

Section 75 and Schedule 9
The Northern Ireland Act 1998

**A Fundamental Review of
Social Housing Allocations**

Equality Impact Assessment
Final Consultation Report
October 2020

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Social Housing Allocations**
An Equality Impact Assessment

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents the findings of An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations.

1.1. Purpose of Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of this EQIA is to determine whether there is likely to be any differential impact arising from the policy between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; men and women generally; persons with a disability and persons without; and persons with dependants and persons without. The EQIA also considers mitigating measures to better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity.

1.2. Background

The Housing Executive developed the current Housing Selection Scheme and has responsibility for its daily operation and management. Twenty proposals to amend the Housing Selection Scheme were developed with the following desired outcomes:

- 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 list moves more smoothly.

In 2017 the Department carried out an Equality Screening exercise on the Fundamental Review. All Section 75 groups are expected to benefit from the proposals. However the screening process identified some potential adverse impacts arising from the proposals. Give the strategic importance it was decided to conduct a full EQIA.

1.3. Data Collection & Consultation

The draft EQIA considered a range of qualitative and quantitative data. The Department facilitated pre-consultation engagement with a range of key housing stakeholders and a formal consultation exercise took place between September and December 2017. All of these have informed the EQIA.

1.4. Key Findings

The EQIA concludes that in the main benefits will be realised across all Section 75 groups. However, upon implementation of individual proposals

there may be potential adverse impact on certain groups. The extent of this will become clear upon implementation and will be closely monitored.

Of those who responded to the specific EQIA questions posed during the consultation exercise 50% agreed with the Department's assessment of impacts outlined in the draft EQIA and 60% agreed that the proposals will provide for a fairer and more transparent system of assessing housing need.

1.5. Conclusions

The Department will take the following action in respect of the adverse impacts identified:-

- Provide a greater range of solutions to meet housing need, specifically the provision of a housing advice service as at proposal 1.
- Determine any impact as a result of changes to the Selection Scheme by monitoring waiting times for:
 - key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is a result of giving greater weight to time waiting
 - those needing adapted stock
 - those requiring specialised properties
- Undertake reviews to determine:
 - any impacts arising from two new proposals in relation to intimidation points and interim accommodation points.
 - whether the impact of landlord discretion over policy succession / assignment reflects the desired outcome of an improved system for the most vulnerable applicants
 - how specialised properties should be allocated

1.6. Policy decision

18 of the 20 proposals will proceed as per the 2017 consultation. Further exploration of proposals 7 and 9 are required as these will not proceed as per the consultation.

As part of the normal operation and maintenance of the Scheme, equality impacts, post EQIA and proposal finalisation, will be monitored by the Housing Executive on an ongoing basis.

1.7. Publication

This document is available at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/fundamental-review-social-housing-allocations> alongside the Consultation Outcome Report and other supporting documentation.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Section 75 and the statutory duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires each public authority, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

The Department for Communities (the Department) has in place an Equality Scheme. The Scheme outlines how the Department proposes to fulfil its statutory duties under Section 75. Policies are screened to assess impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity and the duty to promote good relations using the following criteria:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant group?

2.2. The organisation

The Department was established on 9 May 2016. It comprises five main work areas:

- Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government
- Engaged Communities
- Strategic Policy & Professional Services
- Work & Health
- Supporting People

Our responsibility for *housing* includes:

- having overall control and responsibility for preparing and directing social housing policy in Northern Ireland;
- working closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Registered Housing Associations in implementing social housing policies;
- having regulatory powers over the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Registered Housing Associations;
- having oversight of the Private Rented Sector, which is also controlled by the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978;
- appointing the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Rent Assessment Panels;
- taking the lead in the Promoting Social Inclusion review of the difficulties faced by people who are homeless; and
- taking the lead in tackling fuel poverty, a major element of which is the Warm Homes Scheme

2.3. The policy

The policy relates to the fundamental review of social housing allocations.

The Housing Executive developed the current Housing Selection Scheme and has responsibility for its daily operation and management.¹ Registered Housing Associations also use this scheme to make allocations to their accommodation.

¹ Further information on the existing Scheme: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Housing-Help/Apply-for-a-home/The-Housing-Selection-Scheme>

Further information on the equality impacts of the current scheme available: [https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Equality-Impact-Assessments-\(EQIAs\)/The-Housing-Selection-Scheme](https://www.nihe.gov.uk/Documents/Equality-Impact-Assessments-(EQIAs)/The-Housing-Selection-Scheme)

As part of the Housing Strategy “Facing the Future” (2012-17) the Department for Communities committed to carry out a fundamental review of the allocation of social housing in Northern Ireland. The current Housing Selection Scheme (in place since 2000) sets out the rules for the allocation of social housing. Evidence from independent research, consultation with a range of stakeholders and two previous Housing Executive consultations (to make changes to the Scheme and to address the potential impacts of welfare reform) have led to a series of proposals. These proposals aim to ensure that allocations are performed in a fair, transparent, effective, reasonable and proportionate manner to make best use of public resources and continue to prioritise those in greatest housing need.

The policy aim is that the desired outcomes for the Selection Scheme are achieved as a result of the review. The outcomes are:

- 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 list moves more smoothly.

2.4. List of proposals

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

- 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
- 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

2.5. Initial S75 screening

The series of change proposals aim to improve the allocations scheme for all users, mitigating some issues raised around the existing scheme.

In 2017 the Department carried out an Equality Screening exercise with regard to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations. Having considered the evidence, all Section 75 groups are expected to benefit from the proposals. These benefits were explored in the detailed screening policy screening completed in 2017.

However the screening process identified some potential adverse impacts arising from the proposals. Whilst the proposals for change aim to improve the scheme and mitigate any adverse impacts, these potential adverse impacts need to be further investigated.

It was decided that a full EQIA was needed because:

- the review is strategically important, representing an area of major social policy, affecting over 10,000 households a year.
- potential equality impacts are unknown as data upon which to make an assessment on are complex.

3. DATA COLLECTION AND CONSULTATION

3.1. Data sources

The following sources of information were used to develop the draft Equality Impact Assessment:-

- **DfC Equality Screening - Review of Social Housing Allocations Consultation (2017)**
- **NIHE's EQIA on Housing Selection Scheme (2007)**
This is the latest equality impact assessment which was carried out on the Housing Selection Scheme by the NIHE.
- **NIHE's EQIA on strategic guidelines for the Social Housing Development Programme (2011)**
This EQIA looks at the social housing development programme, not allocations per se, it provides background information on inequalities which are pertinent to allocations.
- **DfC (ASU) Equality Analysis Report (2017)**
The Department's Analytical Services Unit provided analysis of waiting list data.
- ***Housing and Communities' Inequalities in NI Report (Wallace, Alison, University of York, June 2015)***
www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/HousingInequalities-FullReport.pdf
This report provides analysis on equality issues pertaining to housing.
- **NIHE Homelessness Strategy 2017-22**
www.nihe.gov.uk/homelessness_strategy
This sets out the Housing Executive's strategic direction on how it will address homelessness over a 5 year period, and includes information on temporary accommodation.
- **NIHE Waiting List Administrative Data (2014-16)**
 - The Housing Executive provided the Department with waiting list statistics on intimidation cases and those in temporary accommodation.
 - The Housing Executive has provided modelling to the Department on the impacts of proposals 7 and 10, (the removal of intimidation points from the scheme and placing applicants into bands based on similar levels of need).

- The Housing Executive included some questions in its Continuous Tenant Omnibus Survey, which have informed development of the proposals.
- **Census 2011**
www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/census/2011-census
 This primary source provides background data on the proportion of section 75 groups in the general population and data on the tenure in which people live.
- **Homelessness Monitor: Northern Ireland (2016)**
 This independent report is a longitudinal study analysing homelessness in Northern Ireland.
- **Sheffield Hallam University Report: Housing impacts of Welfare Reform in Private Rented Sector (2014)**
 This report concerns Housing Benefit reforms but it contains a qualitative element which sheds some light on the experience of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland.
- **House Condition Survey (2011)**
 This sampled primary source provides further equality data on tenure.
- **Office of National Statistics Integrated Household Survey (2009/10 & 2011/12)**
 This is the largest social survey undertaken by the Office of National Statistics. It provides estimates from approximately 325,000 individual respondents.
- **The Rainbow Project/Council for the Homeless NI, 'Through Our Eyes' Report (2015)**
 The Housing Executive commissioned this research to provide an evidence base on the changing characteristics of homelessness in Northern Ireland, particularly with regard to NI's LGB&T communities.

Further sources were used, such as media reports and voluntary and community sector publications.

3.2. Pre-consultation

From January 2017 onwards, the Department facilitated pre-consultation engagement with a range of key stakeholders. This aimed to uncover any issues and concerns regarding the proposals at the development stage, and, where appropriate, this input was used to inform the final proposals put forward for consultation in September 2017.

Pre-consultation engagement included:

- Ongoing consultation / liaison with the Housing Executive;
- Meetings with key housing sector stakeholders, including the NI Federation of Housing Associations, Housing Associations, Housing Rights Service, Chartered Institute of Housing and Equality Commission NI
- Commissioning and publication of independent recommendations from the Universities of Ulster and Cambridge (at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/fundamental-review-social-housing-allocations-policy>)
- Public events and taking comments on the independent recommendations (compiled in a report at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/summary-views-allocation-social-housing-northern-ireland>)
- Monitoring of wider media and political interest in these issues, e.g. Private Members Motion Debate² (12 September 2016)

3.3. Formal consultation

The Department launched the consultation on “A Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations” on 27 September 2017. The consultation lasted 12 weeks, and included a range of activities, aimed at promoting the widest consultation possible and securing the views of the broad range of stakeholders with an interest in this issue.

The Department notified all applicants on the waiting list (including transfers) that the consultation was taking place – over 51,000 applicants received a mailshot inviting them to attend local consultation events and to respond to the consultation.

All Section 75 contacts held by the Department were notified of the consultation by email or post and provided with a link to the consultation page on the Department’s website.

² <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-12-09-2016.pdf>

A broad range of stakeholders were notified by email, including: local Councils, political representatives, statutory bodies, and voluntary and community groups.

Other activity to promote the consultation included:

Social media and online activity

- All consultation documents and other related information published on the Department's consultation webpage:
 - Easy Read consultation document
 - Draft Equality Impact Assessment
 - Review of social housing allocations policy screening and annexes
 - Rural Needs Impact Assessment
 - Social Inclusion Impact Assessment

Targeted stakeholder engagement

- Presentation to All Party Group on housing in advance of consultation launch
- Highlighting consultation launch to housing sector at Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) conference on launch day
- Five public events across Northern Ireland, attended by over 160 people
- 13 presentations to smaller stakeholder groups, attended by over 230 people

Accessibility

- Easy Read version made available at all public consultation events, and provided directly to consultees on request
- Large print copies provided on request
- Translated copies provided on request
- Electronic note taker made available at public consultation event

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1. Assessment of impact on Section 75 groups

The policy was examined in light of information obtained to assess whether or not there are actual or potential adverse impacts on any of the nine Section 75 categories and to ascertain if action could be taken to promote Equality of Opportunity and/or Good Relations.

The following table sets out each of the proposals within the policy and provides detail of actual or potential adverse impact where it has been identified, mitigation where appropriate and possible, and detail of further action required to determine level of impact i.e. monitor and review.

Assessment of impact of each individual proposal within the Fundamental Review

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
1. An independent tenure-neutral housing advice service for NI	<p>The proposed service should be open to all adults, including those whose immigration status or history of anti-social behaviour means they are ineligible for social housing. <u>This should be an addition to current provision, and therefore beneficial for all.</u></p>	<p>Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A</p>
2 & 3. Changes to eligibility where there has been serious anti-social behaviour	<p>The objective is to have a fair allocation process, reduce nuisance to tenants and strike a better balance between excluding people from the waiting list and prioritising vulnerable groups. The housing advice service and the Housing Executive should assist excluded applicants in ways other than an allocation of a social home. <u>The proposed changes could result in more people being deemed ineligible for social housing because of their serious anti-social behaviour. This may impact young men in particular, as they are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of anti-social behaviour.</u></p>	<p>Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact on young males who are perpetrators of serious antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>Mitigation:- A greater range of solutions to meet housing need, particularly the provision of a housing advice service as at proposal 1.</p> <p>Further action required: none</p>

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
4. NIHE can meet their duty to homeless applicants on a tenure-neutral basis, provided that the accommodation meets certain conditions	This should ensure that the Housing Executive has a greater range of ways to meet its duty to homeless applicants and that it can provide more options for those applicants to meet their housing needs. <u>This should be an addition to current provision, and therefore beneficial for all.</u>	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
5. A greater choice of areas for all applicants	Allows applicants to identify their geographical housing needs more precisely. <u>The proposal should be an addition to current provision, and therefore beneficial for all.</u>	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
6. Greater use of a Mutual Exchange Service	Increasing the proportion of transfer applicants who use Homeswapper may contribute to minimising the time that stock is empty. <u>The proposed service should be an addition to current provision, and therefore beneficial for all.</u>	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
7. The removal of intimidation points from the Selection Scheme	Removing intimidation points from the Selection Scheme would meet the objective of greater parity between applicants in similarly urgent housing need, including	Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact on intimidated households, who are more likely to be

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>those at risk of violence in their own home and others in homes which it is not reasonable for them to occupy. This should ensure that no one type of emergency overrides another.</p> <p>The proposed change would result in victims of intimidation receiving fewer points for re-housing. This would impact on victims of paramilitary intimidation and antisocial behaviour in particular; and to a lesser extent, people intimidated because of sectarianism or on the basis of racial identity, sexual orientation or disability. Data shows that the latter three categories account for less than 15% of intimidated households.</p> <p><u>The Section 75 characteristics of households with intimidation points are examined at Annex A of the screening document. The findings include that:</u></p>	<p>single adults, in younger age groups and of white or unknown ethnicity. In terms of religion, such households are more likely to be of unknown religion, and those allocated are more likely to be of no or unknown religion.</p> <p>While intimidated households will no longer receive 'over-riding' priority for re-housing, they will still be entitled to removal from the threat of violence and full duty homeless applicant status and accompanying points for re-housing.</p> <p>There is expected to be a potential beneficial impact for households in high housing need across all Section 75 groups. Although numbers are small, it may be beneficial for people with dependants as shown in the NIHE modelling (Annex D of the consultation document).</p>

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>- compared to all households on the waiting list and all allocated households, those with intimidation points were more likely to be single adults.</p> <p>- compared to the waiting list as a whole, applicants with intimidation points were more likely to be of unknown religion. Compared to all allocated households, those with intimidation points were less likely to be Catholic, and more likely to be of no, or unknown, religion.</p> <p><u>- in respect of ethnic group</u>, applicants with intimidation points were slightly more likely to be white or of unknown ethnicity.</p> <p>- in respect of age, applicants with intimidation points were of working age, and more likely to be in the younger age groups.</p>	<p>Mitigation: none at present</p> <p>Further action required: Monitor waiting times for key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is as a result of removal of intimidation points from the Selection Scheme (particularly in respect of religious belief, age, disability, dependants and ethnic group. Gender and marital status are less informative on this issue as they only reflect the main applicant in a household. The Housing Executive does not collect quantitative data on sexual orientation or political opinion, but qualitative research may provide a means to monitor change).</p> <p>If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does in fact reflect the desired outcomes of ensuring a more accurate waiting list</p>

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
		that reflects current housing circumstances, and that those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need.
8. Points should reflect current circumstances for all applicants	Should make the Selection Scheme fairer and more transparent to all applicants as they know they will be assessed on their current circumstances. <u>The proposed change should be fairer for all and result in a more accurate waiting list. Applicants whose points were historically protected will no longer receive this protection. The change will ensure that access to social housing reflects current housing need.</u>	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
9. The removal of Interim Accommodation points from the Selection Scheme	By removing Interim Accommodation Points, those homeless applicants who opt for other temporary accommodation (i.e. not arranged by the Housing Executive) would no longer be treated less favourably. The high level of need of people who are homeless should continue to be reflected in the 70 Full Duty Applicant points and points for individual housing circumstances. Our proposal for greater recognition of	Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact for homeless households in NIHE-sourced temporary accommodation. However, proposal 10 will deliver benefits to all homeless applicants with longer waiting times, as greater recognition is given to time waiting.

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>time waiting through banding, combined with points should deliver the outcome that those waiting longest in high levels of need will have a greater likelihood of receiving an offer of a social home.</p> <p><u>The proposed change should be fairer for all. Homeless households, who source their own accommodation, or share with family / friends, would indirectly benefit.</u></p> <p>The Section 75 characteristics of households with interim accommodation points are examined at Annex B of the screening document. The findings include that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compared to all households on the waiting list and all allocated households, those with interim accommodation points were less likely to be elderly and more likely to be families; - Compared to all households on the waiting list, those with interim accommodation points were more likely to be of Catholic or other religion and less likely to be of Protestant religion. Compared to all allocated households, those with interim 	<p>Mitigation: none at present</p> <p>Further action required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor waiting times for key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is as a result of removal of interim accommodation points from the Selection Scheme (particularly in respect of religious belief, age, disability, dependents and ethnic group. Gender and marital status are less informative on this issue as they only reflect the main applicant in a household. NIHE does not collect quantitative data on sexual orientation or political opinion, but qualitative research may provide a means to monitor change). • If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>accommodation points were more likely to be of Catholic religion and less likely to be of Protestant religion;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compared to all households on the waiting list, those with interim accommodation points were less likely to be white and more likely to be of Black African, other or unknown ethnicity. Compared to all allocated households, those with interim accommodation points were slightly more likely to be white or of unknown ethnicity; - Compared to all households on the waiting list and all allocated households, those with interim accommodation points were more likely to be in the younger age groups. 	<p>in fact reflect the desired outcome of a more accurate waiting list that reflects current housing circumstances. In particular, consideration should be given to whether average waiting times are falling for those in temporary accommodation or if further changes to the scheme are required.</p>
<p>10. The Scheme should place applicants into bands based on similar levels of need</p>	<p>This measure should give greater priority to those applicants who have spent the longest time in a high degree of housing need. If this proposal is implemented, it should mean that over time, there should be a</p>	<p>Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact for those with high housing need, who have not been waiting a long time. Mitigation: none at present</p>

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>reduction in the number of applicants in high need who have been waiting a very long time.</p> <p>The screening document* provides information on waiting times across the Section 75 groups. It showed that the longest waiting times for those in housing stress are found among those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whose religious background is ‘undisclosed’ (33 months) • aged 60-64 (30 months) and 65 or over (41 months) • Who are separated (31 months), married (39 months) and widowed (37 months) <p>The Department commissioned analysis from its Analytical Services Unit (Social Housing Waiting List paper, 2017)*, which looked at waiting times by age, religion and dependants, but did not identify which are the determining variables. A policy analysis of the statistical report (Analysis of ASU research paper, 2017)* identified differences in waiting times between Protestant and Catholic households, where age and family status might be determining and compounding factors. The policy analysis cannot address the question of which of the three key variables has any influence, or</p>	<p>Further action required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor waiting times for key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is as a result of changes to the Selection Scheme (particularly in respect of religious belief, age, disability, dependents and ethnic group. The Housing Executive does not collect quantitative data on sexual orientation or political opinion, but qualitative research may provide a means to monitor change. Gender and marital status are less informative on this issue as they only reflect the main applicant in a household.). • If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does in fact reflect the desired outcome of ensuring that those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need. In

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	<p>the greatest influence, on waiting times. <u>The proposal to give greater recognition to time waiting, based on level of need, reflects the finding that some Section 75 groups are waiting for a very long time – in a high level of need – to access social housing. The proposal should therefore be beneficial for all those in high need, who are experiencing long waiting times.</u></p> <p>* These documents were published alongside the 2017 consultation documents</p>	<p>particular, consideration should be given to whether average waiting times are falling for those in the highest need or if further changes to the scheme are required.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Aligning the bedroom requirements and the overcrowding rules for the Selection Scheme with those of Housing Benefit should ensure a more consistent approach, avoid confusion for applicants and enable good housing management.</p>	<p>Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A</p>
<p>12-14. More options for allocating difficult-to-let properties</p>	<p>The proposals aim to minimise the time that stock is empty by facilitating the allocation of all types of properties, including those that are difficult-to-let. These measures should ensure that difficult-to-let properties are let more quickly. They may increase the likelihood</p>	<p>Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A</p>

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	and speed of allocation for applicants in lower housing need. Those in greatest housing need must continue to receive priority, with recognition of their time in need, as properties let by multiple offer or choice-based letting should still go to the applicant (who has shown an interest in the property) in the highest band who has waited longest.	
15. An applicant may receive two reasonable offers of accommodation	Combined with proposal 1 (Housing advice service), 5 (enabling applicants to choose areas that suit their needs), and proposals 13-15 (allocating difficult-to-let properties more effectively), this proposal should, over time, reduce the number of refusals of property and ensure the list moves more smoothly. The Housing Executive's Continuous Tenants' Omnibus Survey evidence (Annex A of the consultation document) shows that 82% of applicants took their first (72%) or second (10%) offer.	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
16. Social landlords may withdraw an offer of accommodation in specified circumstances	Clear provision setting out when an offer can be withdrawn will ensure that the Selection Scheme is fair and transparent, and enable the list to move more smoothly as homes will be available for those who are	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
	eligible and can occupy them without unreasonable delay.	
17. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession/ assignment to a general needs home in limited circumstances where there is evidence an applicant needs it	Greater discretion, particularly in areas of high demand, can ensure the best use is made of public resources.	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
18. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession/ assignment of adapted accommodation or purpose-built wheelchair standard accommodation where	Greater discretion to ensure best use is made of existing adapted stock should ensure the best use is made of public resources. Waiting times for applicants requiring adapted accommodation should reduce. <u>The proposal reflects the additional cost of adapted stock and the current waiting times.</u>	Potential adverse impact: households requesting a policy succession may be impacted. If so, they should be supported to move to more appropriate accommodation under the management transfer process. Mitigation: N/A Further action required:

Proposal	Impact	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation Further Action required
there is evidence an applicant needs it		Monitor waiting times for those needing adapted stock and consider if further action is required. If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does in fact reflect the desired outcomes of ensuring an improved system for the most vulnerable applicants.
19. Updating the Scheme to bring it in line with Public Protection Arrangements NI	Applicants managed under PPANI should not be allocated a permanent home inappropriately in a way that brings risk to the applicant or others	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
20. Specialised properties should be allocated by a separate process outside the Scheme	Given that these households require specific rather than general needs housing, there should be a more bespoke, tenant-focused pathway for those applicants requiring specialised accommodation. To ensure they are housed appropriately, they should not have to 'compete' for specialised properties against those who require general needs housing. <u>This proposal should be fairer for those requiring specialised properties compared to those requiring general needs housing.</u>	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: Monitor waiting times for those requiring specialized properties and take forward a review to determine how specialized properties should be allocated.

4.2. Consultation responses

185 responses were received for the consultation as a whole. A broad range of stakeholders responded to the consultation, including: individuals; housing organisations; social landlords; political parties and other political representatives; voluntary and community groups; and advocacy organisations. A full list of respondents is included in Annex A of this document.

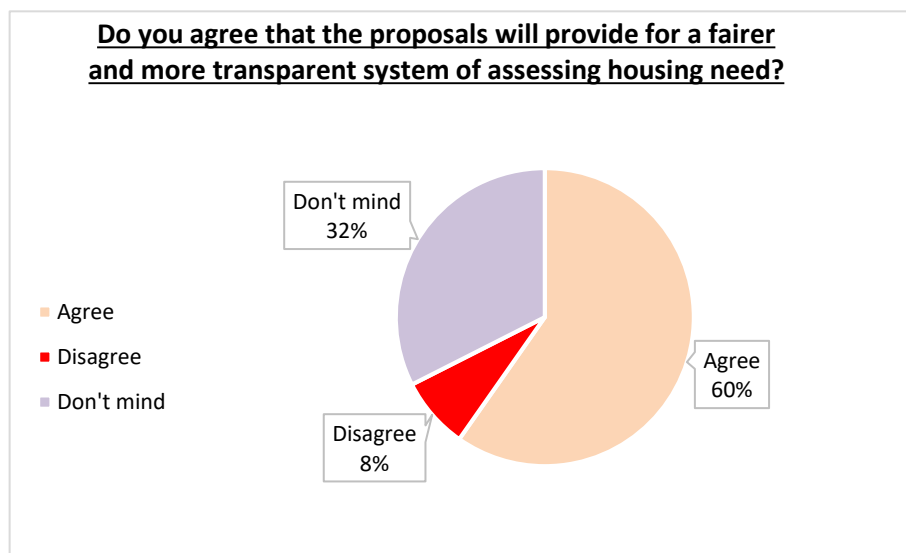
Respondents were asked to comment specifically on the EQIA by answering the questions below. The number of responses varied by question and details are provided for each question.

In addition, a small proportion of respondents commented on equality and the impact on various Section 75 categories in response to each of the proposals – these issues have been noted in the analysis of the relevant proposals, where appropriate.

1. Do you agree that the proposals will provide for a fairer and more transparent system of assessing housing need?

Out of a total 185 responses, 77 (42%) responded to this question.

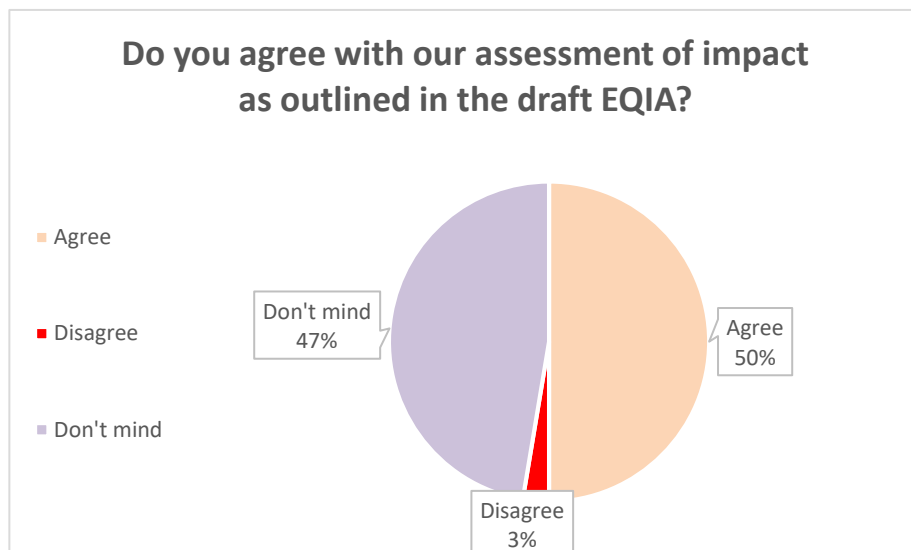
- Of those who indicated a position on this issue, six out of ten (60%) agreed with the statement



2. Do you agree with our assessment of impact as outlined in the draft EQIA?

Out of a total 185 responses, 77 (42%) responded to this question.

- Of those who indicated a position on this issue, one out of two (50%) agreed with the assessment



3. Are there any other pieces of information and evidence relevant to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations that you would like us to consider?

Out of a total 185 responses, 34 (18%) responded to this question.

In answering this question, respondents noted a broad range of issues, rather than providing pieces of information or evidence. These issues have been noted in the analysis of the relevant proposals, where appropriate.

4. Do you have any other comments/views on any aspect of our impact assessment?

Out of a total 185 responses, 25 (13%) responded to this question.

A small number of respondents noted a broad range of issues in relation to equality more broadly. These issues have been noted in the analysis of the relevant proposals, where appropriate.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This section sets out the conclusions of this EQIA and outlines the decision-making process which was adopted. The systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future are also outlined.

5.1. Consideration of adverse impacts/mitigation/action per proposal

Proposal	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation/Further Action required
1. An independent tenure-neutral housing advice service for NI	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
2 & 3. Changes to eligibility where there has been serious anti-social behaviour	Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact on young males who are perpetrators of serious antisocial behaviour. Mitigation:- A greater range of solutions to meet housing need, particularly the provision of a housing advice service as at proposal 1. Further action required: none
4. NIHE can meet their duty to homeless applicants on a tenure-neutral basis, provided that the accommodation meets certain conditions	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
5. A greater choice of areas for all applicants	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
6. Greater use of a Mutual Exchange Service	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
7. The removal of intimidation points from the Selection Scheme	*This proposal will <u>not</u> proceed as per the 2017 consultation. Intimidation points will be retained. Further exploration of this proposal is now

Proposal	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation/Further Action required
	required. This will include further screening as appropriate.
8. Points should reflect current circumstances for all applicants	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
9. The removal of Interim Accommodation points from the Selection Scheme	*This proposal will <u>not</u> proceed as per the 2017 consultation. Intimidation points will be retained. Further exploration of this proposal is now required. This will include further screening as appropriate.
10. The Scheme should place applicants into bands based on similar levels of need	Potential adverse impact: possible adverse impact for those with high housing need, who have not been waiting a long time. Mitigation: none at present Further action required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor waiting times for key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is as a result of changes to the Selection Scheme (particularly in respect of religious belief, age, disability, dependents and ethnic group. The Housing Executive does not collect quantitative data on sexual orientation or political opinion, but qualitative research may provide a means to monitor change. Gender and marital status are less informative on this issue as they only reflect the main applicant in a household.). • If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does in fact reflect the desired outcome of ensuring that those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need. In particular, consideration should be given to whether average waiting times are falling for those in the highest need or if further changes to the scheme are required.
11. The Selection Scheme should always align the number of	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A

Proposal	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation/Further Action required
bedrooms a household is assessed to need with the size criteria for eligible Housing Benefit customers.	
12-14. More options for allocating difficult-to-let properties	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
15. An applicant may receive two reasonable offers of accommodation	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
16. Social landlords may withdraw an offer of accommodation in specified circumstances	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
17. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession/ assignment to a general needs home in limited circumstances where there is evidence an applicant needs it	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A
18. Social landlords may withhold consent for a policy succession/ assignment of adapted accommodation or purpose-built wheelchair standard accommodation where there is evidence an applicant needs it	Potential adverse impact: households requesting a policy succession may be impacted. If so, they should be supported to move to more appropriate accommodation under the management transfer process. Mitigation: N/A Further action required: Monitor waiting times for those needing adapted stock and consider if further action is required. If an impact is identified, it should be determined whether the impact does in fact reflect the desired outcomes of ensuring an improved system for the most vulnerable applicants.
19. Updating the Scheme to bring it in line with Public	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: N/A

Proposal	Actual or potential adverse impact Mitigation/Further Action required
Protection Arrangements NI	
20. Specialised properties should be allocated by a separate process outside the Scheme	Adverse impact: none Mitigation: N/A Further action required: Monitor waiting times for those requiring specialised properties and take forward a review to determine how specialised properties should be allocated.

5.2. Measures to mitigate

Having considered available data and research and considered any adverse impact which might arise out of the policy, it is proposed that the Department will take the following action in respect of the adverse impacts identified:-

- Provide a greater range of solutions to meet housing need, specifically the provision of a housing advice service as at proposal 1.
- Determine any impact as a result of changes to the Selection Scheme by monitoring waiting times for:
 - key Section 75 groups to determine if any impact is a result of giving greater weight to time waiting
 - those needing adapted stock
 - those requiring specialised properties

Note that key Section 75 groups are those in respect of religious belief, age, disability, dependants and ethnic group. The Housing Executive does not collect quantitative data on sexual orientation or political opinion of households on the waiting list, but qualitative research may provide a means to monitor change. Gender and marital status are less informative in the context of waiting lists as they only record the main applicant in a household.

- Undertake reviews to determine
 - any impacts arising from two new proposals in relation to intimidation points and interim accommodation points
 - whether the impact of landlord discretion over policy succession / assignment reflects the desired outcome of an improved system for the most vulnerable applicants
 - how specialised properties should be allocated

These measures, when implemented, should further Equality of Opportunity generally, in compliance with the Department's obligations in its Equality Scheme and with its obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

5.3. Monitoring

As part of the normal operation and maintenance of the Scheme, equality impacts, post EQIA and proposal finalisation, will be monitored by the Housing Executive on an ongoing basis.

6. POLICY DECISION

The final policy decision has been informed by: consideration of the findings of the draft EQIA; consideration of the consultation findings; and consideration of mitigations.

18 of the 20 proposals will proceed as per the 2017 consultation. Further exploration of proposals 7 and 9 are required as these will not proceed as per the consultation. Details, as currently available, in relation to implementation next steps have been included in the consultation outcome report. This report is published alongside this Final EQIA report.

7. PUBLICATION

The outcomes of this EQIA will be published in the form of a consultation report on the Department's website: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/fundamental-review-social-housing-allocations>

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including large print, Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Social Housing Policy Team
Department for Communities
Level 3, Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG
E-mail: allocations@communities-ni.gov.uk

ANNEX A

Full list of respondents

Action for Children
Advice NI
Apex
Ards & North Down Borough Council
British Red Cross
Central Housing Forum
Council for the Homeless IN
Choice
Choice Tenants' Forum
Chartered Institute of Housing NI
Citizens Advice
Clanmil
Community Relations Council
Connswater Homes
Co-ownership Housing
Did not specify - 4
Disability Action and NIHE Disability Forum
Drumcree Community Trust
East Belfast Community Development Agency
Equality Commission
Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
First Housing
Green Party
Housing Council
Housing Policy Panel
Housing Rights
Housing students – 50
Jim Shannon MP
Law Centre NI
Members of the public – 63
Mencap
Mid Ulster District Council
Migrant Centre NI
NI Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NI Federation of Housing Associations
NI Local Government Association
NI Public Service Alliance
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Organisation unknown – 13

Participation and the Practice of Rights
Praxis Care
Radius
Rural Community Network
Shelter NI
Simon Community
Sinn Fein
Social Democratic and Labour Party
South and East Belfast Housing Community Network
Supporting Communities Staff
The Royal College of Psychiatrists
Ulster Unionist Party
Voice of Young People in Care
WAVE Trauma Centre
West Belfast & Shankill Housing Community Network
West Belfast Partnership Board
Women's Aid
Women's Regional Consortium
Workers Party