

Response ID ANON-Z841-1V31-2

Submitted to Justice Bill

Submitted on 2025-03-05 12:31:55

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:

Julie Steele

What is your email address?

Email:

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

Organisation:

Chartered Institute of Housing

The Committee for Justice has agreed to publish all responses as part of the survey results. If you would like to have your survey results anonymised and for us not to publish your name or organisation, please indicate so here.

I am content for my information, including details of my name and organisation, to be published in the survey results.

Amendment: Repeal of vagrancy legislation

Do you have any comments on the proposed vagrancy amendment to the Bill?

Yes

Please provide information to support your answer here::

CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) strongly supports the Departments plan to decriminalise rough sleeping and begging through the repeal of the relevant provisions of the Vagrancy Act 1824 and the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847. We commend the Minister for Justice for bringing forward these proposals.

CIH is against the criminalisation of rough sleeping and begging. We believe that it is not an effective way to address the issue of homelessness and that it can make the situation worse for people who are already in a vulnerable position.

CIH supported the repeal of the Vagrancy Act in England and Wales, which made it a crime to sleep rough or beg and we continue to press for its early commencement without it being contingent on replacement coercive measures. Section 4 of the 1824 Act was repealed in Scotland in 1982 without any replacement and we aren't aware of any adverse consequences. A review of the use of section 3 and 4 powers by police forces in England and Wales carried out the English Homelessness Minister found that in many police force areas it was unused suggesting that its use elsewhere was wholly unnecessary. We therefore call for its complete repeal without replacement powers in Northern Ireland. This law is outdated, and it criminalises people for being poor and homeless.

CIH also believes there are better ways to address the issue of homelessness, such as providing more affordable housing and support services for people who are homeless. We suggest this approach is more effective and more humane than criminalising people for being homeless.

In addition to calling for the repeal of the Vagrancy Act, CIH has also called for the government to invest more in affordable housing and support services for people who are homeless. We believe this is the best way to address the root causes of homelessness and to help people who are homeless to rebuild their lives.