

TRIANGLE

**Celebrating 30 years of
Building homes,
Providing support &
Creating possibilities**



mark of excellence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**building homes
providing support
creating possibilities**

Historical overview

A group of nine women from professional backgrounds came together to meet the identified housing need for women suffering domestic violence. Their hard endeavours were rewarded in 1977 with the registration of Triangle Housing Association Ltd by the Department of Environment (now the Department for Social Development, DSD) as its regulator and funding body of capital grant to provide social housing for those in need.

Although regulated by DSD the Association is an independent non-profit making organisation managed by a board of elected shareholders who serve on a voluntary basis.

The Association worked in partnership with Coleraine Women's Aid and together through their own voluntary effort provided a refuge for eight women and their families. However, the Board had realised that should further accommodation be provided they would require paid staff, resulting in the employment of their first employee in 1979.

Through strong leadership Triangle has become a leading provider of innovative supported housing and support services for vulnerable people across Northern Ireland and is widely recognised as a client focused organisation with an excellent reputation of providing quality housing and support services.

1979 – 1984

The Association established links with another community voluntary agency, 'Coleraine and District Society for people with a Mental Handicap' creating a secondary interest in the needs of people with a learning disability. Parents were seeking accommodation within their local communities as a preventative measure to their adults being admitted to institutional care when they as parents could no longer provide the support that was needed. They held a vision of having a small shared home for approximately 4 people. Lerwill House, Coleraine, was the reality of that dream; the first in Northern Ireland. To meet funding requirements and to make it work financially both for

capital and revenue funding the number was increased from 4 to 7 people sharing.

There was no recognised revenue funding stream available, but through Triangle's initiative and the willingness of statutory agencies, resources were secured. Triangle shared its revenue funding knowledge with other voluntary agencies, leading to the development of other housing being provided through other housing associations. This funding later became the statutory allowance for residential care paid through DHSS until the introduction of Community Care legislation, which capped this resource and transferred funding to Social Services.

A phased development programme of 60 units of accommodation was launched for registered residential care and supported housing in Ballycastle, Ballymoney and Ballymena. With supported housing being a new concept it took

until 1992 to complete this programme.

1985 – 1990

Triangle extended its interests to young people leaving care and people who were homeless, developing partnerships with Barnardo's and Simon Community. Again these relationships developed innovative models of housing incorporating extended support to vulnerable people.

1990 - 1995

In 1991 the Association moved its administrative functions from being home based to new rented office accommodation in Ballymoney.

The Association had also by now become a support provider in the absence of any voluntary group being available to undertake this role.

The revenue funding was a major issue as hostel deficit grant was not available in Northern Ireland, while available in the United Kingdom. Triangle was at the fore in researching how this worked in the UK and was instrumental in this being introduced in N. Ireland. This provided the backdrop to the introduction of Special Needs

Management Allowance in Northern Ireland.

This was also the period in which Community Care Legislation was introduced and with it came significant changes in the funding regime for the development of residential care and supported housing.

1995 – 2000

This was a defining time for the organisation and the Board initiated an annual strategic planning weekend to provide sufficient time to fully assess and establish their strategies for the future.

The Housing Policy Review provided new challenges and responsibilities for housing associations and with it came the increased opportunity of providing general needs housing. Although Triangle embraced this policy it still held to its main interest of providing housing for vulnerable people.

Mrs Isa Mc Combe a long standing board member known for her commitment to people with a learning disability was awarded the Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E), in recognition of her work

and dedication to improving the quality of life for people with a learning disability.

A new partnership was established with South & East Belfast Trust This relationship offered innovative opportunities to promote the supported housing model and represented 'joined up working in practice' between statutory and voluntary agencies. The model developed is one of the recommended service delivery models within the Bamford Review.

The Association responded to the tenants in our existing services to provide them with increased leisure facilities and work opportunities. This led to establishing community initiatives for a supported employment and a volunteer service. Again these were innovative services. They were primarily funded through the European Funding initiatives. The Association's staff forged strong links with the European Union of Supported Employment and made valuable contacts within the previous political

administration in the U.S.A. Supported employment is widely recognised today as being at the core of promoting community integration.

The growth of the organisation during this period was considerable and the political situation in N. Ireland was having significant influence on housing. The Association embarked on a strategy that involved our staff and Board members in discussing the issues of equity, diversity and interdependence. This was based on the organisation's values of promoting choice, dignity, respect, empowerment and inclusion. This programme tested the innovative framework developed by Future Ways of building relationships based on trust. This framework is embedded through all working practices at induction and ongoing training.

Again based on strong community links with the Quakers a floating support service and rent guarantee scheme became a first in Northern Ireland. This was established to provide housing support to vulnerable adults with complex needs, sometimes exacerbated by a dependency on drugs,

alcohol and mental illness. Triangle has shared its knowledge with other agencies in the setting up of new Floating Support Services and many of these are now mainstreamed into organisations as an effective means of improving peoples housing conditions and accessing services to support a more settled lifestyle.

2000 - 2005

The organisation's efforts in working with vulnerable people was recognised through Edna Dunbar receiving an MBE.

The changes brought about with the introduction of Supporting People enabled the Association to review its existing services and align these with new models. A remodelling strategy for existing services was also introduced.

In support of these changes, the Association was successful in making a joint bid for funding through the Big Lottery to host a research project forging our links with The University of Ulster and other service providers. This research has monitored the progress being made over a three

year period evaluating the improvements of social inclusion for people with a learning disability in moving from residential care to supported living options.

The Association's continued growth in housing and support provision required a review of the organisational structure to meet the changing climate in which we work and this is regularly updated to meet our current and future strategies.

A new diversion for Triangle was to extend its Supported Employment Service to include Transition services. This involved working in schools to prepare young people for the transition into adulthood creating opportunities for work placement.

To meet the requirements of being able to demonstrate continuous improvement, the Association embarked upon implementing Best Value Reviews, Investor in People Standards and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Steps to

Excellence Model as a framework on which to base our future service delivery.

2005 – current

Our efforts at continuous improvement have been rewarded through receiving the EFQM all Ireland 'Mark of Excellence' Award, the Investors in People new Standard and good reports from our Regulators and Inspectors.

The research programme has now been completed and has recently been launched. This links in with government's Social Inclusion Strategy Triangle has received additional funding to provide Independent Travel Training.

Our Supported Employment Services have expanded to include the development of social enterprise initiatives to facilitate active progression towards engagement in employment opportunities

Our continued expansion in service delivery has now required us to extend our office base both in Ballymoney and Ballymena and open new premises in Cookstown.

The Future

The success of the organisation cannot be summed up into a few

words, but intrinsic to our success has been the Board holding strong to its vision of a society where people are empowered to take decisions that improve their quality of life. This vision is embedded in the culture of the organisation they have guided over the past 30 years.

The staff working together as a team to achieve the same vision is an essential feature of delivering quality housing and support services and commendation is given to those who have actively worked at achieving improvements in the quality of life for or tenants and service users.

The tenants and service users are to be congratulated in taking the courageous steps to bring about change in their own lives and not so amazingly when given support to do so, are willing to strive towards their own aspirations.

Triangle, therefore, by keeping the tenants and service users at the heart of what we do will continue to challenge the boundaries of what is thought possible for people who are vulnerable. This

can best be done by keeping people involved in the decision-making about their own lives and then responding flexibly in ways that achieve what they aspire to.

Success, however, is never achieved in isolation. It has to be measured along with the support we have received by those with influence. These were people in the different organisations with whom we have worked who could also identify with the vision and who were prepared to take measured risks with the Association to achieve what is now being celebrated in 30 years of work. Therefore, in thinking of the way forward last year, we also looked back at what it is that the organisation had sought to achieve. This was encapsulated in Triangle's vision representing what we have and are hoping to continue achieve:

'Building Better Futures Together'

We have extended and maintained our partnerships with:

- Causeway Women's Aid (1979) for Women and children suffering domestic violence
- Simon Community NI (1992) for people who are homeless
- Barnardos (1992) for Young people leaving care
- Positive Futures (1993) for people with a learning disability
- Downe Residential Project (1996) for people with a learning disability
- Autism Initiatives (1997) People for people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- Prospects (2003) for people with a learning disability -
- Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd. (1997) for people with a range of disabilities
- Working with statutory bodies across the sectors
- Working in consortium arrangements to share information and improve service delivery
- Serving on external forums that can influence changes in policy and service delivery
- Responding to policy consultations that impact the sectors in which we work

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