
Fundamental review of
Social Housing Allocations
Social Inclusion Impact Assessment

SOCIAL INCLUSION ASSESSMENT: REVIEW OF SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

When is a Social Inclusion Impact Assessment Required?

If the answer to any of the screening questions in the table below is yes, consideration should be given to undertaking a social inclusion impact assessment.

In undertaking the assessment it is only necessary to address the relevant questions highlighted by the screening tool.

([Executive Office Impact Assessment Guidance](#))

www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/effective-policy-making-workbook-four-practical-guide-impact-assessment

BACKGROUND

What is social housing allocations policy?

If you want to rent a home from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) or a Housing Association, you apply to the NIHE. The NIHE has to have a scheme to decide which people are prioritised for homes when they become available. The scheme is made up of rules to make sure everyone is treated fairly. Housing Associations in Northern Ireland have agreed to use the same scheme as the NIHE. It is referred to as the Housing Selection Scheme or the Common Selection Scheme. In the rest of this document it is called the Selection Scheme. When the social landlord finds a tenant a home they 'allocate' the home or 'make an allocation'. This review of allocations policy is to decide if changes to the rules of the Selection Scheme are necessary.

Why a review?

The Selection Scheme has not changed much since November 2000. The NIHE looked at the Selection Scheme in 2011 and suggested some changes to the Department for Communities. The Department decided there was an opportunity to look at allocations of social housing in a more fundamental way.

Who is responsible for the review?

The NIHE must have an allocations scheme which is approved by the Department. The Department has led the review, with input from the NIHE. The NIHE has also carried out research on some of the proposals. The Department has consulted with other stakeholders, including Housing Associations, about the proposals as they developed.

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Some key facts on the Social Housing Sector in Northern Ireland

There are approximately 120,000 social homes in Northern Ireland. Each year, approximately 10,000 households are allocated a home (or transfer within the social sector). There are around 37,500 households on the waiting list for a social home, of whom about 22,500 are considered to be in 'housing stress' (i.e. they have 30 points or more as assessed by the Selection Scheme). Approximately 15,000 households on the waiting list are statutorily homeless.

Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy

It is important to note that the review of the social housing allocations policy is itself a mitigating measure; to provide more options for applicants and to make the allocations system fairer and more transparent for all, including the most disadvantaged in our society.

The review aims to achieve the following outcomes:

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

More information is available in the consultation document at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/allocations-review

Impact Assessments

A Section 75 screening document considered each proposal and its potential impact across all S75 groups. Given the scale of social housing and complexity of the scheme the Department decided to conduct a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA), which will be subject to the public consultation alongside the proposals. This exercise will enable further evidence gathering.

A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has also been completed.

All of these documents are available at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/allocations-review

**SOCIAL INCLUSION ASSESSMENT:
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Poverty & Social Exclusion Screening Questions	Response to Screening Questions		Full Impact Assessment Required?		Justification / Key issues and groups to focus on
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Will the policy involve the spending of public monies, the allocation of non-financial resources or the delivery of a service?	√			√	<p>The Housing Selection Scheme is delivered across Northern Ireland. Its fundamental principle will remain: that is, to allocate social housing to those in greatest need.</p> <p>One of the desired outcomes of the review is to ensure better use of public resources by ensuring the waiting list moves more smoothly.</p>
Will the policy impact on socially excluded or vulnerable groups or involve the delivery of a service within or to socially excluded areas?	√			√	<p>The current Housing Selection Scheme impacts on socially excluded / vulnerable groups (including homeless households). The proposals for change aim to improve housing outcomes for these groups, for example through provision of an independent, tenure-neutral housing advice service. One of the desired outcomes of the review is to ensure that those in greatest housing need receive priority, with recognition of their time in need.</p> <p>The public consultation on the proposals for change will use various accessible communications channels and will target specific 'harder to reach' groups.</p>
Will the policy address or impact on measures to promote employment or employability among the most disadvantaged?		√			

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	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Will the policy address or impact on other areas of inequality and disadvantage such as health, education and housing?	√			√	<p>The Housing Selection Scheme currently aims to prioritise those in greatest housing need, and this will continue. The proposals for change support five desired outcomes, including an improved system for the most vulnerable applicants.</p> <p>By its very nature housing is inextricably linked to health and well-being. Whilst the proposals will not address health inequalities per se, they include measures to give recognition to time in housing need, and to improve the allocation of specialised or adapted homes which should help people with disabilities or chronic health issues, or those who care for dependants with these issues.</p>
CONCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Selection Scheme will continue to prioritise those in greatest housing need. • The desired outcomes for the review are to provide a greater range of solutions to housing need; improve the system for the most vulnerable applicants; deliver a more accurate waiting list that reflects current housing circumstances, give greater recognition to time in housing need, and make better use of public resources by ensuring the list moves more smoothly. • The Department will consider any adverse impacts identified during the consultation period. • Equality impacts will be monitored, particularly any impact on waiting times. Any mitigation measures that are required will be determined depending on the monitoring findings; and a review is proposed of how specialised properties are allocated. 				