

## **HOUSING RIGHTS INFORMATION**

### **Office Location:**

Housing Rights have moved premises and are now situated at The Skainos Centre, 239 Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 1AF

### **Organisational Background**

Housing Rights is the leading provider of independent specialist housing advice services in Northern Ireland. We believe everyone has the right to a decent, safe and affordable home and have been working for over 50 years to help achieve this on behalf of people who are homeless or living in poor housing in Northern Ireland. All our services are delivered throughout Northern Ireland and focus on the key areas of preventing homelessness; accessing accommodation; tackling affordability and poor housing conditions. Our services currently include:

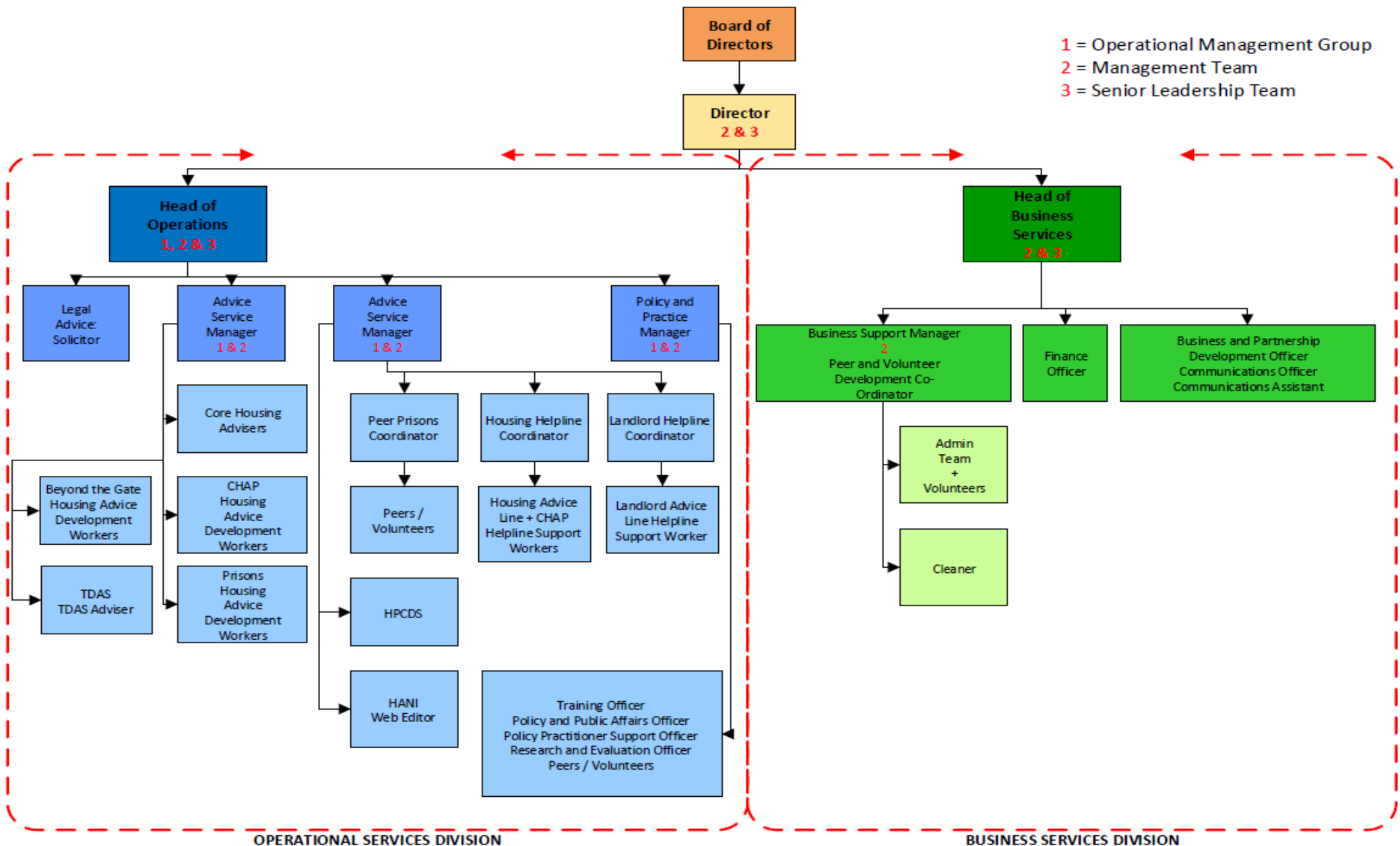
- Providing a housing advice line.
- Undertaking advocacy and legal representation on behalf of people with housing problems.
- An in situ court representation service for people facing possession as a consequence of debt.
- Providing online advice through the website [www.housingadviceNI.org](http://www.housingadviceNI.org) as well as email advice.
- Providing a good practice and compliance helpline for private landlords operating in Northern Ireland.
- Providing a specialist housing advice service within the prisons in NI.
- Providing intensive short term support to the most vulnerable prisoners on release to ensure they are connected with appropriate support services within the community.
- Supporting (in partnership with Citizens Advice and AdviceNI) generalist advice agencies to deliver high quality housing in their local communities.
- Delivering a skills and knowledge based training programme.
- Producing information resource materials on housing law and practice.
- Providing client based comment to influence the development of relevant public policy and legislation.

Housing Rights has recently completed a review of staffing and structure levels within the organisation. This seeks to take account of the growth and development of the organisation and also to reflect changes in the external operating environment which are likely to affect the organisation and the people who use our services over the coming period. These include:

- Continued difficulties in the local housing market; radical changes in the social housing landscape and the implementation of the Welfare Reform Agenda which are all likely to lead to an increase in the demand for advice and advocacy services to help resolve housing and homelessness problems.
- An increasing need to deliver all services in a variety of formats to meet the changing needs and preferences of users.
- Contracting funding opportunities within an increasingly competitive environment
- Significant reductions in public expenditure across Northern Ireland.

Housing Rights wishes to ensure it can:

- Deliver the level and range of services needed, without compromising on quality;
- Effectively demonstrate the importance and impact of our work;
- Make the most effective and efficient use of its resources;
- Compete successfully in a contracting environment;
- Identify and respond to appropriate opportunities for future service development



# HOUSING RIGHTS

## **VISION**

When everyone has a home

## **MISSION**

Housing Rights works to improve lives by tackling homelessness and housing problems.

## **VALUES**

### **Respect**

Treating everyone with dignity

### **Equality**

Challenging inequality and treating everyone fairly

### **Confidentiality**

Not disclosing your information without your consent, unless required to do so by law

### **Independence**

We are a charity and governed by an Independent Board

### **Quality**

Striving for excellence in everything we do

### **Co-operation**

Working together and with others to achieve shared goals

## **STRATEGIC THEMES 2014-2018**

Strategic themes have been agreed for the organisation for the period 2014 – 2018. These include:

- To prevent homelessness and help people in need to access and sustain a decent and affordable home.
- To maximise the impact of our services by working collaboratively with others to achieve solutions for those in housing need.
- To provide client focused comment to help inform developments in legislation, policy and practice
- To positively influence housing policy and practice on behalf of those who are in greatest need.
- To be a centre of excellence preventing homelessness and helping people in need to find solutions to their housing problems.
- To be innovative in meeting the needs of our clients and respond to appropriate opportunities for service development.

# HOUSING RIGHTS

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

### Our Commitment

Housing Rights is **committed to providing equality of opportunity to all persons** in relation to the delivery of our services. We recognise a clear moral obligation to promote fairness and equality. We value all individuals (clients, staff and volunteers), **their diversity, unique identity and backgrounds**. These include (but are not exclusive to) the established equality grounds of religious belief; political opinion; community background; ethnic and national origin; sex; sexual orientation; disability or age.

### WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

This policy applies to Housing Rights:

- clients
- staff and volunteers
- instruction of counsel, commissioning research etc.
- all other visitors to the organisation

### APPLICATION OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to every aspect of our work including the recruitment & selection and progression of staff and volunteers, training of staff and volunteers, conditions of service for staff and volunteers.

In addition this policy encourages equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in our relationship with our clients. We therefore aim to maximise accessibility to our services for example by:

- making reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled clients / staff are not disadvantaged compared to those who are not disabled.
- ensuring people whose first language is not English have equal access to our services
- regularly reviewing our methods of delivery e.g. texting services, virtual adviser

### YOUR RIGHTS

All clients, staff, volunteers, who work for or engage with our services shall do so in an environment which is free from any form of discrimination, harassment and victimisation. All clients, staff, volunteers have the right to complain about discrimination, harassment and victimisation; should it occur and this organisation has established an internal grievance procedure to deal with such complaints. All complaints will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

# HOUSING RIGHTS

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

We require all clients, staff and volunteers to comply with this policy. We expect all clients, staff volunteers to treat others with dignity and respect and ensure that their behaviour does not amount to discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Clients, staff, volunteers are expected to challenge discrimination, harassment and victimisation by making it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable and by supporting victims of such treatment. Anyone who is aware of an incident of discrimination, harassment or victimisation should alert a manager to enable the organisation to deal with it

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT**

The organisation will:

- Publicly promote this policy
- Ensure each member of staff / volunteer is aware and understands our equality & diversity policy
- Ensure all complaints of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are dealt with promptly, seriously and confidentially
- Set good examples by treating staff, volunteers & clients with fairness, dignity and respect.
- Be alert to unacceptable behaviour and will take appropriate action in accordance with this policy

## **MONITORING & REVIEW**

Monitor all incidents of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. The Head of Operations in conjunction with the management team shall review the effectiveness of this policy at least annually.