Housing Rights

We are Housing Rights.
We believe that prevention
of homelessness is the best
cure. We work tirelessly to
keep people in their homes
and help them with their
housing problems.

We believe that everyone
should have a *home*

Website design, development and delivery plan

Introduction

The last 2 years have hammered home the importance of good digital services. When we designed our strategic plan for 2018-2023, we couldn't have imagined a period when our services would primarily be delivered remotely and digitally. Even so, we recognised the importance of digital services in that plan with a commitment to enhancing our digital offering. We've taken huge steps forward to achieve this objective. It's now time for another.

As demand for services increase, many organisations are shifting emphasis to digital channels, prioritising their telephone services for those most in need or least able to help themselves. More than 2,000 people use our websites every day. Our websites act as our shop front and are the main way that the majority of people know of and interact with Housing Rights. They are a showcase for and an access point to our advice, policy, training and mediation services and demonstrate our worth and value to funders.

The systems that deliver our current websites will stop receiving technical support in November 2022[1]. We need to take this opportunity to ensure that the replacement fully delivers on our vision and strategic objectives.

A fundamental element of our work is our housing advice services. They largely feed everything else we do. Research by CaCHE stresses the need for a meaningful multi-channel approach to housing advice services with an emphasis on real improvement of digital provision, so people choose to use these services. Staff and consultants have researched the successes and failings of our digital offering. We've identified areas where we can, and will, do better.

For these reasons we need to design, develop and deliver a new online home, but we don't want to lose what is special and specialist about Housing Rights. It's important to remember that the way we've integrated online provision into our advice services has been noted as an example that other countries should follow in a technical report accompanying the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 2017 study into widening access to housing advice.

We recognise that not everyone needs, uses, or wants digital services. We'll work to make sure that our commitment to digital does not further exclude people who are digitally disadvantaged. Maximising the effectiveness of our digital services will allow us to concentrate our telephone and face-to-face services on those who need them most.

Our aim is to build new and better products and services that help people and deliver all our core business, without sacrificing our values or our vision of a place "where everyone has a home".

This plan sets out our reasons for this work, how we intend to deliver this work, and how we'll measure its success.

Delivering on our strategic objectives

This work directly relates to a number of our strategic objectives for the period 2018-2023

Improving lives and promoting wellbeing by helping more people in NI to live in secure and affordable homes	Our improved online housing information and advice services will be available to anyone dealing with a housing problem
Housing Rights when you need them	Our clear, accessible and actionable content will be available day or night
Highly motivated, reliable and trusted experts	We will provide our staff and other professionals with clear, accessible information and will be better able to promote and sell our training products
Minimise waste and maximise use of emerging technologies	We reduce duplication of effort and embrace useful new technologies
Achieving financial sustainability	We can offer a better sales and donation journey to people who want to purchase our services or support our work

---

[1] See Drupal 7 end of life PSA: https://www.drupal.org/psa-2020-06-24, accessed 4 November 2021

Housing Rights digital journey

We are undergoing a period of digital transformation. This process is led by a digital vision statement and implementation plan.
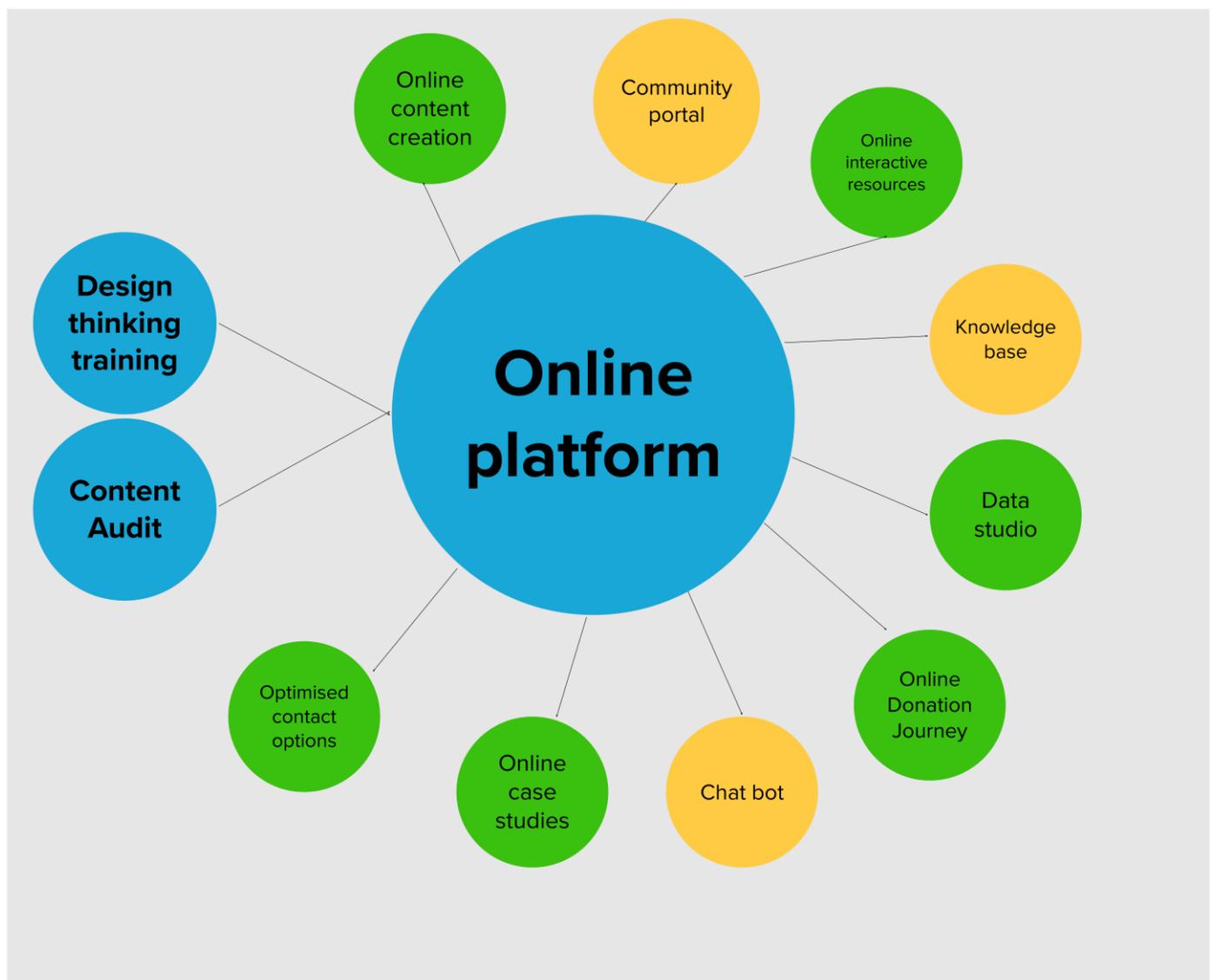
Our digital vision

To embrace digital technology to generate more helpful, accessible and impactful services to our users and stakeholders.

Our aims are to

- make it easier for people to access and use our services
- make our digital services appropriate, accurate, helpful and accessible
- raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues.

We are committed to a design-thinking led journey. Any approach must be optimised through empirical user evidence and continuous monitoring, testing and iteration.

The digital vision statement and implementation plan identifies 18 initiatives to help us deliver on our objectives. Development of a website is the key component in this, with multiple initiatives either feeding or depending on this element.

Design principles

Any work that we carry out as part of our digital vision and implementation map is underpinned by these core design principles.
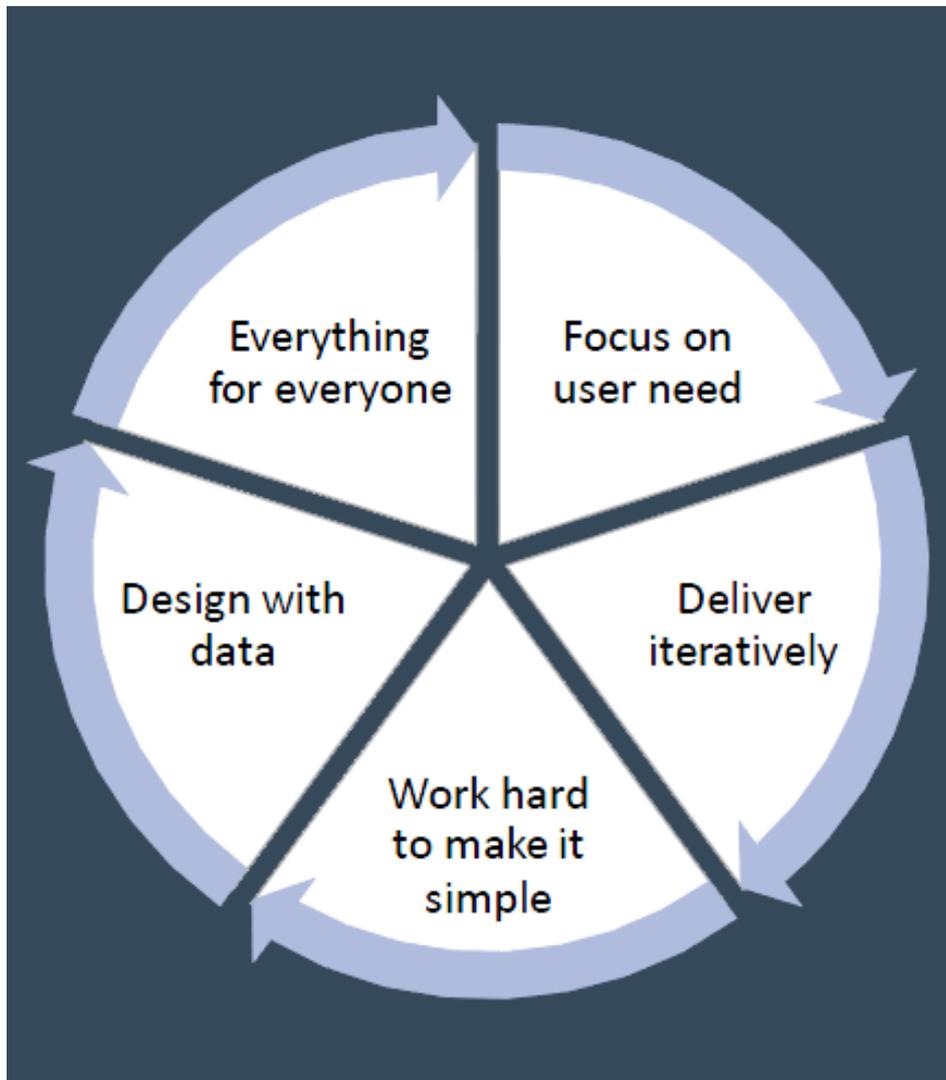
1. **Focus on the user need:** If we don't know what the user needs are, we won't deliver the right thing.
2. **Deliver iteratively:** The best way to build good services is to start small and iterate a lot. Test with users and change on feedback.
3. **Work hard to make it simple:** Information and customer journeys should be straightforward, even if that is harder work for us.
4. **Design with data:** Let data drive decision-making, not hunches or guesswork
5. **Everything for everyone:** The right information should be available at the right time, from anywhere and should be accessible regardless of a person's abilities.

Understanding our problems and our users

Over the past year we've worked with consultants to explore what our users need and expect from us. We've looked at how our current offering fails to meet these needs and expectations. We've agreed on 3 key problem statements and have prioritised our users and their stories. This work has led us to our goal: to create a fast, seamless, and helpful online experience for people who use or could use our services, thereby maximising Housing Rights' reach and impact

Our problem

We've analysed our user journeys and have established that our web presence has three particular problems

People find our split web presence confusing, which means they struggle to connect with the information or service they need and they miss out on help we could provide.

Our websites are built on Drupal 7, which means they are nearing end of life and pose a risk to the organisation.

Our current purchasing and donation journeys are disjointed and complicated, which means we lose out on opportunities to raise funds to deliver our services

Our users and their stories

As **someone with a housing problem**, I need to know my rights and options and how to get help so I can avoid homelessness

As **a professional with a housing case,** I need quick access to clear, trusted information and advice so I can help my clients and do my job

As a **manager of an advice service**, I need to know about relevant training and book this easily, so my staff can develop and do their jobs

As **someone who works in housing**, I need Housing Rights to explain their thoughts about planned changes, so I understand the issues properly

As **someone who wants to support Housing Rights**, I want to be able to easily take part in fundraising, donation and volunteering opportunities, so I can give back

As **Housing Rights**, we need to clearly demonstrate the impact and outcomes of our work to our funders and others, so we can keep working towards achieving our vision

Our goal

To build a fast, seamless, and helpful online experience for people who use or could use our services, thereby maximising Housing Rights' reach and impact.

Our objectives, outcomes and tasks

Area 1: Improve processes		
Objective	**Digital theory of change outcome**	**Tasks**
People have clear accessible pathways into our advice, training and policy services	Deliver improved quality services to our key customers	We will • research current pain points in our user journeys • create content that is easily found on Google and other search engines • allow users to seamlessly access Housing Rights services, including training and events • work towards the highest standards of website accessibility
We have data and analytics we need to continue improving services	Improve efficiency in delivery of our services	We will • design a new approach to web metrics, to ensure we make proper use of all the data our websites provide • commit to ongoing data analysis and data-driven improvements
We have a value for money resource that will sustain us for at least 10 years	Adopt more sustainable/ environmentally friendly working practices	We will • agree a robust project management approach • ensure sustainable, proportionate processes are in place to maintain an optimum service and protect our investment
Area 2: Help customers		
We have a fast, efficient and high-performing resource	Provide more accessible and responsive services	We will • work towards meeting the highest standards of web accessibility • reduce duplication of resources internally and where others are best placed to respond to the user need • design a site that scores well in relevant tests for speed and performance • ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to keep resources up to date
People can find answers and information to help with housing problems in a suitable way	Be able to help more people in housing need via digital means	We will • create content guidelines to ensure our content is o **easy to find** – users can orient themselves

		regardless of how they enter ○ **easy to understand** - we will use plain language and avoid jargon ○ **easy to act upon** - users understand how to take the next steps ○ **easy to check** - professional content will include sources and citations
People recognise Housing Rights as expert in housing in Northern Ireland	Be more effective, using digital methods, in influencing positive change in housing policy/legislation in N	We will • create new web-based content for housing professionals, creating trust and confidence that we are the specialists in the field • prove our value to housing professionals in Northern Ireland by showcasing our resources, training and policy • build a smooth and safe booking process encouraging people to turn to us first for their training needs
Area 3: Enable growth		
People understand the impact of our work	Raise awareness of Housing Rights and the services it has available to help people in housing need	We will • demonstrate our impact through the use of compelling case studies and blogs • highlight our policy work and how it creates change
We can more effectively raise funds through selling services and an improved donation journey	Increase income generated via digital channels for use in service delivery	We will • build an improved online sales system for training and events • highlight an option to donate and clearly explain how donations help us to change lives

Measuring success

Outcome 1: Deliver improved quality services to our key customers		
How will we measure success?	Baseline	Target
Was this helpful feedback on Hotjar[2]	60%	85%
Satisfaction with online event booking	Not currently measured[3]	90%
Satisfaction with digital advice service	100%	90%
Outcome 2: Improve efficiency in the delivery of our services		
Proper data sharing, analysis and improvement process in place across content, communications and advice teams	No formal arrangements Metrics are reported on but not acted on	By November 2023
Outcome 3: Adopt more sustainable and environmentally friendly working practices		
Resources are in place to continue improving and providing services beyond the life scale of the digital strategy		
Outcome 4: Provide more responsive and accessible services		
WCAG 2.1[4]	90% AA	90% AAA by March 2023
Google core vitals report[5]	100% mobile – Poor 75% desktop – Need improvement	100% URLs - Good
Outcome 5: Be able to help more people in housing need via digital channels		
Hotjar Satisfaction rating Did information help	78% 60%	85% 85%
Continual content review	N/A	>90% plain English
Percentage of helpline queries dealt with digitally	20.5%	35%
Outcome 6: Be more effective, using digital methods, in influencing positive change in housing policy/legislation in Northern Ireland		
Pageviews of policy content	Articles – 424 views Paper downloads – 534[6]	30% increase in usage
Outcome 7: Raise awareness of Housing Rights and the services it has available to help people in housing need		
Views of impact and user stories	158	>500 page views
Engagement with impact content	N/A	20% conversion rate on CTAs[7] on impact content
Outcome 8: Increase income generated via digital channels for use in service delivery		
Income generated through online sale of services	Not known	

---

[2] Embedded surveying tool for websites

[3] We will try to get a baseline for this in our 2021 PRS conference evaluation.

[4] Web content accessibility guidelines, version 2.1 AAA is the highest standard of web accessibility. It is the standard that public sector organisations are required to meet to comply with legislation.

[5] The core vitals are content loading speed, interactivity and visual stability. A rating of "good" indicates a smooth and seamless user experience.

[6] 1 April 2021-30 September 2021, Google Analytics figures for pageviews of content under news/policy and events with policydocs/ markers

[7] Call to action: engaging the user by including an action in relevant pieces of content. This could be asking the user to share something, to sign up to a campaign, to sign up to a newsletter, to donate etc.

Income generated through online donations	£50[8]	

---

[8] Total of online donations generated through website donation portal 1 April 2021-30 September 2022. This does not include funds raised through targeted fundraising campaigns like B&Q and HR Belfast marathon activity. These campaigns used a separate online platform to collect donations. There was a sole unsolicited donation through the online fundraising platform, which appears to have come from a former client.

11

Appendix 1: Housing Rights digital vision statement and implementation plan

Link to Housing Rights digital vision statement and implementation plan

Appendix 2: Analysis of needs, functionality and design

Mobile first	The largest and most important user group is members of the public in need of help. 70% of users use a phone to access our advice content.
Clear contact channels	The primary focus of this website will be ensuring people can get help when and how they need it, whether they are members of the public or professional users. Current users have difficulty finding contact details. Our chat service and helpline number will be prominent.
Sophisticated navigation	The site requires a sophisticated but clear navigation system. Content may have up to three versions (e.g. eviction content for public, practitioners, landlords) and users need to be able to easily find the information relevant to their needs. The site will have hundreds of entry points so navigation on every page must allow users to properly orient themselves and serve their individual needs.
Sophisticated search system	The site requires a sophisticated taxonomy and search system that will allow users to find information suitable to their audience need.
Accessible resources	We want the site to be as accessible as possible and will work towards meeting WCAG 2.1 AAA. The design must also be environmentally accessible (e.g. screen glare when outdoors, operable single-handedly). Site must be able to handle long-form HTML documents, which would previously have been in PDF
Branding	Content for landlords must be branded with a distinct Landlord Advice brand. Content should be clearly identified as being for landlords in search results, and may need to be indexed separately.
Booking platform	Users must be able to book and pay for events and services online. We will explore plugins, such as Eventbrite, to improve customer experience and ease administrative burden.
Future functionality	The solution must allow for further development, including but not limited to • A portal where our professional users can engage further with Housing Rights and each other • Online recruitment, or compatibility with relevant SAAS (software as a service) provider • Interaction with Maximiser CRM • An online agency referral system
Administration	Staff do not have a technical background. The content management system should be intuitive and user-friendly. Staff should be able to add and update content on the website without assistance from developers Staff should have control over navigational elements, including menus

Accessibility of services

We want to make sure our website is useful to as many people as possible. At least [1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland have a long term illness or disability](#). Some of these people will struggle to use websites that are not designed to accessibility standards.

[Since 2018 public sector bodies have had to make sure their content is accessible](#). As a charity, we are not required to have meet these same standards, but accessibility is important to us. It is also important to our funders. We will work towards meeting the standards expected of public bodies, but expect that this will be a longer journey for us as we have limited resources for this work.

Required functionality

We want functionality that will

- improve user experience
- Increase online sales and bookings and
- encourage users to interact with the content and messaging, improving our conversion rates as a result[9]

We need technical solutions that will allow users to

- easily find information they need, whatever their user profile
- search and filter their results by content type or audience
- easily access our phone and digital advice services
- quickly book and pay for tickets at all Housing Rights events
- keep up to date with what is happening at Housing Rights
- understand our views and position on key housing and welfare issues
- understand how our work impacts on our clients and on others more widely
- support Housing Rights through donations
- support and champion Housing Rights social media activities

Look and feel

The new website will be designed for speed and usability. It must

- take a mobile-first approach
- score well in tests for core web vitals, such as speed
- be accessible and should work towards meet the standards set out in The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018
- fit within the existing Housing Rights brand identity
- allow a separate brand identity for content focused at landlords and agents
- incorporate strong evocative imagery where this is required
- ensure that design elements in no way detract from function

---

[9] Conversion rates include actions like booking an event, signing up to a mailing list, filling in a form, requesting a chat

Appendix 3: Anticipated audiences and content types

Audiences

The site has multiple audiences and must meet each audience's primary and secondary needs.

The public	1. Want simple, actionable information to solve housing problems 2. Need an element of personalisation so they can find the information that's relevant to them 3. Need to talk and need someone to listen 4. Need to know how we can help and how long it will take 5. Want information about jobs, impact, campaigns and fund-raising
Practitioners	1. Need clear, accessible pathways to HR helpline for further support 2. Need to be able to refer clients quickly, confidently, easily 3. Need to know where information comes from and that it is accurate and up to date 4. Want information about training, networking, resources and policy work 5. Need to be able to quickly book and pay for training and events
Landlords	1. Need advice and support with tenancy management issues 2. Want access to services for landlords, including Landlord Advice NI and mediation
Funders	1. Need information about our impact 2. Need information about our values, finances, governance

Content types

Public advice pages	Members of the public Clear actionable content Can include video content[10] Quick pathway to helpline, including LiveChat Inc (TM) service Most likely entry channel to site
Practitioner pages	Advisers, HR staff, statutory organisations, private companies Clear, actionable content Can include video content Citations and links for legislation, case-law, policy documents, signposting Quick pathway to helpline Links to similar resources (e.g., training, events)
Landlord content	Landlords and agents Clear, actionable content Can include video content Separate branding Quick pathway to separate landlord support helpline – phone, email and chat
Training courses & events	Title and description of course Dates and tiered pricing Ticketing and booking function, or compatibility with reliable SAAS platform Enhanced HTML information such as speaker info/trainer info, programme etc Integration with Moodle
Policy content[11]	Long documents (HTML) setting out HR position on housing and welfare issues Consultation responses, research papers, briefings Articles summarising longer pieces of content

---

[10] All video content must include captioning

[11] For the purposes of this paper, the broader work of participation, research and influencing forms part of the policy content

	Blogs, including video content
	Include contacts for relevant staff
Impact	Case studies
	Housing Rights successes
	Active or past campaigns
	Impact reports (HTML)
Governance	Mission, values
	Funding
	Board
	Compliance information (e.g. cookies, charity number etc)

Appendix 5: HousingRights.org.uk user analysis

Analysis of 504 responses to Hotjar survey carried out between February and April 2021 of visitors to www.housingrights.org.uk.

Majority of users are members of the public (n=503)

Public (61.3)
Professionals(38.7)
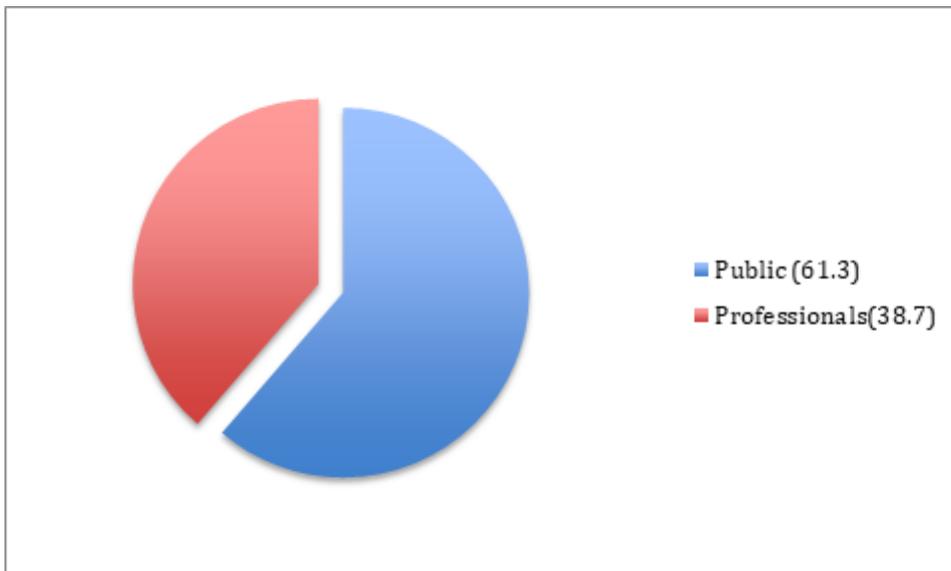
Public users

- 51% access the site using a mobile phone
- 41% access the site using a desktop or laptop computer
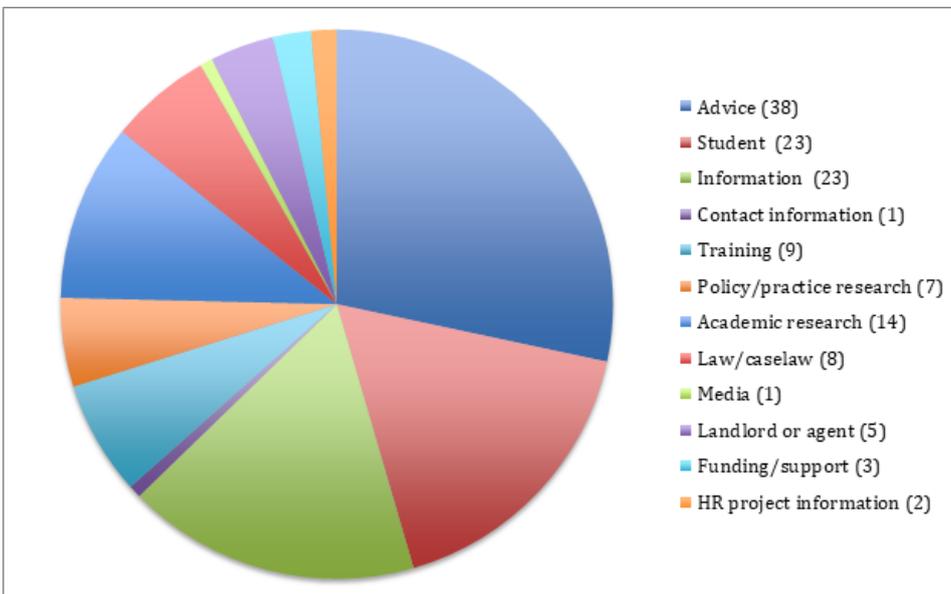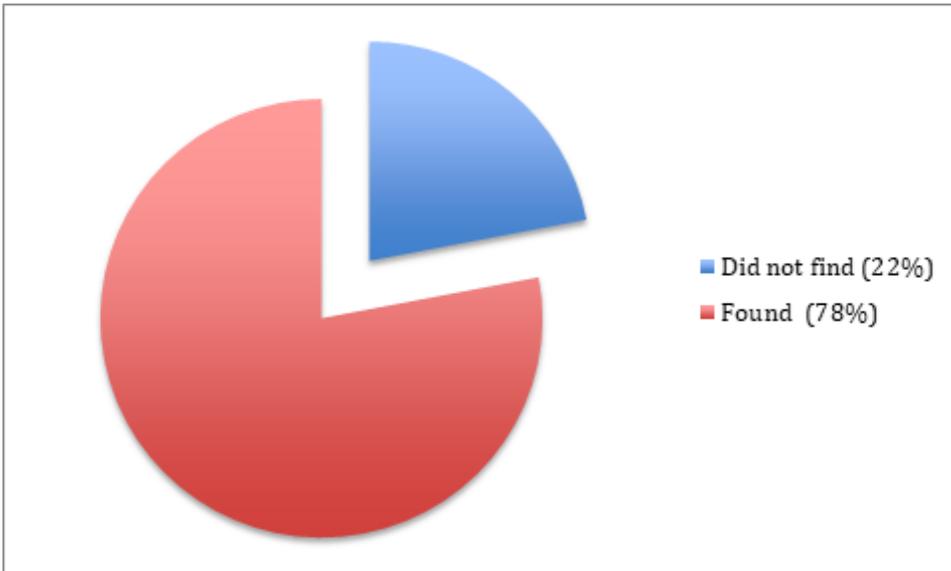- 7% access the site using a tablet

The majority of members of the public struggled to find the information they needed. All bar one respondent was seeking information or advice to deal with a housing issue. One respondent was looking for information about jobs.

Didn't find (66%)
Found (34%)
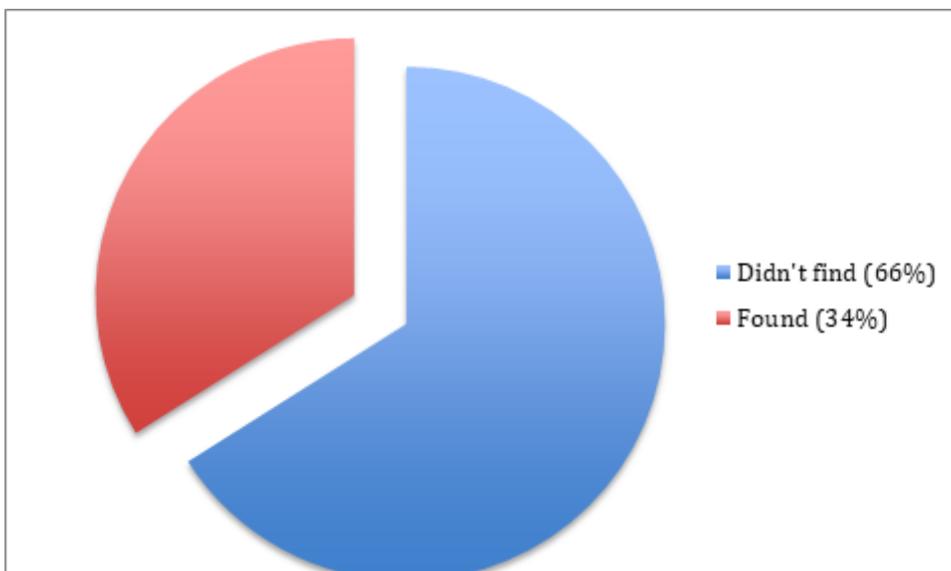
Professional users

- 95% access the site using a desktop or laptop computer
- 3% access the site using a phone
- 2% access the site using a tablet

Professional users have greater success finding the information they require.

- Advice (38)
- Student (23)
- Information (23)
- Contact information (1)
- Training (9)
- Policy/practice research (7)
- Academic research (14)
- Law/caselaw (8)
- Media (1)
- Landlord or agent (5)
- Funding/support (3)
- HR project information (2)

Professional users' reasons for visiting HousingRights.org.uk can be broadly grouped into these areas. The majority of users were seeking information or advice to help them carry out their work. A significant portion of users were students using the information on the site to complete coursework.

Appendix 5: HousingAdviceNI user profiling

HousingAdviceNI user profile