

28th August 2026

NIFHA response to Housing (Amendment Bill) – Call for Evidence

About NIFHA:

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA), formed in 1977, is the representative body for Northern Ireland's 19 registered housing associations. Our members are all not-for-profit organisations. Together, supported by the Department for Communities and the Housing Executive, they provide over 62,000 social and affordable homes. Housing associations access private finance to effectively double the number of homes that could be delivered with government housing association grant alone.

Housing associations also deliver high-quality care and support to help people stay as independent as possible. Working in partnership with other organisations, they also invest millions each year in community services and facilities. Our sector employs more than 3,400 people and manages total assets of £5.42 bn. NIFHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Committee for Communities call for evidence on the Housing (Amendment) Bill.

Response to call for evidence:

NIFHA support the principle of extending the period during which a person is considered to be threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 60 days. It is our view that increasing this window should provide the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other relevant statutory agencies with more time to intervene and engage with households and explore measures that may prevent homelessness.

However, while the proposed 60-day period represents a positive step, we would have concerns that it may still be insufficient in many cases to prevent individuals or households from requiring emergency or temporary accommodation. Waiting times for the allocation of a social home are already significant, reflecting the acute shortage of available social homes and the exceptionally high level of housing need across Northern Ireland.

NIFHA would also emphasise that if the legislation is amended to a 60-day period, there must also be adequate additional funding for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the relevant support organisations responsible for responding to the extended duty. The proposed change will undoubtedly have operational and financial implications, including increased demand for advice, assessment and homelessness-prevention support. These responsibilities should not be absorbed within already constrained budgets. In particular, the preventative work delivered through the Supporting People Programme must be properly and sustainably funded. The Supporting People Programme plays an essential role in helping individuals and families to sustain their tenancy, addressing the circumstances putting their tenancy at risk and avoiding homelessness. These services must have sufficient capacity and long term funding to provide timely, meaningful and effective support.

In a review of the period during which a person is considered to be threatened with homelessness, consideration should also be given to improving how public services identify and refer to people who might be at risk of homelessness. Organisations across health, social care, justice, education and other public services will often come into contact with individuals and families experiencing circumstances that could put them at risk of homelessness. Strengthening the ability of these organisations to make timely referrals to the appropriate housing and support services could facilitate earlier intervention, improve collaboration and increase the possibility of homelessness being prevented.

In conclusion, it is our view that we support the proposal in principle, but we emphasise that it must form part of a wider and adequately resourced and collaborative approach to homelessness prevention, housing support and social housing delivery.

ENDS