

Written Ministerial Statement

The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Minister. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

Department for Communities

HOUSING EXECUTIVE RENT FREEZE

Published on 16 February 2022.

Ms Hargey (The Minister for Communities): I wish to advise you of my decision to freeze the Housing Executive's rent in the incoming financial year at 2021-22 levels. There will be no rent increase this year for those tenants living in Housing Executive homes in order to support residents in the face of the cost-of-living crisis.

As Communities Minister my top priority is to support people, particularly the most vulnerable in our society, who are facing soaring fuel and household bills. So today I am announcing that I will freeze Housing Executive rent levels for 2022/23 so as to not place any further financial burden on individuals and families trying hard each day to make ends meet.

This follows the recent success in closing the loopholes in welfare mitigation schemes meaning top-up payments will be available to more people who currently have their benefits reduced because of the 'bedroom tax' and benefit cap. As Members of this Assembly will be aware I have also announced a £200 payment to support 280,000 eligible people in meeting their energy costs.

I have set out the biggest reform of social housing in 50 years. At the heart of this is the revitalisation of the Housing Executive. I am committed to that agenda as it is all about delivering better outcomes for tenants including improving the quality of their homes.

Right now, tenants need security and a freeze in their rents will provide a bit of stability on an important housing cost in an uncertain climate.

The rent freeze applies only to Housing Executive tenants. Rent levels in Housing Associations are an issue for each Housing Association Board. I would call upon Housing Associations to also consider the financial pressures their tenants are facing when considering their rent levels.

Every household, including all those across the social housing sector, are facing unprecedented living costs and I would call on them to be mindful of the times we are in when considering rent levels.