

Public Consultation

Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations & Draft EQIA



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The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Housing Selection Scheme has been in place, largely unchanged, since 2000. Housing stress is affecting over 22,000 households in Northern Ireland and 11,000 households per year are considered homeless. The Department recognises the need for changes to the current Housing Selection Scheme to ensure it meets housing need efficiently and effectively while remaining fair and transparent.

The Department for Communities has launched a public consultation on proposals to improve how social homes are allocated. This 12-week consultation follows extensive research by the Department and a debate on the Housing Selection Scheme in the Assembly in September 2016.

Public events will be held on 17 October and 13, 15, 21 and 24 November 2017.

The proposals (listed overleaf) aim to ensure that those in the greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need. The proposals support five outcomes as follows:

- A greater range of solutions to meet housing need;
- An improved system for the most vulnerable applicants;
- A more accurate waiting list that reflects current housing circumstances;
- Those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need; and
- Better use of public resources by ensuring the waiting list moves smoothly.

The proposals for change

Throughout the process

1. An independent, tenure-neutral housing advice service for NI
2. An applicant who has been involved in unacceptable behaviour should not be eligible for social housing or Full Duty homelessness status unless there is reason to believe – at the time the application is considered – that the unacceptable behaviour is likely to cease
3. NIHE may treat a person as ineligible for Full Duty homelessness status on the basis of their unacceptable behaviour at any time before allocating that person a social home
4. NIHE can meet their duty to homeless applicants on a tenure-neutral basis, provided that the accommodation meets certain conditions

Application

5. A greater choice of areas for all applicants for a social home
6. Greater use of a mutual exchange service

Assessment

7. The removal of intimidation points from the Selection Scheme
8. Points should reflect current circumstances for all applicants
9. The removal of Interim Accommodation points from the Selection scheme

Allocation

10. The Selection Scheme should place applicants into bands based on similar levels of need to meet longstanding housing need more effectively
11. The Selection Scheme should always align the number of bedrooms a household is assessed to need with the size criteria for eligible Housing Benefit customers
12. For difficult-to-let properties: Social landlords should be able to make multiple offers to as many applicants as they think necessary
13. For difficult-to-let properties: Social landlords should be able to use choice-based letting
14. For difficult-to-let properties: Social landlords should be able to go direct to multiple offers if they have evidence that a property will be difficult to let
15. An applicant may receive two reasonable offers of accommodation
16. Social landlords may withdraw an offer of accommodation in specified circumstances
17. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession or assignment to a general needs social home in limited circumstances where there is evidence an applicant needs it
18. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession or assignment of adapted accommodation or purpose built wheelchair standard accommodation where there is evidence an applicant needs it
19. Updating the Selection Scheme to bring it in line with developments in Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI)
20. Specialised properties should be allocated by a separate process outside the Selection Scheme