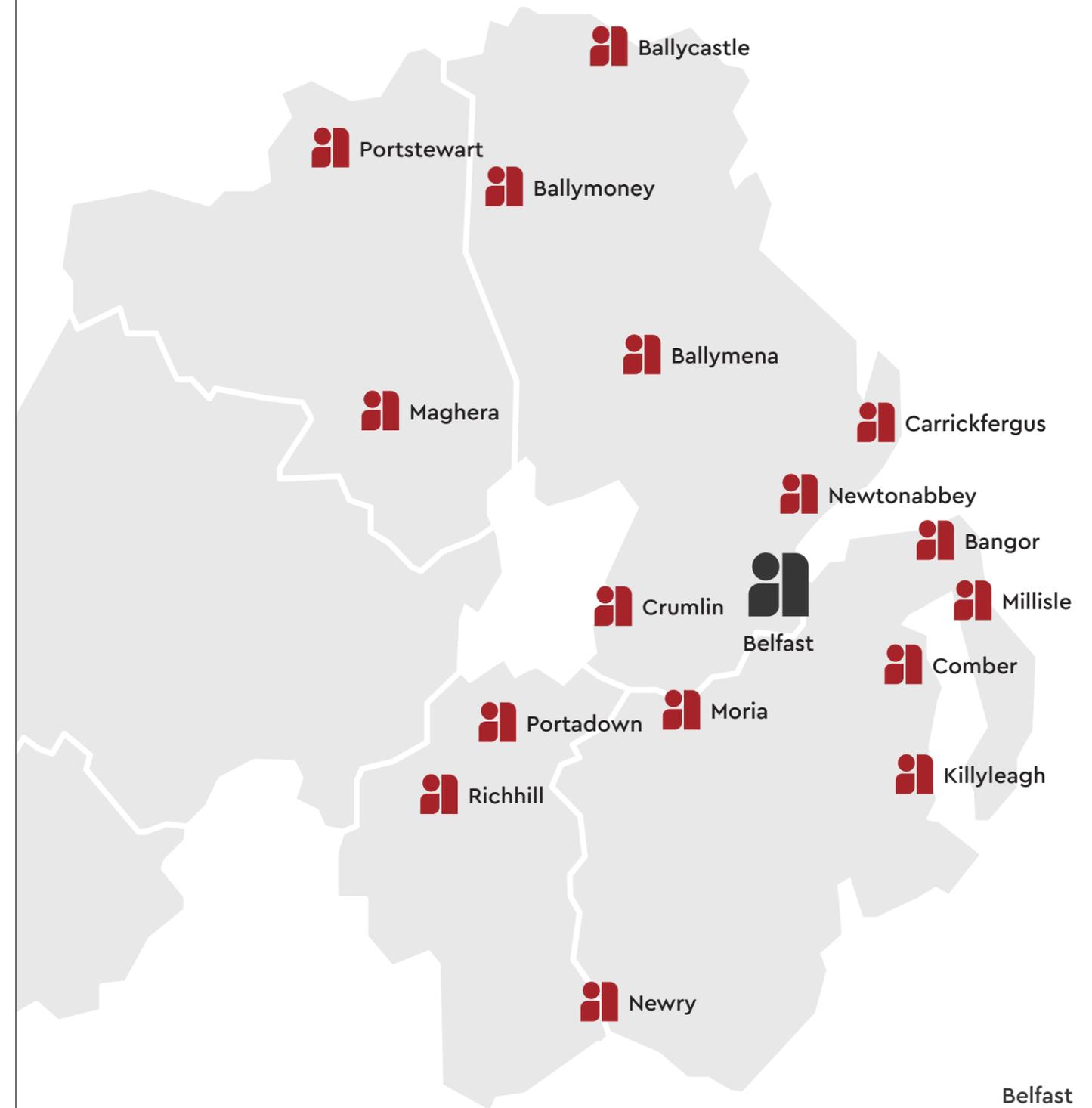
Alpha's size and ethos enable us to provide a personalised, tenant-focused service. According to recent independent research, overall tenant satisfaction with Alpha's services is 91%, one of the highest levels in Northern Ireland. However, we are not complacent and are determined to improve further, including in listening to and responding to tenants' views.

Alpha is a housing association and charity regulated by the Department for Communities, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Financial Conduct Authority. We strive to uphold the highest standards of governance to ensure high-quality and equitable services for all tenants.



'Happy Hatchlings' baby yoga, Weir Court, Comber

## Where we are



### Belfast

- Alexander Court
- Antrimville Court
- Dunseverick Court
- Johnston Court
- Lowry Court
- Carrs Court
- Taylor Court
- Wilton Court

# Introduction

## Leading in Sheltered Housing

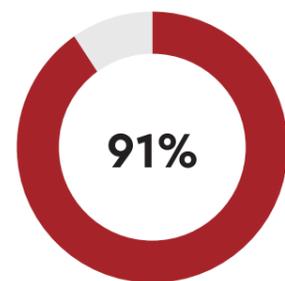
Alpha strives to provide exemplary sheltered housing services. In recent years we have prioritised the sustaining of adequate Scheme Co-ordinator staffing at our schemes, despite major funding constraints.

Normally, regular group activities are held in our sheltered housing schemes, including coffee mornings and lunch clubs. We aim to foster community within our schemes and reach out to residents in neighbouring areas. Prior to the pandemic, intergenerational projects and work to support nature on our sites was a focus for scheme activities, and we are looking forward to resuming these in the coming months.

Currently normal scheme life is severely affected by COVID-19, especially limiting group activities. Alpha has been doing our utmost to keep tenants, staff and visitors safe throughout the pandemic. We are pleased that independent research shows 92% of our tenants are satisfied with Alpha's response to COVID-19 so far.

Alpha is committed to ensuring that our tenants have a full opportunity to help shape the services they receive and to hold us to account for our performance. The Tenants Forum and Tenants Committee, comprising residents from around our schemes, meet regularly to engage with Alpha management on key issues. Our Board is now meeting twice a year with the Tenants Committee and we welcome increasing regulatory expectations from DfC on tenant engagement.

We believe that sheltered housing will be more needed than ever in the post-Covid world. However, funding pressures and the changing needs of older people mean that the model must evolve. That is why Alpha is partnering with Clanmil to pilot 'hub and spoke' delivery of support services using our existing sheltered schemes as community hubs. The project, funded through the Supporting People programme's Provider Innovation Fund, is due to launch in October 2021 and we expect it to usefully inform the development of sheltered housing services across NI in the years to come.



At 91%, Alpha's level of overall tenant satisfaction is one of the highest in NI

# Introduction

## Building New Homes

Alpha is now embarking on an ambitious growth phase through building new homes. Exemplar developments are helping set new standards of housing for independent older people. Over the coming years Alpha intends to build hundreds of good homes of varying sizes and types, including for families and disabled people.

Alpha has recently completed a new build scheme, Giffen Place, Barnetts Road in East Belfast. This exemplar design and build project provides fourteen 'Category 1' two-bedroom apartments built to the HAPPI principles, the blueprint for high-quality housing for independent older people. Features include generous internal space standards; attractive, mature grounds; and closeness to public transport links and local amenities.

Alpha is also currently building a similar scheme of apartments for independent older people in Broughshane in Mid-Antrim, due for completion in late 2020. Several other projects are in the pipeline.



CGI of Fir Park development, under construction in Broughshane



Giffen Place, Alpha's exemplar development in Stormont, East Belfast

# Introduction

## Telling Our Story and Facilitating Digital Engagement

Over the last year, Alpha has been increasingly seeking to 'tell our story' and publicise our good work. This has included sharing more news through mainstream and social media. In addition to our new build developments, we have got a great response to content featuring our partnership with Ulster Wildlife and the tenant-led initiative to green our sites. Alpha has also been actively profiling our new grounds maintenance contractor, social enterprise Outwork, who rehabilitate people in the justice system by giving them real jobs. Positively, this is helping Outwork grow and secure new clients, including in social housing.

Through our communications and lobbying work, Alpha is committed to helping provide leadership to the NI social housing sector. We fully participate in CIH and NIFHA initiatives, such as the Benefits to Society campaign, which featured Alpha projects. Alpha also lobbies strongly for the future of the Supporting People programme, which funds a wide variety of sheltered and supported housing in NI.

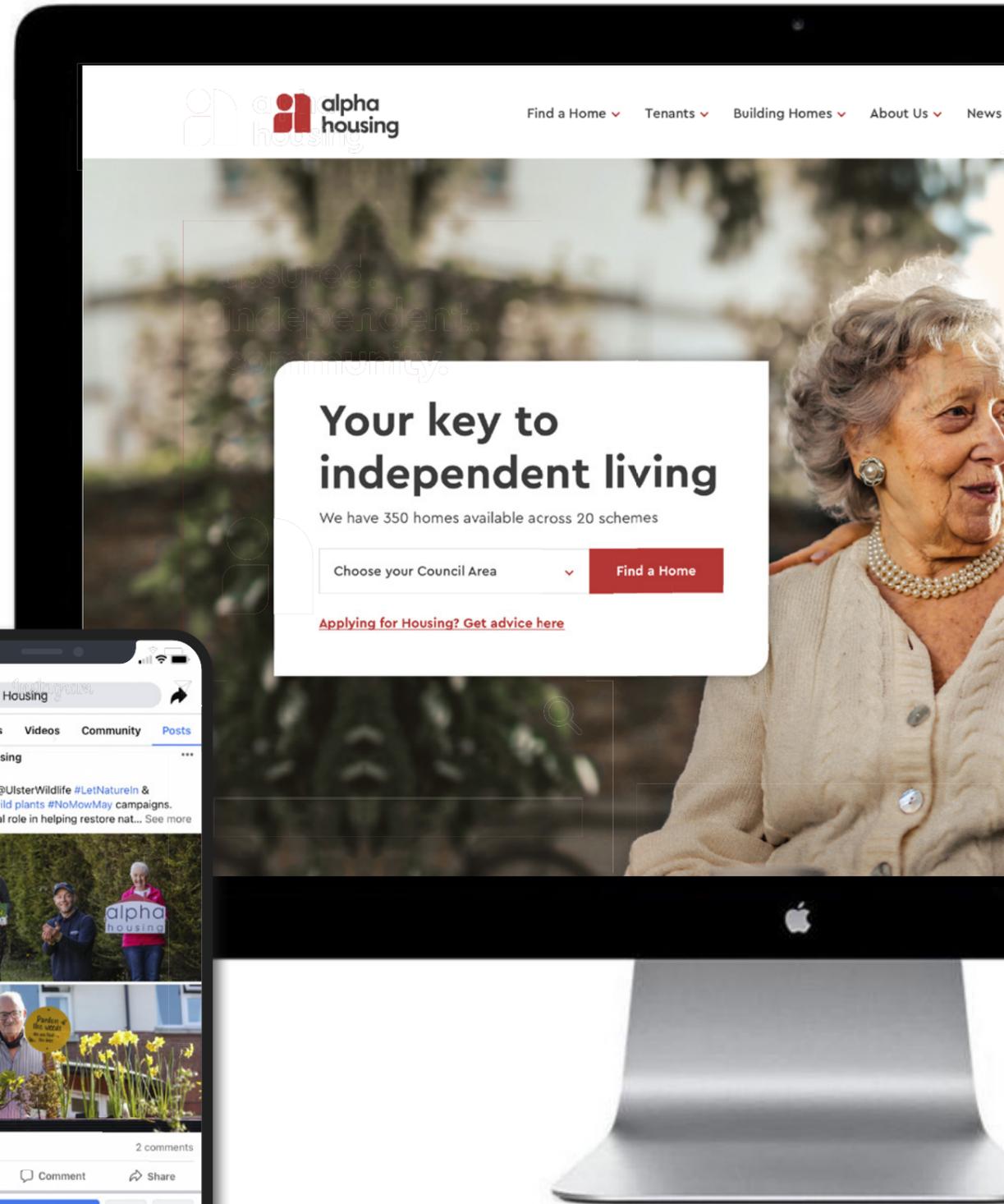
Alpha's engaging new website, designed around our fresh brand identity, is also about to launch. It will provide more opportunity for tenants to transact with us online, with the tenant portal enabling residents to generate rent statements, pay their rent and raise repairs.

Alpha's partnerships with Ulster Wildlife and social enterprise Outwork have recently been featured the Belfast Telegraph & the Country Down Spectator.



Visit us online at [alphahousingni.org](http://alphahousingni.org)

Facebook [@alphahousingni](https://www.facebook.com/alphahousingni)



**Our Values:  
Integrity,  
Customer Care,  
Value, Equality,  
Accountability,  
Good Governance,  
Prudence and  
Commitment.**



## Introduction Culture and Ethos



We endeavour to nurture a positive and productive working environment characterised by high expectations and good working relationships. Most staff members work with a high degree of autonomy. Colleagues are trusted to do a good job and supported through effective line management and training. We actively support professional development, including through achieving accreditation with professional bodies.

Collaboration and learning are fostered through regular gatherings of HQ and scheme staff, as well as periodic all-staff events. We encourage engagement using technology, including the Workplace social media app.



Currently Alpha head office are still working from home, which has proved to be successful during the pandemic. We expect to start a phased return to the office in the coming months and are likely to introduce hybrid working arrangements as we adjust to the 'new normal'.

# Introduction

## Our Governance

Alpha is governed by a voluntary Board of eleven members. The Board includes senior leaders with professional backgrounds in areas such as housing management, law, architecture and construction.

Three committees comprising Board members regularly meet to oversee Alpha business. These are the Investment Committee, Customer Services Committee and Audit and Governance Committee. Both the Board and committees meet four times per annum.

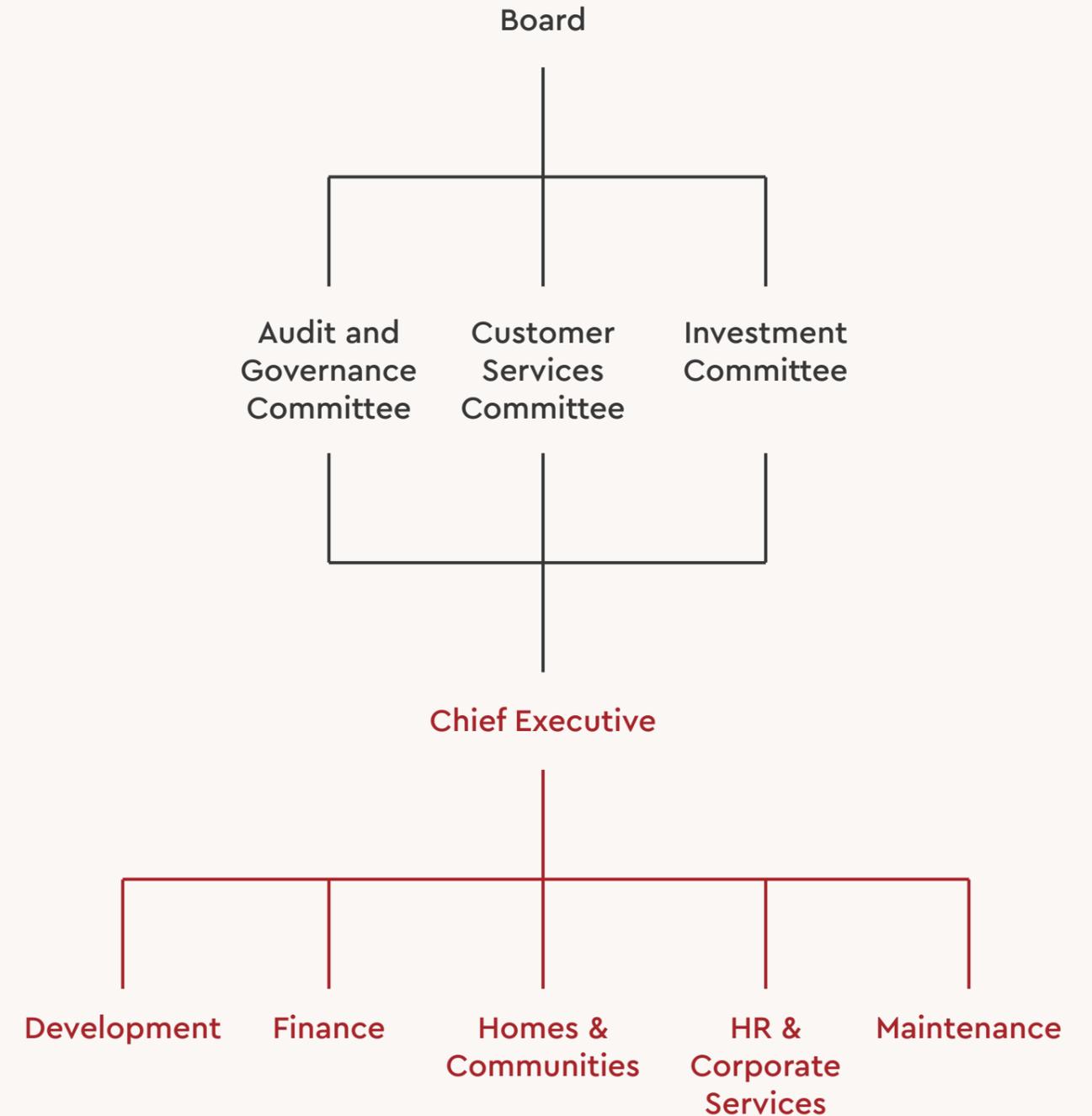
The housing function is guided by the Customer Services Committee, currently chaired by Board member, John McConnell, a senior manager at maintenance contractor H&J Martin.

The Senior Management Team currently comprises six members, including the postholder for this role. The Team meets regularly to ensure effective operational leadership of the business. It is led by Chief Executive, Cameron Watt, who previously headed the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) and a policy team at the National Housing Federation, the trade body for English housing associations, in London.

Among the Board's priorities for 2021-22 will be the formulation of a new three-year corporate plan.



## Our Structure



■ Non Executive  
■ Staff Roles

# Homes and Communities Manager Role

The Homes and Communities Manager role is central to Alpha's mission to provide great homes and communities where people can thrive.

We are seeking an experienced, energetic and resilient housing professional eager to make their mark in this next stage of your career. You will be a strong all-rounder capable of effectively leading in our housing management, housing support and community investment services.

Passionate about providing great customer service, especially to older people, you will model the commitment and quality of work you expect of colleagues. Creative and flexible, you will be able to push boundaries and take the initiative in improving services.

As an able leader and manager, you will be confident in setting the direction for your departmental colleagues, demonstrating ambition and drive. You will be empathetic and flexible, adjusting your approach to best support and develop team members.

In managing our housing portfolio, you will be confident in leading the team to meet significant challenges, such as in re-letting the currently higher number of vacant homes resulting from the pandemic. You will be able to analyse processes and make them better.

In developing our housing support services, you will be committed to ensuring Alpha continues to provide effective, compassionate and caring services. You'll be enthused at the opportunity to guide the evolution of these services to best meet the changing needs of tenants, and to extend these to older people in the community through the hub and spoke pilot.

For further information visit  
[alphahousingni.org](http://alphahousingni.org)



Social enterprise Outwork planting trees at Lowry Court, South Belfast



Scheme Co-ordinator Denise Cherry and Tenant Norman Doyle, Rathmore Manor, Newtownabbey



Coffee morning at Agherton Grange, Portstewart

# General Information for Applicants

Given our commitment to nurture thriving and active communities, you will be excited to build on our existing partnerships, from 'Happy Hatchlings' baby yoga group to Ulster Wildlife. You will inspire your team to take the initiative in 'making things happen' in our sheltered schemes, and lead in building new partnerships and securing necessary funding (with appropriate assistance).

Our expectations are clearly high. But in return, you will enjoy being part of a committed, diverse and fun team excited about delivering great services and helping drive positive social change.

Alpha encourages and supports personal and career development, such as funding colleagues to obtain professional qualifications, to providing time to participate in sector initiatives and working groups.

As Alpha is a relatively small housing provider, you will have significant autonomy and scope to make your mark, unhindered by undue bureaucracy.

If this sounds like you, please get in touch and apply for this exciting role!



Montgomery Manor resident Victor Allister launches 'No Mow' initiative with Ulster Wildlife

## Application Details

Thank you for your interest in this role. If you have any questions about the job role or the organisation, please contact Helen McCoubrey, HR and Corporate Services Manager, [helen.mccoubrey@alphahousingni.org](mailto:helen.mccoubrey@alphahousingni.org) or Cameron Watt, Chief Executive, [cameron.watt@alphahousingni.org](mailto:cameron.watt@alphahousingni.org). To speak to them, please call on 028 9078 7750

- The deadline for applications to be submitted by email to Helen McCoubrey is noon on Monday 21 June.
- First round of interviews is scheduled to take place early in the week commencing 28 June (these may be held virtually via Zoom dependant on circumstances at the time).
- [If required] Second round interviews will take place later in the w/c 28 June.

## Your Application

Please submit a full Curriculum Vitae along with a covering letter detailing your skills and experience relevant to this role and how you meet the essential criteria set out in the person specification.

## Shortlisting and Interviews

After the closing date we will send applications to the selection panel comprising the Chief Executive, HR & Corporate Services Manager and a member of Alpha's Board, who in shortlisting will assess each person's skills, experience and competencies. We will invite applicants who most closely match the requirements to interview.

## Equal Opportunities

We will not use data from our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion monitoring as part of the selection process. This information is used for monitoring purposes only. Our policy is available on request.

## Background Checks

We will conduct background checks on all successful candidates. These will include the following: identity checks; Access NI and employment references.

# Job Description



**Job Title:** Homes and Communities Manager

**Location:** Head Office, Alpha House, Belfast Harbour Estate

**Hours:** 37 hours per week

**Salary:** £35,745 – £46,845 (NJC SCALE PTS 32–43) plus attractive benefits including non-contributory pension with 10% employer contribution

## Reporting Structure

The post holder will be a member of the Senior Management Team and will report to the Chief Executive.

## Main Purpose of the Role

Alpha is committed to providing great homes and helping nurture communities where people can thrive.

As Homes and Communities Manager, you will have a vital role in realising this exciting vision. You will lead our housing management function, ensuring it operates in an effective, efficient and compliant manner, innovating to better meet the needs of our residents. You will lead your team to further improve Alpha's leading sheltered housing services, adapting to tenants' changing needs and the evolving policy and funding environment. Also, pioneering our community investment activities, you will build partnerships and help secure funding to enable our tenants and sheltered schemes to flourish, leading the team to 'build back better' as we emerge from the pandemic.

## Main Duties

### People Management

- Lead, manage and motivate your Housing Department colleagues, including line management of two Housing Officers and an Administration Officer.
- Hold regular 1:1s and team meetings to review progress and set goals.
- Monitor performance on an ongoing basis, intervening promptly and sensitively where expectations are not being met, providing coaching and support as required.
- Provide overall Departmental management of the scheme staff who are directly line managed by the Housing Officers.
- Ensure the learning and development needs of Departmental colleagues are identified and met.
- Liaise with the HR and Corporate Services Manager on the management of absence, conduct and employee relations.

## Housing Management

- Lead and manage the Housing Department to ensure it delivers effective and efficient housing management and housing support services in a compliant manner.
- Proactively manage the re-letting of void properties, marketing vacant homes to help minimize rental losses.
- Manage the allocation and re-letting of homes within the parameters of the Common Selection Scheme.
- Provide advice and guidance to colleagues, tenants and external stakeholders within the framework of corporate policies, good practice and legislation.
- Foster harmonious tenant relations, guiding colleagues to ensure that any tenant disputes are dealt with promptly and appropriately.
- Effectively address anti-social behaviour (ASB), ensuring it is actively identified and investigated. Seek prompt resolution of cases, including through convening ASB case conferences, liaising with tenants and external agencies to resolve successfully.
- Act as the Adult Safeguarding Champion, ensuring safeguarding issues are managed appropriately and involving statutory safeguarding teams as appropriate.
- Work closely with the Maintenance Department to ensure the delivery of 'joined-up' housing management, housing support and maintenance services.
- Deal with housing management related complaints in accordance with good practice in customer relations and relevant corporate policies and procedures.
- Oversee the escalation of challenging tenancy management cases, e.g. when issuing Notices Seeking Possession, seeking appropriate legal advice and supporting relevant team members.
- Draft, update and implement policies and procedures, ensuring they reflect corporate objectives, sector good practice and legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Support and manage colleagues to minimize rent arrears, ensuring effective support for tenants whilst limiting rent losses, and liaising closely with Finance colleagues.
- Facilitate internal audits and regulatory inspections, promptly implementing agreed recommendations.

# Job Description



## Tenant Engagement & Empowerment

- Lead in ensuring Alpha is a truly tenant-focused organisation in which residents' views are listened and responded to, and where tenants can meaningfully scrutinise us for our performance and hold us to account.
- Keep the Tenant Participation Strategy updated in line with evolving good practice and regulatory expectations.
- Facilitate regular meetings of the Tenants' Committee and Tenants' Forum, and between the Board and Tenants' Committee.
- Co-ordinate the bi-annual 'STAR' tenant customer service satisfaction survey.

## Housing Support

- Manage support services in sheltered schemes in line with the Housing Executive Supporting People team's expectations.
- Meet Supporting People reporting and compliance requirements, including through accurate record-keeping, facilitating inspections and prompt filing of returns.
- Sustain the quality of sheltered housing services despite funding constraints, innovating where possible.
- Manage the Radius 24 Connect contract, monitoring performance and operational records.
- Assist the Chief Executive in managing the successful delivery of the 'Support Connect' hub and spoke pilot, potentially extending these services further if funding allows.

## Community Investment

- Establish and maintain relationships with partners to facilitate varied and stimulating activities in our sheltered schemes.
- Initiate and oversee grant applications to secure funding for initiatives.
- Manage existing intergenerational projects, working to expand further.
- Promote initiatives involving tenants to support nature and improve our communal grounds.
- Encourage participation in corporate charitable partnerships and activities.

## General Management

- Contribute fully as a member of the Senior Management Team in helping provide operational leadership across the organisation.
- Effectively manage and monitor performance against Key Performance Indicators and use data to help ensure effective, efficient service delivery and drive improvement.
- Provide reports to the Board's Customer Services Committee on a quarterly basis.
- Prepare and provide reports and departmental information as and when required to the Board, its other Committees and the Chief Executive.
- Provide statistical information for inclusion in benchmarking exercises, including but not limited to NIFHA and Housemark.
- Work in conjunction with the Finance Manager to forecast expenditure and deliver Housing management programmes within budget.
- Contribute to the organisation's strategic planning, business planning and employee development processes.
- Represent Alpha in a variety of forums and working groups.
- Undertake any other reasonable and relevant duties as and when requested by the Chief Executive or Board.

For further information visit  
[alphahousingni.org](http://alphahousingni.org)

# Person Specification

## Required Criteria for Post

A good working knowledge of relevant policy, practice and legislation for social housing and adult safeguarding.

An understanding of developments and issues in social housing, particularly relating to older people.

Experience of leading and motivating a staff team.

Experience in budget setting, forecasting and control.

Ability to produce high-quality board reports, business cases and presentations.

Current driving licence and access to a car for business use.

Commitment to the highest standards in Health & Safety.

## Qualifications

Educated to degree level with 3 years' relevant housing management experience; or 5 years' relevant experience in housing management.

(Experience must include: allocations (letting and re-lets); voids management, tenancy management and staff management.)

Membership of a relevant professional body (e.g. the Chartered Institute of Housing)

## Essential



## Desirable



## Skills and Abilities

Excellent communication skills with a strong ability to influence a range of individuals and stakeholders.

Excellent customer focus to effectively address the needs of internal and external customers.

Strong organisational skills to work in a pressurised environment, prioritising workloads to meet targets and achieve results.

Effective interpersonal skills, with the ability to build relationships and negotiate with others.

Ability to think creatively and be able to drive to the continuous improvement of services.

Proven negotiation, analytical and problem-solving skills.

Strong ICT skills with demonstrable proficiency in MS Office.

## Essential



## Desirable

# Core Competencies

Additionally, the Homes and Communities Manager will be expected to demonstrate these core competencies:

- **Commitment to excellence** – Demonstrating a commitment to delivering quality customer service.
- **Interpersonal and communication skills** – Ability to demonstrate empathy to others through active listening and emotional intelligence. Strong ability to communicate effectively in partnership with service users, colleagues, stakeholders (including regulators) and the Board.
- **Innovative thinking** – Ability to create new and better ways to achieve success.
- **Results focused** – Proven ability to drive innovation and deliver results within tight time frames.
- **Leadership skills** – Ability to lead, motivate and manage people and improve performance levels through effective mentoring and staff development.
- **Decision making** – Ability to make sound judgements and manage risk.
- **Governance** – Working knowledge of governance practices and proven success in overcoming obstacles through innovative solutions within a challenging or regulated environment.

# Terms & Conditions of Appointment

- The salary for this post, determined by skills and experience, will be set within the range £35,745 – £46,845 (NJC SCALE PTS 32–43).
- Annual incremental progression through the salary scale is dependent on satisfactory performance.
- Alpha Housing operates a defined contribution contributory pension scheme with the employers' contribution set at 10% of annual salary.
- In addition to 13 statutory holidays, the annual leave allowance is 23 days, rising to 28 days after 5 years' service.
- This is a permanent position subject to the satisfactory completion of a probation period of six months.

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