



# Strategic Plan 2019–2021

Housing and Sustainable  
Communities Agency



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



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# Foreword

*from the Chair and Chief Executive*

The Housing Agency's role is to **promote the supply of housing to meet current and future needs and demand.** It does this by building expertise and expert knowledge on housing, supporting housing policy development and implementing effective housing programmes in collaboration with key stakeholders.

## This is the Housing Agency's second Strategic Plan. It covers the period 2019–2021.

We launch our strategy at a time when there are  
**three clear housing challenges:**



### Supply

The supply of housing, particularly in urban areas, has not yet reached the levels necessary to meet demand.



### Affordability

Housing costs have continued to grow well above general inflation, putting an increasing number of households under undue financial pressures and threatening to damage our economic competitiveness.



### Security

Particularly for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness; but also, for households in prolonged mortgage arrears and some in the rental sector.

In response to these challenges, the Government's strategy *Rebuilding Ireland – Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* prioritised addressing homelessness, the acceleration of housing delivery across all tenures, a better rental sector and a more efficient use of the housing stock. The Agency has, and will continue to play, a key role in the implementation of these objectives.



Under the Agency's Strategic Plan 2019–2021, we will work with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (the Department), Local Authorities (LAs), Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), the private sector and others in the housing sector to build sustainable communities. We have engaged with a wide range of these stakeholders as we developed this revised strategy, seeking to reflect the complexity and wide ranging nature of the current and future housing challenges.

Sustainable communities are ones that last – they are places that are well planned, with good quality housing, places where people want to live and where they have opportunities.

**Good housing is central to achieving sustainable communities.**

Good housing has four key features – security, quality, affordability, appropriateness. Security means that households can plan for their future. The quality of accommodation determines how safe and comfortable people are in their homes; but it is also about design and the type of materials we use in construction to safeguard our future. If accommodation is unaffordable, this affects household's choices, but it could also damage our economic recovery. Our housing stock needs to be appropriate – in size, accessibility and location for instance – to meet current and future needs.

It is this understanding of housing and sustainable communities that underpins this Strategic Plan. This is the type of

## Sustainable communities are ones that last – they are places that are well planned, with good quality housing, places where people want to live and where they have opportunities.

housing in this type of community that we will work to try to achieve.

We aim to have a real impact on people's lives and particularly their housing experiences. **To do this, over the next three years, the work of the Housing Agency will focus on five inter-connecting themes:**

- Being a centre of knowledge on housing
- Optimising supply and utilisation of housing
- Understanding housing demand and affordability
- Realising results through our people
- Meeting governance and service commitments.

The Agency is staffed by many dedicated people, working in partnership with others to achieve shared objectives. We are committed to being professional, accountable, open and respectful. We seek to be innovative and future focused in our approach. This strategy reflects our values and informs our approach.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who work with and for the Agency to deliver progress, including

its dedicated staff and board members. We thank the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and Departmental colleagues for their ongoing support; and all those who helped in the development of this Strategic Plan.

Collaboration between all the stakeholders involved is critical to addressing the housing issues that our country is facing. We look forward to continuing engagement over the lifetime of this strategy to drive housing supply and build sustainable communities.

**Michael Carey**  
Chairman

**John O'Connor**  
Chief Executive



# Overview of the housing market

## Policy context

Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

## 5 pillars of Rebuilding Ireland



## Census 2016 data

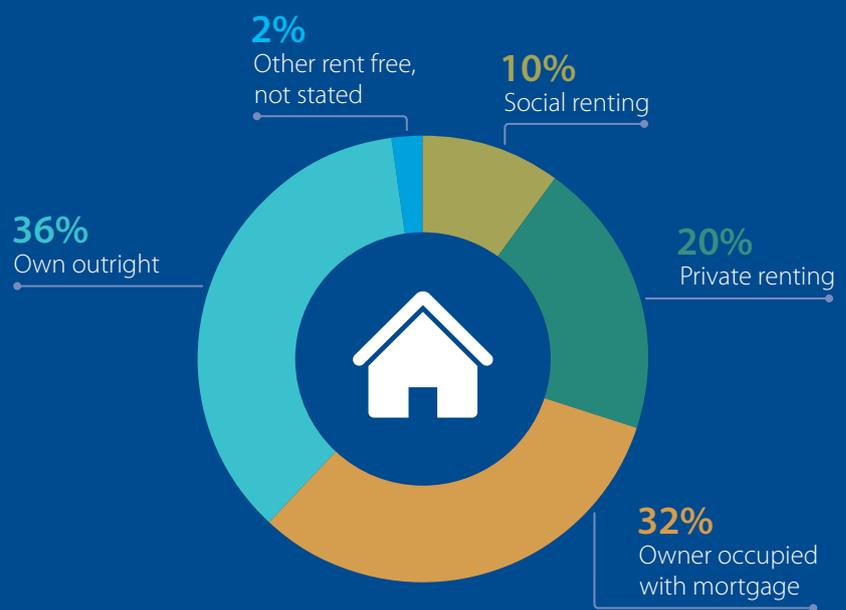
Housing stock of 2 million

**1.76 million occupied**

(9.4% vacant)



## Tenure



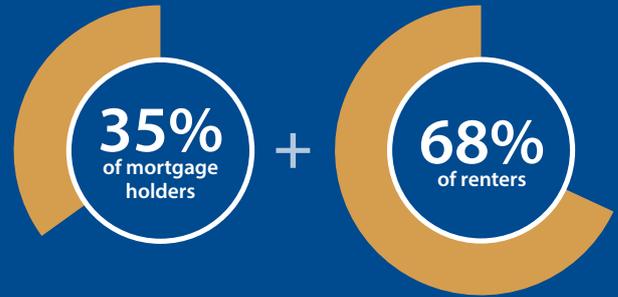
### Attitudes



are satisfied with their accommodation



are satisfied with their neighbourhood



said they found it difficult to meet housing cost

### Supply and demand

**29,000** principal dwellings & **13,000** buy-to-let

mortgages in arrears of more than 2 years

**7%** increase



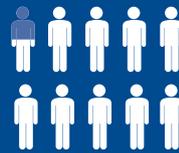
in average new rents nationally Q1 2018

**12%** increase



in residential property prices (in year to June)

**9,527** homeless



at the end of August 2018



**8,000** new homes

built in the first 6 months of 2018



**72,000** households

on social housing waiting lists



Over **35,000** homes needed each year to meet current demand

## **Our vision**

To promote the building of sustainable communities

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## **Our mission**

To promote the supply of housing to meet current and future needs and demand by being a centre of expert knowledge on housing, supporting housing policy development and implementing effective housing programmes in collaboration with key stakeholders

# Our values



**Integrity and independence**  
in meeting our objectives

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**Dedicated and committed**  
to professionalism, collaboration and our  
role in the delivery of shared objectives

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**Innovative and future focused**  
in applying knowledge, initiative and  
pushing boundaries in our thinking

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**Accountable and engaged with**  
our stakeholders, and the Department  
in delivering progress

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**Open and respectful** to new ideas  
and solutions, as well as in our dealings  
with colleagues and stakeholders



# Our five themes



Being a **centre of knowledge** on housing

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**Optimising supply** and utilisation of housing

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**Understanding housing demand** and affordability

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**Realising results** through our people

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**Meeting governance** and service commitments

## Theme 1

# Being a centre of knowledge on housing



### Goal

To provide a robust and deep understanding of the dynamics of the housing sector, to inform quality policy decisions and development of effective programmes towards the provision of good housing and sustainable communities.

### Role of the Housing Agency

To be a centre of knowledge on housing issues, by:

- 1 Building housing **knowledge and expertise** within the Housing Agency.
- 2 Providing a **centre of research**, good practice in housing and dissemination of data.
- 3 Ensuring suitable **development, education and training** is provided to housing practitioners.
- 4 Actively working on the development of potential **housing policy options** and supporting the Department in the development of policy and effective programmes.
- 5 **Undertaking research programmes** into housing in Ireland and collaborating with others on housing research projects, ensuring a research focus assesses requirements and identifies solutions for special housing needs groups.
- 6 **Raising the level of housing knowledge** through engagement with key stakeholders.
- 7 Establishing a specific space and **procedures to capture inputs** from local and international housing experts.
- 8 Demonstrating and **promoting the value of housing research**, as well as the Agency's research contribution by driving and influencing good policy and practices across the housing sector.
- 9 Using the knowledge of the Regulation Office to **enhance governance standards** across the AHB sector.

## Objectives

The following define Agency objectives, activities and initiatives.

New initiatives will also be agreed and implemented over the period covered by this Strategic Plan.

Objective	Through
Build expertise within the Agency	<p>Preparing plan to develop knowledge and understanding of housing issues.</p> <p>Engaging experts and assess leading international practice.</p> <p>Audit and establish a register of skills and knowledge of the Board and staff.</p>
Become a recognised centre for housing knowledge, expertise and national policy influence in Ireland	<p>Creating and managing a central data hub of statistics and research.</p> <p>Identifying partners and develop research collaborations with other expert bodies/agencies.</p> <p>Developing a schedule of planned research topics to provide an evidence base to inform national policy and drive the implementation of leading practice, including annual publications such as the National Statement of Supply and Demand, and the Summary of Social Housing Assessment.</p> <p>Ensuring research focus assesses requirements and identifies solutions for all housing needs groups.</p>
Actively input into policy development and decision making	<p>Reviewing of developments in housing policy and development of recommendations for the Department's considerations.</p> <p>Reviewing and supporting housing management practices such as rents, allocations etc.</p>
Raise level of knowledge through engagement with key stakeholders	<p>Optimising the research impact and longevity through effective communications.</p> <p>Implementing engagement strategy to enhance communication and collaboration.</p> <p>Increasing general public's knowledge of housing options.</p>
Supporting and further developing housing practitioners knowledge nationally	<p>Provision of central resources (on-line housing manual and training portal).</p> <p>Ensuring suitable development, education and training is available for housing practitioners, and promoting professionalism in housing practice.</p> <p>Co-ordinating training programmes and training bursary.</p> <p>Providing training on housing policy and housing management.</p>
Maintaining the interim regulatory function	<p>Maintaining and reviewing governance framework and published standards.</p> <p>Annual assessment and engagement of AHBs.</p>

## Theme 2

# Optimising supply and utilisation of housing



### Goal

To optimise the supply and efficient use of housing stock by informing policy decisions, working collaboratively on delivery with key stakeholders and monitoring progress.

### Role of the Housing Agency

To achieve targeted provision of housing, by:

- 1 Engaging with government to **support effective supply, policy and initiatives.**
- 2 Supporting and **advising Local Authorities, AHBs and other state bodies** such as the Land Development Agency in housing delivery and the efficient use of existing housing stock.
- 3 Being innovative and **developing solutions** to emerging supply issues.
- 4 Having a central co-ordinating role in **optimising the delivery** of social and affordable housing.
- 5 Providing targeted **support to stakeholders** to address homelessness issues.
- 6 **Managing and developing sites** owned by the Agency.
- 7 Providing **advice and supports** to builders, developers, investors and private entities on funding of social, affordable and housing delivery generally.
- 8 **Monitoring progress** of supply initiatives and activity.
- 9 Engaging with the **financial and construction** sectors to understand and remove barriers to progress.
- 10 Implementing the **Pyrite Remediation Scheme** on behalf of the Pyrite Resolution Board.

## Objectives

The following define Agency objectives, activities and initiatives.

New initiatives will also be agreed and implemented over the period covered by this Strategic Plan.

Objective	Through
Provide input to drive and support development of policy	<p>Support housing delivery and assist in appropriate responses.</p> <p>Track progress on announcements and commitments on housing development.</p> <p>Support Department's development of "affordable purchase and cost rental schemes".</p> <p>Improve and help expand the rental sector by working with the RTB and the Department.</p>
Providing a central co-ordinating role in expediting supply	<p>Sourcing and acquisitions of properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Utilising revolving €70m fund to purchase and sell onwards to AHBs</li> <li>– Sourcing of housing for Local Authorities and AHBs for acquisitions or leasing.</li> </ul> <p>Implementing the management and strategic development of sites owned by the Housing Agency.</p> <p>Encouraging private sector engagement through an intermediary role across Local Authorities and the state.</p> <p>Providing targeted support to stakeholders to address homelessness issues.</p>
Supporting and assisting our core stakeholders in achieving targeted delivery	<p><b>Local Authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Undertaking project feasibility assessments and developing outline project delivery plans</li> <li>– Advising on turnkey delivery; and design and build tenders</li> <li>– Assisting on preparing framework contract tender requests</li> <li>– Supporting Part V delivery.</li> </ul> <p><b>Approved Housing Bodies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Building capacity to access private finance through regulation of the sector</li> <li>– Undertaking financial appraisals of P&amp;A and CALF applications</li> <li>– Preparing contractual arrangements for larger projects</li> <li>– Providing technical, financial, procurement, advice and guidance.</li> </ul>
Assist with development and implementation of particular programmes and strategies	<p>Addressing homelessness through various measures by supporting the DRHE, Local Authorities, and relevant AHBs in prevention and in supply of suitable temporary and long-term housing.</p> <p>Implementing the Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities.</p> <p>Supporting the Housing First initiative for individuals that are homeless by sourcing of suitable properties.</p>
Implement Pyrite Remediation Scheme on behalf of the PRB	<p>Agreeing targets with PRB and the Department and develop a work programme to deliver.</p> <p>Maintaining consultant and construction frameworks, and liaising with homeowners.</p>

## Theme 3

# Understanding housing demand and affordability



### Goal

Understand and respond to housing demand trends and prioritise housing affordability by informing policy decision and working collaboratively on measures with key stakeholders to deal with demand and affordability issues.

### Role of the Housing Agency

To understand housing demand and concentrate on housing affordability, by:

- 1** Ensuring there is a clear and deep **understanding of demand and affordability levers** as a foundation for high quality policy decision making.

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- 2** **Supporting Local Authorities and AHBs** as they make demand management decisions.

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- 3** **Supporting consistent implementation** of Mortgage to Rent, HAP, Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan schemes and other affordability support schemes.

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- 4** **Developing innovative proposals** on alternative responses to affordable rental and purchase.

## Objectives

The following define Agency objectives, activities and initiatives.

New initiatives will also be agreed and implemented over the period covered by this Strategic Plan.

Objective	Through
Building on clear and robust insight to housing demand/needs/choice	<p>Regularly updating demand analysis (including demographics and sentiment changes).</p> <p>Annual assessment of social housing needs.</p> <p>Undertaking survey to establish public choice and preferences as factors in predicting demand.</p> <p>Consulting stakeholders on design or enhancement of existing schemes.</p>
Provide policy input and centrally support implementation of policies	<p>Targeted research and analysis on affordability and leading practice solutions.</p> <p>Inputting into policy development on affordable housing for buyers and renters.</p> <p>Actively engaging and implementation of affordable measures.</p>
Develop innovative proposals on alternative responses to emerging and relevant housing issues	<p>Developing proposals to alleviate risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Reviewing affordable rental, equity and purchase schemes.</p> <p>Making recommendations for improvement.</p>
Manage/support initiatives and programmes centrally	<p>Addressing homelessness through assisting AHBs and LAs with timely housing solutions for new homeless and secure properties on behalf of LAs and AHBs.</p> <p>Managing 'Mortgage to Rent' solutions to avoid loss of homes.</p> <p>Supporting delivery of Rebuilding Ireland home loans.</p> <p>Encouraging consistent application of HAP.</p>

## Theme 4

# Delivering results through our people



### Goal

To ensure that the Agency's systems and culture support the contributions of everyone with whom we engage to achieve our targets.

### Role of the Housing Agency

To optimise the contribution of the people who work in and with the Housing Agency, by:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1</b> Ensuring the <b>appropriate structures and resources</b> are in place to implement our strategy.</p> <hr/> | <p><b>4</b> <b>Enhancing expertise</b> and developing organisational capacity.</p> <hr/>                           |
| <p><b>2</b> Developing the <b>capability of employees</b> and the culture of the Agency.</p> <hr/>                     | <p><b>5</b> Establishing a structure of <b>Advisory Panels</b> to engage a wider spread of stakeholders.</p> <hr/> |
| <p><b>3</b> <b>Enhancing the effectiveness</b> of the Board, staff and the leadership team.</p>                        | <p><b>6</b> Implementing <b>knowledge sharing</b> and collaborative arrangements internally and externally.</p>    |

## Objectives

The following define Agency objectives, activities and initiatives.

New initiatives will also be agreed and implemented over the period covered by this Strategic Plan.

Objective	Through
Enhance Board effectiveness	<p>Advising the Department on expertise required to ensure that the Board reflects the needs of the Agency.</p> <p>Annual formal review of the performance of the Board.</p> <p>Developing a number of advisory panels (reporting to the Board) to address specific areas of key strategic importance, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Affordability</li> <li>– Homelessness</li> <li>– Research/insight.</li> </ul> <p>Skills and capability gaps identified and filled through careful selection and development of the Board and staff.</p>
Strengthen all staff as well as the leadership team	<p>Skills and capability gaps identified and filled through careful selection and development of the staff.</p> <p>Enhancing management performance evaluation procedures.</p>
Create a stronger workforce to undertake and support the Agency's work programme	<p>Identify resources required to respond efficiently and effectively to stakeholders and the Agency's future needs.</p> <p>Agreeing workforce plan with the Department.</p>
Foster an inviting and inclusive organisation that supports diversity within our workplace	<p>Strengthen the Agency's culture in line with the Agency's defined values.</p> <p>Promoting and encouraging behaviours in line with the values.</p> <p>Undertaking employee opinion surveys to review and enhance working conditions and environment.</p> <p>Developing people performance metrics to assess and improve our impact.</p> <p>Developing an education and training plan for our people.</p>
Enhance knowledge sharing, collaboration and communications	<p>Implementing communications strategy and supporting initiatives.</p> <p>Identifying requirements and implement knowledge management protocols within the Agency.</p> <p>Establishing arrangements for sharing expertise and collaborating with other agencies/bodies.</p> <p>Exploring scope to second experts and expertise from other bodies, agencies and/or institutions.</p>

## Theme 5

# Meeting governance and service commitments



### Goal

To ensure we operate to the high levels of public-sector governance and build strong partnerships with key stakeholders.

### Role of the Housing Agency

To establish effective working arrangements to enable the realisation of our goals, by:

- 1 Ensuring we operate to the **high levels of corporate governance** and legislative obligations.
- 2 Establishing **clear relationships with key stakeholders**, avoiding duplication and optimising synergies.
- 3 Developing clear **memoranda of understanding and service level agreements** with each of our key stakeholders.
- 4 Maintaining **independence of interim voluntary regulation of Approved Housing Bodies** and ongoing implementation of voluntary regulatory function.
- 5 Supporting the **advancement of a statutory regulation framework**.
- 6 Further developing the **reputation for the Agency as a credible organisation** that delivers on its commitments.

## Objectives

The following define Agency objectives, activities and initiatives.

New initiatives will also be agreed and implemented over the period covered by this Strategic Plan.

Objective	Through
Ensure compliance with governance standards and statutory obligations	<p>Applying the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, including risk management and internal practices, procedures and controls.</p> <p>Ensuring sound financial management is in place to deliver effective resource utilisation and achieve value for money.</p> <p>Complying with statutory obligations including the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.</p>
Establish clear relationships with key stakeholders, avoiding duplication and optimising synergies	<p>Completing MoUs with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Local Authorities</li> <li>– Approved Housing Bodies</li> <li>– RTB</li> <li>– Housing Finance Agency</li> <li>– LGMA</li> <li>– Land Development Agency.</li> </ul>
Support the transition to statutory regulation of AHBs	Supporting the transition to statutory regulation.
Continual development of Agency's operating systems, processes and controls	<p>Reviewing and enhancing physical workplace environment to support increased professionalism and service delivery.</p> <p>Identifying critical systems, procedures and controls.</p> <p>Reviewing current arrangements and identifying scope for enhancement.</p>

## Appendix:

# Key targets 2019–2021

Rebuilding Ireland pillars	Actions by Housing Agency
1. Addressing homelessness	<p>Delivery and acquisition of permanent homes for families; and for individuals under the Housing First initiative.</p> <p>Sourcing of buildings for family hubs and for supported temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Working with Local Authorities to deliver temporary family hubs using modular homes.</p>
2. Accelerating social housing delivery	<p>Engaging directly with Local Authorities and AHBs to delivery social housing.</p> <p>Specific target of 1,600 homes per annum.</p> <p>Specific focus on delivery by AHBs through Payment and Availability Agreements and CALF.</p> <p>See table overleaf for details.</p>
3. Building more homes	<p>Supporting the delivery of homes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Working on delivery of affordability and cost rental homes</li> <li>– Providing central underwriting service for Rebuilding Ireland</li> <li>– Research and analysis of supply and demand needs</li> <li>– Providing research and guidance on the planning and design of apartments and houses.</li> </ul>
4. Improving the rental sector	<p>Working with the Department and the RTB to make renting a home a sustainable tenure both for security and rent certainty.</p> <p>Developing the cost rental sector and specifically using parts of the land owned by the Agency for cost rental.</p>
5. Utilising empty homes	<p>Acquisition of vacant homes and properties to bring back into use; primarily from banks.</p> <p>Supporting a range of measures in the National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy to get vacant homes back into use.</p>

## Housing Agency targets inputting into Rebuilding Ireland delivery

Delivery type	Target 2016–2021	Annual* average 2019–2021	Housing Agency actions to support output	Housing Agency input to achieving targets for LAs and AHBs per annum
Local Authority construction and regeneration	14,028	3,980	Technical support in delivery of housing and provision of Agency land	350
AHB construction Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF)	8,960	2,270	Undertaking P&A and CALF Assessments and contract preparation and provision of land	1,850
Local Authority void refurbishment	3,459	218	Assist local authorities in refurbishment of voids	
Part V – Local Authority and Approved Housing Body	4,690	1,260	Provision of central support services on Part V	420
Public Private Partnership (PPPs) by National Development Finance Agency (NDFA)	2,300	767	Provision of land for use for PPP delivery	85
Local Authority acquisition	1,480	183	Acquisition of housing in trust for LAs	100
Approved Housing Body acquisitions	5,050	792	As per AHB Construction and Acquisition of housing using €70m revolving fund	200 400
Leasing	10,036	2,400	Finalising agreements for leasing projects	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,003</b>	<b>11,870</b>		<b>3,755</b>

\*The targets set are for the period of this Strategic Plan

**Other key headline targets of the Housing Agency**

Activity	Target to 2021	Annual target
Mortgage to Rent	1,200	400
Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies	Transition to statutory regulation complete	Assessments completed, and engagement meetings held
Pyrite Remediation Scheme	2,400 homes remediated by 2021	400

2019-2021

We are committed to being professional, accountable, open and respectful.

We seek to be innovative and future focused in our approach.

**This strategy reflects our values and informs our approach.**



*promoting sustainable  
communities*

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