



Department for

**Communities**

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# Amendments to the Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Consultation Paper

March 2026



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Private Rented Branch  
Department for Communities  
Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7EG

or email: [prs@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:prs@communities-ni.gov.uk)

This document is also available from our website at: [www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

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# Foreword



The Housing Supply Strategy vision is that everybody has access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home that is appropriate for their needs and is located within a thriving and inclusive community. The private rented sector plays a crucial role in helping us achieve this vision. With over 130,000 households now living in privately rented homes, it is essential that the system works effectively for both tenants and responsible landlords.

Most landlords in Northern Ireland take their responsibilities seriously and provide well managed homes that meet the needs of their tenants. I want to acknowledge and support those landlords who are doing the right thing. However, we also know that this is not the experience of every tenant.

A minority of landlords fail to meet the legal standards expected of them, and this undermines confidence in the sector as a whole. Tenants must be able to rely on their landlord to provide a home that is safe, well maintained and properly managed.

The Landlord Registration Scheme, introduced in 2014, was an important step forward in improving transparency and accountability. But as the sector continues to grow and change, so too must the system that supports it. This consultation explores proposals to strengthen the landlord registration process in a proportionate and balanced way- supporting good landlords while enabling more effective action against those who persistently fall short of legal standards.

Local councils play a key role in ensuring that landlords meet their obligations. For them to act effectively, they need reliable information about who landlords are and how they operate. Expanding the information collected at registration will enhance councils' ability to identify risk, target support, and take enforcement action where necessary. It will also provide valuable data to inform policy development across the private rented sector.

These proposals are not about creating unnecessary burdens. They are about building a system that is fair, proportionate and capable of delivering higher standards across the sector-benefiting both tenants and responsible landlords.

I encourage you to share your views and help shape a strengthened, balanced landlord registration system that supports a better private rented sector for everyone in Northern Ireland.

I look forward to hearing your views on this consultation.

**Gordon Lyons**  
**Minister for Communities**

# Scope

The Department for Communities (“the Department”) is consulting on changes to the Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (“the Regulations”) to appoint Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council as Landlord Registrar (acting as host council on behalf of all councils in Northern Ireland).

Other proposed changes include requesting mandatory information on the standards of properties, allowing data from the register to be shared with public authorities for safety purposes and research and statistics to help inform policy. There are also a few minor technical amendments proposed to reflect the fact that the administration of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) is now operated by local councils.

# Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published. We will remove any names, email addresses and telephone numbers from these responses; but apart from this we will publish them in full. For more information about what we do with personal data please see our consultation privacy notice.

Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); however, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (EU) 2016/679.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under the FOIA or EIR.

The Department is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide, and DfC's privacy notice, which gives details of your rights in respect of the handling of your personal data can be found at: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/dfc-privacy-notice>.

# Introduction

The Landlord Registration Scheme was developed to drive forward standards in the private rented sector through having a complete single database of landlords and their properties to effectively target enforcement. The Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 came into operation on 25 February 2014, and since its introduction, the Scheme has been administered by the Department for Communities.

The Regulations require all private rented sector landlords to register with the Scheme, registration costs £70 (£80 for paper applications), lasts for three years and can cover multiple properties.

# Background

On 1 March 2025 operational responsibility for the Landlord Registration Scheme transferred from the Department for Communities to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (acting as the host council for all local councils in Northern Ireland). One of the proposed changes to the Regulations will be to appoint the Council in legislation.

Throughout the operation of the Scheme the register has mainly been used as a database of landlords and their properties. As part of the work to transfer the Scheme, it was recognised that the Scheme had potential to assist councils in carrying out enforcement duties within the private rented sector. It is anticipated that the collection of further information on properties in the private rented sector will ensure landlords are aware of their responsibility to ensure their properties meet the required standards. This will assist with raising the safety and standards in the sector and allow councils to carry out targeted enforcement.

The current restrictions on sharing data from the Landlord Register prevent the registrar sharing information with the Health and Safety Executive (HSENI). HSENI has previously requested landlords' information from the register to assist with its enforcement of gas safety legislation.

Information from the register cannot currently be shared with the Department's Analytical Services Unit for research. Allowing access to the information for research and statistical purposes would allow the Department to build a better picture of the private rented sector to help inform any future policy considerations.

# What are the proposed changes?

The proposed changes are to:

- formally appoint Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council as landlord registrar on behalf of all councils in Northern Ireland,
- introduce the requirement to provide information on compliance with existing legislation relating to private tenancies and property standards,
- allow information from the register to be shared with the Health and Safety Executive to assist with enforcement of gas safety legislation in private tenancies and with the Department for Communities' to allow data from the register to be used for research and statistics to assist with the formulation and development of private rented sector policy and legislation,
- to reflect the changes made by the introduction of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

## Regulation 2

Regulation 2 will be amended to formally appoint Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council as the landlord registrar. The transfer of operational responsibility for the Landlord Registration Scheme to councils has been planned since the introduction of the Scheme

as it was recognised that this would provide a valuable source of information for councils in carrying out their enforcement role relating to the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. The Private Tenancies Order is the main piece of legislation for the private rented sector in Northern Ireland, it details the key duties and responsibilities of landlords, tenants and councils.

## Regulation 7

Regulation 7(2) will be amended to reflect the policy intent that the landlord of a property defined as a licensed house in multiple occupation (“HMO”), be exempt from paying landlord registration fees. This exemption is because the Scheme is about the registration of landlords, not properties. Those individuals who hold a licence for an HMO would have already paid a fee to the HMO scheme.

## Regulation 9

Regulation 9 will be amended to allow the registrar to share information with the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) to assist with enforcement of gas safety legislation in private tenancies. This relates to landlord’s duties to repair under the Private Tenancies Order.

It is also proposed that Regulation 9 should be amended to allow data contained in the register to be shared with the Department for Communities for statistical and research purposes to assist with the formulation and development of policy and legislation related to the private rented sector.

### Schedule 1

The Department is proposing to request extra information from landlords about their properties at the point of registration. Landlords will be asked to confirm whether they are compliant with existing legislation relating to the safety and standards of their properties.

These safety and standards requirements will be compliance with:

- the fitness for human habitation standards
- Energy Performance Certificate requirements (providing a valid EPC to a tenant or prospective tenant is a requirement under The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008).
- Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024
- Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

# Why are these changes being proposed?

## Regulation 2

The changes proposed to Regulation 2 are to reflect that operational responsibility for the Landlord Registration Scheme passed from the Department for Communities to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (who will operate the Scheme on behalf of all councils in Northern Ireland) on 1 March 2025.

## Regulation 7

Regulation 7 will be amended for technical reasons to reflect that the administration of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) moved from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to local councils on 1 April 2019.

## Regulation 9

The proposed changes to Regulation 9 will be to allow for data sharing with further defined organisations for defined purposes relating to the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. In these proposals, the Department has considered previous requests for information from other organisations. Regulation 9 will also require a technical amendment to reflect that the responsibility for the regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation moved from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to local councils.

Sharing information with HSENI will help assist in the enforcement of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Sharing information with the Department for Communities will allow data from the register to be used for statistical and research purposes to assist with policy development for the private rented sector.

## Schedule 1

The overarching objective of the information provided at the point of registration is to make better use of the Landlord Registration Scheme in raising overall housing standards and quality in the private rented sector for all tenants. This proposal will ask landlords to confirm whether they comply with their legal duties in relation to private tenancies. The new registration process would cover specific requirements relating to property conditions and safety.

It is not unreasonable to ask landlords to confirm compliance with existing specific legal duties. This will help to inform landlords about their responsibilities, raise standards for tenants and ultimately

reduce the commercial inequality between landlords that run legitimate businesses and those that operate outside the law.

The current legislation is clear that it is the duty of the landlord to ensure that information provided at the point of registration is accurate. To provide false information is an offence. Local councils are responsible for the scrutiny and assessment of the information given at the point of registration. A risk-based approach may be taken to the request for any additional evidence. For example, the local council may decide that it is not reasonable to ask every landlord to provide physical documents relating to gas/ electrical safety and that a sample check of registrations is sufficient. A landlord may, however, be asked to provide relevant

documents if the council has concerns about the accuracy of the information provided or the safety of the property.

It will also mean that councils can focus on enforcement against non-compliant and unregistered landlords.

### Schedule 2

It is proposed to amend Schedule 2 of the Regulations to reflect the current established practice of allowing a public search by address function through the Landlord Registration Scheme website. This function only confirms if an address is held on the register and does not display the landlord's name or other details. This allows prospective tenants to check if the landlord is registered.

# Stakeholder Engagement

This public consultation is designed to gather the views and feedback of stakeholders.

It will run alongside targeted engagement with private rented sector stakeholders, including landlords, tenants, housing advice services and local councils.

# Timeframe

This consultation will open on 2 March 2026 and will run for 14 weeks, closing on 8 June 2026.

# Human Rights

The Department believes that the proposals set out in the draft Regulations are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

# Equality

The Department considers that the draft Regulations do not contain proposals to change policy in a substantive way, therefore, no adverse impact on the categories of person in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are identified. Potential minor positive impacts have been identified for all Section 75 groups.

# Regulatory Impact Assessment

The Department considers that the proposed amendments will not have a direct impact on businesses, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector.

## Rural Proofing

The Department considers that the proposed amendments in the draft Regulations will have a minor positive impact on private tenants living in rural areas.

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