

Asset Management Strategy 2024-27

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Foreword



Choice continue to build on the work of the last Asset Strategy (2021 – 2024) and have now taken the opportunity to review our vision for our physical Assets and customers. Our new strategy will build on the successes of the last three years and will focus on our strategic goals to 2027, as follows:

- **Providing great homes... encompassing both new build and high-quality existing homes, with proactive support for mixed tenure and shared housing, etc;**
- **Supporting communities to thrive... through ‘hearing the tenant voice’, investing in our communities and leading in shared housing, etc; and**
- **Empowering our people... by investing in skills, enabling technology to simplify the customer (and staff) ‘journey’, and ensuring access to development funding, etc.**

Our strategy will continue Choice’s ongoing investment in our portfolio which will see us spend over £80m on maintenance and projects over the next 3 years. This not only helps us maintain the asset value of our stock but improves the quality, safety and efficiency of accommodation for our customers.

In this Choice Asset Management Strategy, we’ve set out our plans to 2027. Our plans continue with the changes and improvements in recent years and we’ve ambitious plans to build on our excellent track record. We will ensure that all our homes are safe and meet the Decent Homes Standards, building and fire safety regulations. By 2027 our homes will be more energy efficient and we will maintain sector leading health and safety performance. Tenant safety is our top priority.

We will make major investments to enhance the safety of our buildings and continue to improve our property and repairs services from a customer perspective.

We will drive innovation and explore the opportunities to improve our self-service offering and use technology to improve working with residents to enhance our service and to remove waste. Our front-line colleagues will be provided with the latest equipment and technology to deliver quick and efficient property services and the increasing use of smart building technology will help us to early diagnose problems such as damp and undertake repairs promptly.

This will also enable us to drive value for money, and the optimum experience for tenants. Tenants will be able to access more of our property and asset management services at any time and place that suits them, seven days a week via our online offering.

We’ll also continue our important work on environmental sustainability. Going forward we’ll focus on meeting long term Government net zero targets and playing our part in addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies. We’ll do this by continuing to decarbonise our housing stock and ensuring our residents live in energy efficient homes which are affordable to heat.

New challenging targets are outlined within the strategy that will impact across each of the Group strategic goals but we are looking forward to the challenge and working in collaboration with our valued customers, colleagues, contractors, suppliers, consultants and Supporting Housing partners to successfully deliver an asset portfolio that meets the needs and enhances the comfort of the living environment for our customers.

Michael McDonnell
Group Chief Executive

Introduction

Choice Housing Ireland Limited is a Northern Ireland Registered Housing Association and Charity, with a history stretching back for almost 50 years.

The Group employs over 400 people and maintains 12,000 high quality homes to meet the diverse needs of c30,000 tenants and residents.

We provide:

- General needs housing for families and single people;
- Sheltered housing for older people;
- Purpose-built homes for families with complex needs;
- Housing to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, with support provided by like-minded partners; and
- Support services for tenants and the wider community.

£40 million+

Over £40 million invested in our properties through our Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) from 2021-2024



Extremely high levels of health and safety and compliance in our properties



Dedicated processes for helping tenants deal with condensation and mould issues

90%+

A response maintenance performance level for repairs in excess of 90%



A dedicated Sustainability and Energy team to support tenants

ISO

ISO9001, ISO45001 and ISO14001 - An integrated quality, safety and environmental management system has been implemented for the Planned Maintenance team's activities

41,000+

We complete over 41,000 response repairs every year.

The aim of this Asset Management Strategy is to provide direction on the future of the property assets to ensure that they meet corporate objectives and customer expectations. Asset Management goes beyond investing in quality repairs and maintenance service improvements. Asset management is about reviewing and changing the asset base to achieve the right accommodation in the right location supported by flexible services for our customers. Excellent asset management considers quality and value for money, particularly the whole life of a home and how future running costs will impact the customer.

This Asset Management strategy is the responsibility of the Asset Services Directorate although by its nature, it is cross directorate. The Assets Directorate includes compliance, planned maintenance, stock condition management, energy and sustainability, and the in-house maintenance services provided by Choice Services.

Our core values will underpin all of the work we do within this strategy, namely:

- We will be Caring – through listening, being helpful and always acting professionally;
- We will be Committed – through determination, being reliable and always acting with integrity; and
- We will be Creative – through innovating, being responsive and always seeking to improve.

We have set out in this strategy our KPIs and objectives for the period to 2027. These objectives reflect all the key aspects of this Asset Management Strategy.



Vision

Choice Housing Ireland Limited is an Industrial and Provident Society registered as a Housing Association and Charity by our regulators, the Department for Communities and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

The Association is a social enterprise, has voluntary Board and Committee membership and all surpluses are reinvested to fulfil our charitable purpose.

Our charitable purpose for almost 50 years is ‘to benefit the community’. Our social objectives are clear that we will achieve this purpose through:

- The provision of social and affordable housing;
- Assistance to help house people; and
- The prevention or relief of poverty.

Our World

We believe that having a great home can make a positive difference to the health and well-being of everyone in our society.

The need for decent, affordable, ‘fit for purpose’ housing and support services continues to grow.

Consequently, the provision of great social, affordable homes and associated services for those in need remains a priority for Choice and our partners.

Choice will continue to leverage our skills and resources, working closely with other like-minded partners, to deliver benefits for all communities.

We will also play our part in addressing the strategic challenges that face society, including the scourge of homelessness; the high cost of living; need to decarbonise; and promotion of social inclusion and well-being.

Our Ambition

Our Ambition is ‘to empower our staff and partners to make a positive and sustainable difference by: increasing the supply of high quality and affordable homes; ensuring access to excellent support services; enabling our communities to flourish; and making best use of our collective talent and resources’.

Our Values

What we do and say should be underpinned by 3 core values, namely:

We are Caring – through listening, being helpful and always acting professionally;

We are Committed – through determination, being reliable, always acting with integrity; and

We are Creative – through innovating, being responsive and always seeking to improve.

We will strive to be a ‘force for good’ for our tenants, our partners, our colleagues and for society as a whole.

Strategic Priorities to 2027

We have 3 strategic priorities to 2027, as follows:

‘Providing great homes’...encompassing both new build and high-quality existing homes, with proactive support for mixed tenure and shared housing, etc;

‘Supporting communities to thrive’...through ‘hearing the tenant voice’, investing in our communities and leading in shared housing, etc; and

‘Empowering our people’...by investing in skills, enabling technology to simplify the customer (and staff) ‘journey’, and ensuring access to development funding, etc.

Specific priorities relevant to this Asset Management Strategy include:

‘Providing great homes’

- To ensure that our homes are safe, high quality, sustainable and affordable;
- To continue to invest in projects that test potential solutions to decarbonise our homes;
- To ensure that we consistently consult with, effectively listen to and reflect tenants’ views;
- To increase tenancy sustainment through the provision of excellent housing and property management services;
- To provide ‘best in class’ repair and maintenance services through Choice Services and external partners;

‘Supporting communities to thrive’

- To inform and influence public policy and debate around issues which affect our tenants and their communities;

‘Empowering our people’

- To enable customers and other stakeholders to engage broadly & effectively with us;
- To make better use of our systems, data and reporting to improve decision-making;
- To simplify and enhance processes to improve customer, partner & staff satisfaction;
- To enhance staff engagement, well-being and the development of talent;
- To focus on effective, efficient use of resources and the social impact of our work;
- To enhance enterprise risk management and good governance.

Strategic priorities for our subsidiary Choice Services Ireland Limited also include:

- To deliver an enhanced value for money, ‘best in class’ response repairs service;
- To grow our planned maintenance capacity and capabilities to support the wider Group asset management strategy;
- To expand our analytical reporting to create commercial insight and deliver operational efficiencies;
- To invest in and develop our staff so that Choice Services attracts and retains talent to grow;
- To create positive experiences for Choice tenants, partners, colleagues and suppliers; and
- To generate a surplus to enhance Group resources.

We will strive to be a ‘force for good’ for our colleagues, our tenants and society as a whole.

We are caring and committed in that we also involve customers throughout improvement projects, providing choice in specifications and colours where appropriate and also seek feedback upon completion of work enabling us to ensure we continuously improve the services we deliver. We are also creative, offering an expanding range of services and will maximise opportunities from new IT.

We will continue to demonstrate leadership and engage with relevant stakeholders and partner organisations to benchmark, identify, implement and share knowledge on best practice.

22,000

Our Direct Service organisation, Choice Services, now complete over 22,000 response repairs per annum.

Our Stock Profile

Choice stock is maintained to high standards with very significant investment in the last five years. We work to an established stock condition assessment process and plan our investment accordingly. All stock is maintained to Decent Homes Standards as a minimum.

We hold detailed records on the life-cycle of the various components of our assets, supported by regular physical stock condition surveys to assess the requirement and priority for component replacement or multi-element improvement.

The current Choice stock profile includes:

Property Type	Bedsit	Bungalow	Communal Building	Flat	House	Masionette	Room	Grand Total
Sheltered Cat. 1 & 2	21	437	8	2263	10	1		2740
General Needs	1	713	2	2526	3986	30	2	7260
Supported (Directly Managed)		48	6	301	8	1	300	664
Supported (Joint Managed)	5	37	2	387	8	1	747	1187
Grand Total	27	1235	18	5477	4012	33	1049	11851

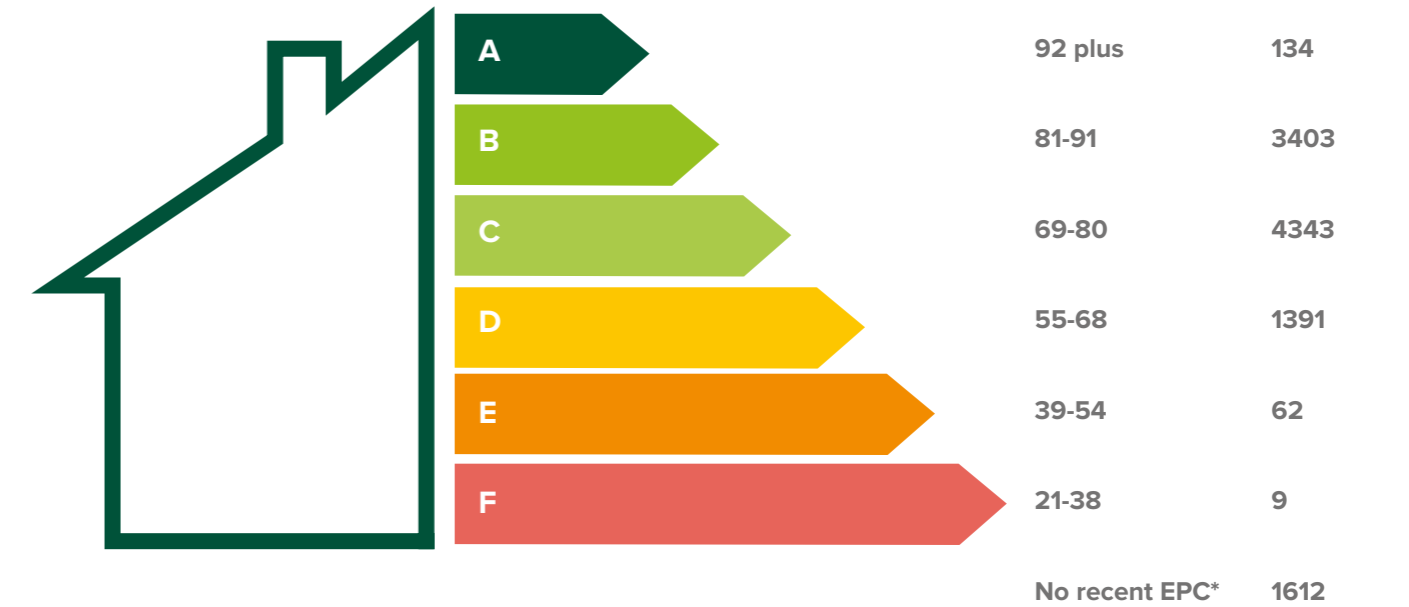
(The above excludes 534 Comhar properties managed via the SHB1 Public Private Partnership)

The age profile is as follows:

<1900	84	1960-1969	501
1900-1909	233	1970-1979	222
1910-1919	41	1980-1989	1783
1920-1929	461	1990-1999	2307
1930-1939	51	2000-2009	2312
1940-1949	20	2010-2019	2647
1950-1959	57	2020-2024	1105

TOTAL = 11851

Energy Efficiency of our Homes (EPC data)



* Choice are currently reviewing properties without an EPC to ensure all our homes are considered as part of our plans to improve energy efficiency and reduce our impact on the environment.

The average EPC of our stock at present is a C, and 76. Social housing dwellings in England

and in Wales currently have a average energy efficiency rating in band C, with scores of 70 and 71, respectively. For properties in Northern Ireland the average housing stock energy rating is D and the average energy score is 60. This means that the average Choice stock EPC rating is currently well above average.



Our Investment Plan

In Choice, we take a long-term approach to investment in our assets to maintain their value. This ensures that we can meet our commitments to our customers in terms of the quality of the homes we provide, that we meet statutory and safety requirements and to ensure that we financially plan for the anticipated investment.

At the core of our 30 year planning is our stock condition surveying process whereby we currently survey a minimum of 20% of our stock annually. The life expectancy of asset components is validated and financial requirements profiled accordingly. This allows us to plan and profile our budget expenditure in the long term. In addition, urgent issues identified in any surveys are also addressed through our response maintenance and tenancy management process.

We will aim to 'smooth out' the investment in major repairs over the next 30 years to enable better planning and use of resources to deliver the investment. Over the next 3 years of this strategy, our capital investment will be over £15m per annum. Investment planning will also take account of changing needs and standards. We will ensure that we monitor and plan, taking account of changing practices, technologies and expectations within the sector.

We are committed to meet net zero carbon targets by 2050. We will need to identify the implications this will have for our 30 year investment plan, and liaise with relevant stakeholders such as DfC and NIFHA. It is recognised that achieving such targets will require significant additional investment and require additional funding sources.

We have evaluated the financial performance of our stock and the Existing Use Value of the portfolio at the 31st March 2024 was £531m. This Asset Management Strategy therefore aims to maintain and enhance the value of these assets not only over the next 3 years, but also into the long term.

Funding of response maintenance services, life cycle replacement, void works and other maintenance activity is wholly funded from rent collection. It is therefore vitally important that our rents reflect our ability to invest in our stock. We have commenced an exercise to review rents against future planned investment, particularly in Supported and Sheltered accommodation. This will continue throughout the period of this strategy.



Asset Management Objectives 2024 – 2027

In delivering this strategy, a number of strategic objectives have been identified:

- To ensure the value of Choice's assets are maintained and increased to support future loan facilities and borrowing;
- Future-proof our homes to make them more sustainable, facilitating reduced CO2 emissions for our customers and alleviation of fuel poverty;
- To ensure that all homes meet the 'Decent Homes Standard' as a minimum;
- To ensure our assets meet the current and future needs and aspirations of our customers;
- To provide an excellent, customer-focused repairs and maintenance services;
- To ensure adherence to all regulatory, legislative and approved codes of practice in relation to property compliance;
- To ensure value for money in the delivery of services;
- To ensure policies and procedures are appropriate and reflect our commitment to continuous improvement;
- To maximise the use of IT systems to improve efficiency and data analysis, audit and assurance and minimise waste;
- Develop systems to identify, manage and minimise property disrepair;
- Implement an inspection regime using the Housing Health and Safety Rating methodology;
- To ensure our rental levels are sufficient to allow ongoing investment in our stock;
- To dispose of unviable stock.

75%

We have surveyed more than 75% of our stock in the last 3 years.





Providing Great Homes

We recognise the impact that living in a good quality home has on our customers' everyday lives. We will therefore continue to deliver significant capital investment to ensure the properties comply as a minimum, with the Decent Homes Standard, compliance legislation, Building Regulations and Choice specifications.

Planned Maintenance

Over the next three years, we aim to invest circa £52 million in planned maintenance and related projects. This will be undertaken in the context of our detailed 30-year financial investment and life-cycle plan.

Our annual stock condition survey programme provides us with the vital information to prioritise planned maintenance projects to ensure we provide Great Homes. Each year we complete a minimum 20% cycle of stock condition surveys of the entire asset base. Each survey details the condition of individual assets and components and identifies and prioritises issues to be addressed. The survey information is collected electronically and is used to produce life-cycle costing reports that prioritise our planned maintenance projects based on anticipated life-cycles and the actual condition of our properties.

We will improve the stock condition process by encouraging increased feedback from colleagues in other directorates to ensure stock data is up to date and works are planned efficiently.

This enables us to provide Great Homes that are consistently compliant with, or exceed, the Decent Homes Standard.

We set life-cycle profiles in line with good practice in the sector and benchmark against achieved life-cycles. Our annual planned maintenance budget is set according to the stock condition data and in consultation with Tenant and Client Services staff. As part of the Stock Condition Survey, we record the actual condition and regularly review the actual achieved life-cycles against the expected life-cycle

profiles.

Examples of life-cycles that we currently model for replacement are:

Attribute \ Component	Life-cycle (Yrs)
Domestic Bathroom Suite	35
Domestic Kitchen	20
Domestic Gas Boiler	17
Dwelling Entrance Door	30
Roof Covering (Slate/Tiles)	50
UPVC Windows	40

We will continue to review our life-cycles regularly (at minimum annually) to ensure they reflect actual life expectancies. Indeed, since the last strategy, we changed our boiler replacement cycle from 15 years to 17 years based upon actual levels of performance.

We invest in our assets using a priority condition focused methodology, which includes consultation with Tenant & Client Services, repairs data analysis, risk assessment and consultation with specialist service providers. We hold detailed records on the life-cycle of the components within our homes and balance this with physical stock condition surveys to assess the requirement for replacement or improvement.

Annually, we balance the requirements of improving assets, replacing building components at the end of their life-cycle, compliance requirements and ad-hoc requests from stakeholders to create the annual Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP).

Prior to commencing any PMP project, we will consider if the existing component and attribute life-cycle targets have been achieved. If not, we will consider any changes or enhancements to specifications that are required to ensure that components last the anticipated life-cycle. Investment will also look to deliver improved VFM in future proofing our homes such as aligning works or projects with additional work streams to reduce long term costs, and investment in enhanced sustainability and energy efficiency measures. This may include enhanced specifications to achieve longer life-cycles to minimise whole-life costs.

For projects over £200k, we have a detailed business case process where we consider the need for the project, health and safety, the asset viability (including rental income, void losses and running costs), the Net Present Value (NPV) of the property and other key factors. This is reviewed by the Choice Senior Management Team (SMT) prior to any decision to proceed.

We recognise the impact that living in a high quality home has on our customers' everyday lives. We will therefore continue to deliver significant capital investment to our existing stock to ensure properties comply, as a minimum, with the Decent Homes Standard, compliance legislation, Building Regulations and Choice specifications.

Response Maintenance

As well as providing a robust investment programme to our stock via the Planned Maintenance Programme, we also provide a comprehensive response maintenance service. Providing response maintenance services is the process of repairing assets to the desired operating conditions after breakdown, damage, asset failure or poor performance, is observed. We have dedicated services for response maintenance including direct labour through Choice Services, and a range of external service providers. All maintenance is undertaken to defined service levels and continually monitored against budgets, contractual standards and tenant satisfaction.

Dampness and Mould

It is recognised that Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) are issues that can affect any properties. These issues can be complex and involve the physical construction, heating, ventilation and how the property is used. We have specific procedures and systems to support dealing with DMC issues and will proactively work to reduce DMC incidences.

As part of this strategy we will increase the use of environmental monitoring in homes and linking up 'smart systems' already installed and pilot multi-channel communications with tenants.

Energy and Sustainability

Providing Great Homes is not limited to maintenance or the Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) in this strategy. Choice are committed to improving the energy efficiency of our homes as part of PMP, and will deliver enhanced energy projects alongside ongoing investment in heating replacements, fabric improvements and lighting upgrades. Enhanced energy projects includes bringing forward energy investment earmarked for future financial years such as LED upgrades at schemes, more innovative or trial based projects including alternative heating controls, or projects based on other drivers aside from life-cycle of attributes including improving homes with low EPC ratings to help alleviate fuel poverty.

We will continue to pilot and learn from new technologies. There are always risks in implementing new technologies, particularly around heating and ventilation but we have gained excellent experience, skills and insights in the last 10 years when looking at technologies around Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR), Photovoltaics (PV), Heat Pumps and conversions from oil to gas.

Over the last decade, we have demonstrated our commitment to improvements in Energy and Sustainability, with significant investment in new and existing homes, an experienced Sustainability & Energy Management Team in place, and the delivery of substantial financial savings for our customers through various initiatives and projects.

We are aware of our impact on the environment and wider challenges which we face, such as climate change, and so we commit to continued action in this area and ongoing work with our stakeholders and customers. To support our ambitions we have a separate Sustainability and Energy Strategy (2022 – 2025) which provides further context and outlines our approach and targets we intend to deliver.

In order to deliver Great Homes and address energy & sustainability we will continue to:

- Provide Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) on a path towards an average rating of 78 by 2030.

- Develop some of the most energy efficient homes on the island of Ireland. We will continue to work with stakeholders and develop homes which will facilitate low energy costs for our tenants and reduced environmental impact, within the context of the 2050 net zero carbon target.
- Continue to pilot retrofit projects and engage with stakeholders about the future funding of retrofit projects.

STRATEGIC GOAL: Providing Great Homes

Objective	
Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) Budget	Deliver 100% of agreed annual Planned Maintenance Programme Budget.
Stock Condition Surveys	Deliver 20% stock condition surveys on an annual basis.
Long Term Investment	Review annually the up-to-date investment profile required in our stock over the next 30 years.
Response repairs completion	90% of response repairs completed within target periods.
Sustainability and Energy Strategy	Deliver on the commitments within our current strategy and develop and implement a new Strategy.
Net Zero	Develop our pathway to net zero by 2050, working closely with partner organisations such as local Government Departments.
Energy efficient and sustainable Homes	Use our Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) as a tool to identify improvement opportunities. Seek to increase our average EPC rating to 78 by 2030.

Empowering our People

The provision of great asset management services is a prerequisite to achieve our mission ‘to enrich the lives of our tenants and communities through the provision of great homes and services’ and deliver on our vision ‘to excel in everything that we do in the eyes of our customers, partners and staff’.

Choice has legal/regulatory obligations and a common law duty of care to our customers, staff, visitors and contractors to ensure our properties are safe, meet lettable standards and that all building components meet legislative and regulatory standards and Approved Codes of Practice. Additionally, planned, preventative and cyclical maintenance reduces the likelihood of component failure or inefficient operation and the associated adverse impacts on customers. It also reduces response maintenance costs and maximises the service life of components.

Choice recognises its responsibilities and obligations for property compliance and considers this to be a critical function. Risk management and good governance controls in place, include:

- Appropriate policies and procedures for all key areas of property compliance, including gas safety, electrical safety, fire safety, lift safety, asbestos, damp and mould and water hygiene;
- Accurate and appropriate data capture and management;
- Weekly compliance dashboard reporting to the Choice Senior Management Team;
- Agreed levels of responsibility, oversight and reporting;
- External Assessors and audit;
- Suitably skilled and qualified staff and contractors;
- Appropriate contractor management;

- Contingency planning;
- Tenant information and awareness;
- Continually seeking improvement from our suppliers, systems and processes.

Current cyclical maintenance programmes are in place for the following:

1. Annual gas and oil boiler servicing
2. Maintenance of fire extinguishers, fire alarms, emergency lighting, disabled refuse systems and smoke extraction systems
3. Periodic electrical testing of fixed wiring (every 5 years)
4. Portable appliance testing
5. Lift and hoist maintenance
6. Smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector servicing (annual – with boiler service)
7. Mechanical ventilation and air conditioning systems
8. Renewables including heat pumps, solar PV, solar thermal and rainwater recovery
9. Generators
10. Water booster sets
11. Sewage pumping systems
12. Grounds maintenance
13. Water hygiene
14. Fall arrest systems
15. Pest control
16. CCTV
17. Wardencall
18. Automatic doors/gates

With regard to current Risk Assessment Programmes, we undertake the following in accordance with good industry practice:

1. Fire Risk Assessment
2. Legionella Risk Assessment

Inspection regimes are also in place for the above and include:

1. Weekly/monthly inspection of block accommodation
2. Annual detailed inspection of block accommodation
3. Specialist audit of gas contractor performance (5% of completed annual services)
4. 100% post inspection of fire safety and legionella works

Fire Safety

Fire safety management remains central to Choice. We will work to develop fire safety throughout Choice, both in our built assets and staff and customer awareness. We have our own in-house Fire Safety team and use external consultants for Fire Risk Assessments and advice.

Fire Risk Assessments will continue to be undertaken with resultant actions prioritised. We will continue to develop our systems, taking account of evolving best practice and improving standards, not only in the built assets with Development colleagues but, with Tenant & Client Services, in the education of customers and management of customer behaviours.

11,000

We service over 11,000 boilers annually.

Asbestos Management

Effective asbestos management is of paramount importance across our operations. Asbestos is present within a small proportion of Choice stock such as tiles, fascias, insulation and ceiling finishes. We have robust policies and procedures in place to protect staff, contractors, and our customers.

We have detailed asbestos surveys and an asbestos register in place which is widely available to staff and external contractors via an online portal. Regular inspections are completed on all identified asbestos containing materials and removals are completed when appropriate.

We continually seek to improve communication, by having in place an annual asbestos awareness mailout to all customers living in properties build pre-2000, improving automatic notifications to contractors and integrating our asbestos register within our housing management system.

Energy

With direct energy costs in the region of £2million each year, we are acutely aware of our responsibility to manage our energy consumption effectively. We also recognize that recent high and volatile energy prices will have had a significant impact on our tenants and led to higher levels of fuel poverty.

Our Sustainability and Energy Management Team will continue to work with colleagues and partner organisations to ensure our direct energy costs offer value for money in relation to the prevailing energy market conditions. Alongside ongoing improvements to our homes, Choice will also continue to take steps to provide advice and support to our tenants, to help them to manage their energy costs. **We will continue to undertake the following:**

- Raise awareness of energy and environmental matters, and embed sustainability within our organisation. Our Sustainability & Energy Management Team regularly provides support and advice to colleagues throughout our organization and will aim to provide specific and relevant training each year.

- Raise awareness of the impact that fuel poverty has on households and we will seek to alleviate fuel poverty for our tenants, through continued energy efficiency improvements, advice and support. Each year we will review the information provided through our literature and on our website.
- Take opportunities to regularly procure our energy costs effectively and engage with suppliers to identify any opportunities to reduce costs.
- Innovate - Choice have repeatedly demonstrated our proactive and innovative approach to energy management over the last decade, partaking in various research projects with partner organisations. We will continue to work with partner organisations such as universities, and we will review technologies and financial models each year to identify future opportunities.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to support an annual Energy Week which will be promoted to all our customers.

Communications

To enable customers and other stakeholders to engage broadly and effectively with us we will continue with our development of multi-channel methods of communication in line with our IT Strategy. This includes improving the use and functionality of our Tenants' Portal, opening up further lines of communication such as Chatbots and improving communications, before and after completing work.

Systems

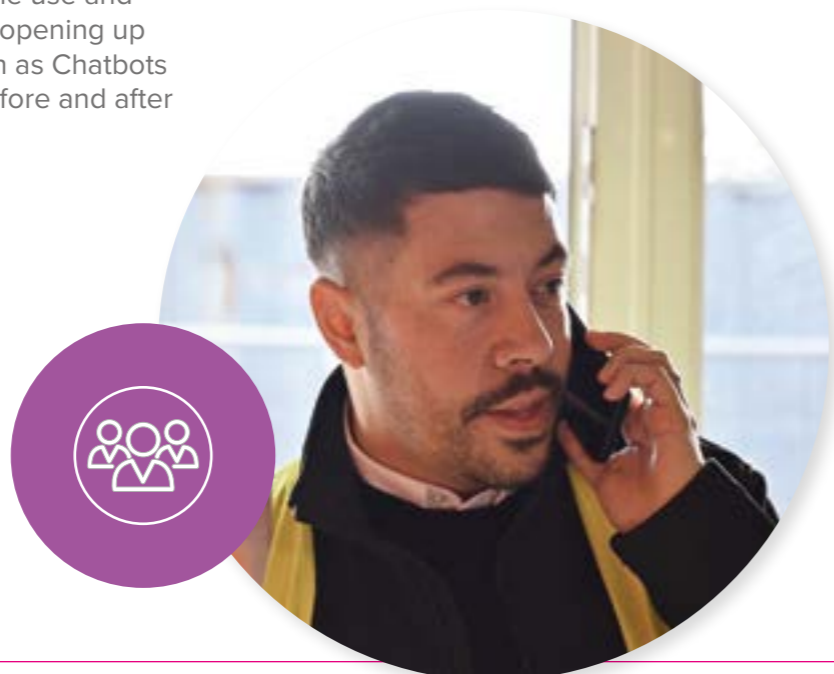
We will make better use of our systems, data and reporting to improve decision-making this includes data around:

- Planned Maintenance and component life-cycles
- Long term financial planning
- Stock condition data
- Trends in maintenance
- Defects monitoring post new build handover
- Costs of individual maintenance activities along with costs of the wider services
- Damp and mould and the conditions likely to lead to mould and condensation

We will also use our systems to simplify and enhance processes to improve customer, partner & staff satisfaction.

Staffing

We will continue with our drive to develop professional and stable teams via improved staff engagement, ensuring staff health, safety and well-being and the continual development of talent and skills in our teams.



STRATEGIC GOAL: Empowering our People

Objective	
Health & Safety	Ensure 100% compliance with the Choice Group policies for all compliance related matters.
Voids	The average period for the turnaround of a lettable void (including timeframe for works) to be less than: 2024/25 56 days 2025/26 56 days 2026/27 49 days
Environmental and Sustainability Community Initiatives	A minimum of two environmental and sustainability community initiatives per annum.
Direct Landlord Energy Usage	Ensure value for money in our procurement and usage.
Trading Subsidiaries & Social Purpose	Trading subsidiaries to return a fair and reasonable sum on an annual basis that is reinvested by the Group.
Sustainability	Develop resourcing and support for Group wide sustainability matters.
Delivery Excellence	Average target completion for response repairs to be above 90%.
Deliver VFM	Formally benchmark stock, response, planned and void maintenance costs on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are obtaining value for money.
Use of Data	To proactively use data to improve the overall delivery of asset management services.
Risks Managed	Maintain an up to date risk map and manage risks proactively.
New build defects	Improve processes around defects arising from new build works through greater team involvement in the design and construction phases and piloting new products and solutions.

Supporting Communities to Thrive

There are a number of key areas where this Asset Management Strategy will help in supporting and strengthening our communities.

Safety

First and foremost, Choice will make sure that our assets are safe. We will ensure that our dwellings meet lettable standards and that all building components meet legislative and regulatory requirements and Approved Codes of Practice. We will do this by having in place robust planned preventative maintenance programmes and ensure that our response maintenance service prioritises safety issues and takes account of the needs of individual customers.

We will continue to invest in security services, CCTV and access control systems to deter Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and assist in effective management. In addition, we will ensure that new developments are 'Secure by Design' and that we proactively design-in security measures to address ASB.

Decent Homes Standard

The Decent Homes Standard in Northern Ireland incorporates four main criteria:

- The statutory minimum fitness standard for housing as set out in Article 46 of the Housing (NI) Order 1981.
- Be in a reasonable state of repair
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

We have invested in data tools to help us model our stock and proactively identify properties likely to fail the Decent Homes Standard. We have also implemented parts of the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which is used in England, in anticipation that similar might be introduced in to Northern Ireland, during the life of this strategy.

Voids

We will minimise the length of time that properties are unoccupied due to remedial works required. We commit to ensuring that Choice has efficient and cost effective processes in place that will minimise the void period and the loss of rental income, and to maximise the use of our stock.

Void works include works required to make the property fit for in-coming residents and overdue planned maintenance, works refused by the previous tenant as well as statutory testing of gas and electrical systems. Work to void properties is carried out in accordance with our Voids Letting standard, agreed with the Tenants Central Network. This standard ensures that homes are fit for purpose and Decent Homes compliant, for tenants at the start of their tenancy.

We will deliver by:

- Minimising the length of time a property is vacant before reletting through effective operational policies and procedures. With the exception of major void works projects, our target is to have all works necessary to ensure occupation, completed within 3 weeks of the end of the tenancy.
- Consider re-modelling of unlettable stock. Where a property is due for remodelling or significant investment, we may temporarily delay the works to ensure that they are included



as part of any wider planned maintenance or refurbishment programme including using void properties for decant or demonstration purposes.

- Ensuring the Group's properties are allocated to a consistently high lettable standard.
- In sheltered and supported schemes, maintaining void properties for short term or day-decants for planned works projects.
- Setting clear service standards in relation to void properties.

Adaptations

Choice recognise that enabling our tenants to remain in their homes for as long as possible helps our communities. We will continue to provide an adaptations service in association with NIHE and Health Trusts, to enable residents to continue to live independently in their homes, have a positive effect on their well-being and improve their quality of life.

We will continue to carry out essential adaptations to meet the needs of the increasing number of tenants and household members with disabilities or sensory impairments.

Adapted properties are recorded in our asset management database, so that these properties can be re-let, where possible, to households with similar needs.

Our new homes are built to the Lifetime Homes Standard allowing simpler, cost effective adaptations, to meet changing needs during the tenancy. In addition a proportion of our new homes are built to full wheelchair standard.

£1.6m

In the last 3 years we have spent over £1.6m on adaptation works for our tenants.

Tenant Engagement

Engagement with Tenants is fundamental to the delivery of a high quality service that meets the needs and expectations of Tenants and to ensure we deliver on our strategic priorities of providing great homes, supporting communities to thrive and empowering our people.

We will continue to develop and improve by:

- Liaison with members of the Tenants Central Network.
- Enabling tenants to interact with the Choice Services Centre in a way that best suits them.
- Taking feedback from tenants following the completion of maintenance works.
- Identifying issues specific to Tenants.
- Property Services Officers dealing with technical issues identified by Tenants and monitoring work undertaken by contractors.
- The appointment of a Tenant Liaison Officer for Planned Maintenance Projects.
- Minimising disruption to tenants during planned works.
- Working closely with tenants where decants are required and endeavouring to minimise the period of decant.
- Provide good practice \ advice to tenants on our website.
- Support and participate in an annual Energy Week.
- Continue with the development of the Tenants Portal to allow tenants to report and manage their repairs.

Sustainability

Choice will ensure that our assets are managed for our customers and communities in a sustainable manner. We will do this by:

- Developing our pathway to net zero by 2050, working closely with partner organisations such as local government departments.
- Setting challenging interim targets to reduce our carbon emissions as part of our future Sustainability and Energy Strategy and reporting on progress annually.
- We will provide support and advice to our customers and suppliers to enable them to make informed decisions to reduce their impact on the environment.
- We will ensure that legal compliance is a minimum standard and we aim to demonstrate best practice in terms of our energy and environmental management.
- We will carry out at least two environmental management and sustainability initiatives each year in areas such as ecology, waste reduction or water consumption.
- We will continue to show leadership in our sector and beyond, by working with our sector representatives, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, other housing associations, the energy industry, NIFHA and relevant Government Departments.



Open Spaces

Our property portfolio includes a range of open spaces. We will ensure that these areas are well maintained via cost effective Grounds Maintenance and inspection regimes. We will ensure that these spaces add to the sense of community and we will work with communities to ensure that they are functional.

Recognising that there is a biodiversity crisis, we will also endeavour to reduce biodiversity loss and improve local habitats through improved management of our open spaces over the term of this strategy.

Disposals

During the life of this strategy we will proactively identify assets in the portfolio that may be uneconomic to maintain or invest in. This will take account of costs such as improvement works, maintaining to the Decent Homes Standard, abnormal costs, any Housing Association Grant (HAG) payable, demand from partners and the overall financial viability of the property. We will consider all options for the future use of the asset and where appropriate, disposal. Should such an option be identified, it will require approval by the Senior Management Team and decisions will take account of the impact on the local community and housing need in the area.

Unauthorised Alterations

We want to ensure that our properties are safe for all our tenants and neighbours and will take action against any unauthorised alterations. All alterations must have our approval and work must comply with Building Control and legislative requirements.

STRATEGIC GOAL: Supporting our communities to thrive

Objective	
Safe Homes	Achieve 100% compliance of service standards for Fire Risk Assessments, Gas Servicing, Legionella, Asbestos Management, Electrical Safety and Lift Servicing.
Decent Homes Standard	Ensure that all occupied properties comply with the Northern Ireland Decent Homes Standard.
Fire Risk Assessments	Deliver 100% of Fire Risk Assessments to programme
Fire Risk Assessment remedial works	Ensure programmes of remedial works are up to date and appropriately programmed.
Tenant Engagement	Ensure that customers have a full ability to interact digitally on Asset matters.
Asset Sustainability	Maintain up to date, long term stock investment profiles that are reviewed annually and are sustainable.
Fuel Poverty	Provide appropriate regular advice and support to tenants.
Customer Service	Continually improve mechanisms for measuring and reviewing customer service across all services offered and contractors utilised.
Digital enabled services	Use existing systems functionality and capabilities to maximise usage of electronic exchanges with our customers and contractors.
Deliver VFM	Formally benchmark stock, response, planned and void maintenance costs on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are obtaining value for money.
Use of Data	To proactively use data to improve the overall delivery of asset management services.
Risks managed	Maintain an up to date risk map and manage risks proactively.
New build defects	Improve processes around defects arising from new build works through greater team involvement in the design and construction phases and piloting new products and solutions.

Delivery of Services

The delivery of this strategy is the responsibility of the Asset Services Directorate, working closely with colleagues across the Choice Group, suppliers, Measured Term Contractors (MTC), specialist contractors, consultants and other stakeholders.

Services will be delivered by balancing in-house and external resources. The performance of all consultants and contractors will be monitored against contractual requirements. When contracts are procured, we will ensure that contractual requirements reflect the best working practices in the sector. We will ensure that all services are benchmarked and costs reviewed annually.

We will deliver services in the following ways:

Service	Delivery Mechanism
Project Management	In-house professional team.
Specialist Design and Management Services	Consultants via a Consultants Framework.
Sustainability & Energy	In-house professional team.
Response Maintenance	MTC contractors, including Choice Services.
Compliance Services	MTC contractors, including Choice Services and specialist contractors.
Planned Maintenance Projects \ Annual PMP	MTC contractors including Choice Services, contractor frameworks and select list Tenders.
Adaptations	MTC contractors including Choice Services and select list Tenders.
Voids	MTC contractors including Choice Services.

Planned Maintenance Delivery

The delivery of the Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) is managed by our professional team who are allocated specific projects to plan and deliver within the financial year. There are currently three main methods of delivering projects:

1. Projects with single component replacement can be awarded to our pre-approved Measured Term Contract contractors. Our internal management team act as Project Manager ensuring that CDM Regulations and all statutory requirements are in place and that all works are delivered within budget and timescale.
2. Specific in-house projects designed and managed by our internal professional team. The team will undertake all the design work and project manage the works through to completion. There will be a full tender exercise for larger projects in line with the public procurement regulations.

3. Complex projects, made up of Multiple Element Improvement works, will be developed into a project brief. This is then awarded to a consultant led integrated design team to deliver. Larger projects will be procured in line with relevant public procurement regulations. Our internal team will project manage ensuring that CDM Regulations and all statutory requirements are in place and that all works are delivered within budget and timescale, to Tenants requirements.

Response Maintenance Delivery

Our Services Centre receives response maintenance requests by email, telephone call and via our Tenants Portal. Work is then assigned to one of our Measured Term Contractors (MTC) or specialist contractors and / or to relevant Choice staff for inspection.

Contractors work to detailed service standards to the following priorities:

Category	Response SLA
Immediate	Commenced immediately and no later than 2 hours and completed or made safe within 4 hours.
Emergency	Complete or make safe within 24 hours.
Urgent	Commence and complete within 4 working days.
Routine	Commence and complete within 28 calendar days.

Where pre-inspection by Choice staff is required, staff are expected to contact the Tenant within one working day to arrange a suitable appointment.

Each MTC contractor is monitored against detailed contractual requirements and KPIs and are formally reported monthly.

Typical definitions for each category of response maintenance are as follows:

Category	Definition
Immediate	Defects immediately affecting the safety, security or health of the tenant, public or property.
Emergency	Defects affecting the safety, security or health of the tenant, public or property or where the defect is likely to cause major inconvenience.
Urgent	Defects causing loss of facility to the tenant or likely to cause further deterioration to the structure, fabric, fittings, fixtures or services to the building.
Routine	Defects which can be deferred without serious inconvenience to the tenant or does not present a danger but should not wait for a planned programme of work.

In delivery of an excellent response maintenance service we will:

- Provide a professional service from the receipt of a request through to the completion of the work;
- Enable customers to be able to report repairs with ease;
- Provide a 24/7 service for emergency repairs;
- Try to identify the issue using scripting of calls to minimise pre-inspection;
- Take account of particular needs or vulnerabilities of customers;
- Maximise first time fix rates and minimise inconvenience to customers;

10,000
We complete over 10,000 response repairs in our sheltered stock, every year.

- Exceed the regulatory response maintenance performance targets;
- Monitor the number of response maintenance requests per call category;
- Use IT to generate improvements in the service;
- Analyse data to inform and target planned and cyclical maintenance; and
- Ensure value for money.

New Build Defects

In any new development there will be defects, despite the best efforts of our Development, design and contracting teams. This is particularly the case as our homes contain more and more mechanical and electrical equipment. We will, over the period of this strategy, introduce improved processes, structures and data reporting to improve the experience of tenants in new build homes.

We will also work with Development colleagues to ensure that the selection of building products and components for new build schemes are to a high standard, installed correctly, are maintained and delivered to meet the needs of our tenants and the wider organisation.

Sustainability & Energy Services Delivery

In order to deliver on our sustainability and energy targets across our objectives, we will continue to maintain a commitment to ensure that adequate resources are in place within our Sustainability & Energy Management Team, and across the organisation, and to ensure that staff are adequately resourced and trained.

Each year we will create an annual plan to identify when our targets will be met throughout the year, with appropriate internal and external reporting. We recognise the changing environment around sustainability and energy, with our Sustainability and Energy Strategy intended to provide a framework for continued improvement. We will therefore seek to work with government departments and partner organisations on areas such as the delivery of Northern Ireland’s first Climate Action Plan, and the Northern Ireland Energy Strategy, in order to clarify future direction and identify opportunities to develop further and deliver benefits for our customers.

Audit & Review of Delivery

Audit and review of services provided is essential to ensure the great delivery of safe dwellings, value for money, adherence to policies and procedures and to prevent poor working practices or potential fraud.

Over the course of this strategy, audit and review will occur as follows:



- Ensure that proper levels of authority are in place for the issuing and authorisation of orders to contractors.
- Independent audit by external auditors.
- Monitoring of works undertaken by Contractors by Property Services Officers \ Asset Services team members.
- Formally benchmark overall stock, response, planned and void maintenance costs on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are obtaining value for money and identify areas for improvement.
- Tenant feedback.
- Technical review by in-house team members, including PMP asset reviews of component failure.
- Feedback from work colleagues.
- Checks of works invoiced by contractors.

In addition we will maintain an up to date risk map and register relating to services provided via this strategy and manage all risks proactively.


1,500 boilers
In the last three years, we have replaced over 1,500 boilers, 700 kitchens and 400 bathrooms.

Summary of Strategic KPIs

In the next three years we will focus on:

	Objective	Target
 PROVIDING GREAT HOMES	Planned Maintenance Programme (PMP) Budget	Deliver 100% of agreed annual Planned Maintenance Programme Budget.
	Stock Condition Surveys	Deliver 20% stock condition surveys on an annual basis.
	Long Term Investment	Review annually the up to date investment profile required in our stock over the next 30 years.
	Response repairs completion	90% of response repairs completed within contract service levels.
	Sustainability and Energy Strategy	Deliver on the commitments within our current strategy and develop and implement a new Strategy.
	Net Zero	Develop our pathway to net zero by 2050, working closely with partner organisations such as local Government Departments.
	Energy efficient and sustainable Homes	Use our Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) as a tool to identify improvement opportunities. Seek to increase our average EPC rating to 78 by 2030.
	Reduce EPC Band D-G properties	Improve our homes so that we have no Band E-G EPCs, and develop an action plan to improve all of our Band D rated homes.
 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE	Safe Homes	Achieve 100% compliance of service standards for Fire Risk Assessments, Gas Servicing, Legionella, Asbestos Management, Electrical Safety and Lift Servicing.
	Decent Homes Standard	Ensure that all occupied properties comply with the Northern Ireland Decent Homes Standard.
	Fire Risk Assessments	Deliver 100% of Fire Risk Assessments to programme.
	Fire Risk Assessment remedial works	Ensure programmes of remedial works are up to date and appropriately programmed.
	Tenant Engagement	Ensure that customers have a full ability to interact digitally on Asset matters.
	Asset Sustainability	Maintain up to date, long term stock investment profiles that are reviewed annually and are sustainable.
	Fuel Poverty	Provide appropriate regular advice and support to tenants.
	Customer Service	Continually improve mechanisms for measuring and reviewing customer service across all services offered and contractors utilised.
	Digital enabled services	Use existing systems functionality and capabilities to maximise usage of electronic exchanges with our customers and contractors.



	Objective	Target
 EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE	Health & Safety	Ensure 100% compliance with the Choice Group policies for all compliance related matters.
	Voids	The average period for the turnaround of a lettable void (including timeframe for works) to be less than: 2024/25 56 days 2025/26 56 days 2026/27 49 days
	Environmental and Sustainability Community Initiatives	A minimum of two environmental and sustainability community initiatives per annum.
	Direct Landlord Energy Usage	Ensure value for money in our procurement and usage
	Trading Subsidiaries & Social Purpose	Trading subsidiaries to return a fair and reasonable sum on an annual basis that is reinvested by the Group.
	Sustainability	Develop resourcing and support for Group wide sustainability matters.
	Delivery Excellence	Average target completion for response repairs to be above 90%.
	Deliver VFM	Formally benchmark stock, response, planned and void maintenance costs on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are obtaining value for money.
	Use of Data	To proactively use data to improve the overall delivery of asset management services.
	Risks managed	Maintain an up to date risk map and manage risks proactively.
	New build defects	Improve processes around defects arising from new build works through greater team involvement in the design and construction phases and piloting new products and solutions.



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