

Response ID ANON-7T4Q-8A4U-J

Submitted to Housing (Amendment) Bill - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2026-08-26 16:00:10

Consent and introduction

What is your name?

Name:

[REDACTED]

What is your email address?

Email address box:

[REDACTED]

If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please state its name.

Organisation name box:

Shelter NI

Please confirm you have read the Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee privacy notice by clicking the button below.

I have read the privacy notice

Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report?

Yes, publish in full.

General views on the Bill

Do you support the overall purpose of the Housing (Amendment) Bill?

No

Please explain your answer, including any areas where you believe the Bill should be amended.:

While this single amendment is a step forward and should in theory help, it will make no substantial difference in real terms. The NIHE already has power to step in before the 30 day "trigger" however, it does not have a DUTY to intervene. We understand that the resources are not available for this measure now, and are not likely to be put in place to back up this legislation.

Many English authorities use this duty/power to negotiate settlements with landlords to resolve disputes and ensure landlords only regain possession of properties through the courts and not by underhand means. How would this be replicated in NI and who would be given this role?

Current 28-day period

Do you consider that the current 28-day period provides adequate protection for people who are threatened with homelessness?

No

Please explain your answer, including any practical examples or evidence.:

In the current housing market climate, giving a family only four weeks to find alternative accommodation is unfair and almost an impossible task. It often means that they are forced to move away from their communities into unsuitable housing out of desperation.

Proposed 60-day period — Clause 1

Clause 1 would amend the definition of "threatened with homelessness" so that a person is included if they are likely to become homeless within 60 days rather than 28 days. Do you support this change?

Yes

What impact would this change have on homelessness prevention?

Text box for entering data:

60 days is obviously better than 28, but still not sufficient. As the change relates to a separate change in landlord/tenant law, it would be better to expand this provision to cover anyone served a valid Notice to Quit.

This change will only have an impact if there are resources to allow prevention by conciliation or negotiation to be part of the assistance provided. It should however, allow the NIHE and other partners more time to find alternative temporary accommodation if needed. Of course, this is not a homelessness prevention measure.

Practical impact on people at risk of homelessness

Would extending the period to 60 days make it more likely that homelessness can be prevented before a person or household reaches crisis point?

Yes

Please explain your answer.:

This will only happen if there is an accompanying service to persuade landlords to withdraw notices. Otherwise there will be no improvement. Many authorities in England do focus on that aspect, and the replication of the English ban on "no fault evictions" would have a much more significant impact.

Once a notice to quit is issued the person/family is already at crisis point. Earlier interventions on matters likely to lead to Notice to Quit, such as debt counselling, a suitable level of Housing Benefit and Supporting People floating support, are the primary ways to prevent crisis.

Temporary accommodation and housing supply

Could the Bill increase demand for temporary accommodation, including non-standard accommodation such as hotels or B&Bs?

No

If so, how should this risk be addressed?:

As the change could potentially double the number of cases being supported, there would be resource issues in terms of the assistance service. However, as alternative accommodation is only required when the notice expires, there should not in practice be any increase in need for that accommodation. In reality, if the NIHE and partners act to ensure eviction is only ever carried out on the strength of a Court Order, and tenants are protected against illegal harassment/eviction, a significant reduction in recourse to hotel accommodation is likely.

Commencement — Clause 2

Clause 2 provides that the Act would come into operation 6 months after Royal Assent. Is this an appropriate period to allow for preparation and implementation?

Yes

Please explain your answer.:

There is no need to delay application of this provision. No significant preparation is required unless training and support is needed for the NIHE and partners. Any further delays are detrimental to people facing the prospect of notice to quit.

Suggested amendments

Please identify any specific amendments you would suggest, including the relevant clause where possible.

A textbox for adding comments:

In order to cover forms of accommodation other than tenancies [licences, informal arrangements etc.] we propose adding "or has been served a valid Notice to Quit their current main/sole residence". This will allow people to seek assistance as soon as notice is given (if more than 60 days). It would also remove the need to amend this clause again (if separate legislation in the future extends the legal minimum notice period).

In terms of additional amendments, this may also be an opportunity to re-visit Article 7a of the 1988 legislation which excludes persons subject to immigration control from all forms of assistance. It is unacceptable to consider victims of racial harassment, as not being owed a duty of care by Government. The 1988 provision appears to allow the Secretary of State to make this amendment.