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Housing (Amendment) Bill

NIAR 270-2026

This Bill paper provides an overview of the Housing (Amendment) Bill as introduced to the Assembly on 30 June 2026. This paper is complemented by [NIAR 248-2026](#) which deals with the potential cost implications of the Bill.

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Key Points

- The [Housing \(Amendment\) Bill](#) (Bill 43/22-27) was introduced by Colm Gildernew MLA on 30 June 2026.
- The Bill contains three clauses, of which clause 1 is substantive. It would amend Article 3(6) of the [Housing \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#) to extend the period within which a person is regarded as “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 60 days.
- [As Introduced](#), the Bill would come into operation at the end of the period of 6 months following the Act receiving Royal Assent.
- The purpose of the Bill is to enable the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to intervene at an earlier stage where a household is at risk of losing their accommodation. The Bill Sponsor has proposed that the current 28 day period is insufficient, particularly where a longer notice period has been given by the accommodation provider and therefore action to prevent homelessness could be taken sooner.
- The proposed Bill is broadly consistent with the direction of homelessness policy in other parts of the UK where there have been moves towards earlier intervention and prevention:
 - England: the period of “threatened with homelessness” is 56 days through Section 175(4) of the [Housing Act 1996](#). This was amended in 2017 by the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#) which replaced the “28” day period with “56” days. The [Homelessness Prevention Bill](#) (2024) was introduced by Bob Blackman, though the Bill made no further progress following the prorogation of parliament in April 2026. Alongside other prevention duties, the Bill aimed to extend the statutory period during which a person is considered “threatened with homelessness” from 56 days to six months.
 - Scotland: the statutory framework defines a person as “threatened with homelessness” if they will become homeless “within 2 months”. This is provided for in Section 24(4) of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#). Section 52 of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#), however, extends the

- definition to circumstances where homelessness could occur within 6 months. This section of the legislation is awaiting implementation.
- Wales: the definition of “threatened with homelessness” is currently 56 days provided for by Section 55 of the [Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). However, Section 1 of the [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Act 2026](#) extends the period from “56 days” to “within 6 months”. The Act also broadens the definition to include where written notice has been given requiring the person to leave their accommodation or an order for possession application has been made to the High Court or county court. This amendment has not yet commenced.
 - Ireland: the [Housing Act 1988](#) does not define a person as “threatened with homelessness” within a specific period, instead providing the definition for a person who is currently experiencing homelessness. The Irish government rely instead on homelessness duties and prevention frameworks, including the [Homelessness Prevention Framework 2025](#).
- The proposed 60 day prevention period would bring Northern Ireland in line with the current 56 day period in England and Wales, and the 2 month window in place in Scotland. As legislation has been enacted in Scotland and Wales providing for a 6 month prevention window, the Committee may wish to consider both the justification for a 60 day period instead of 56 days, as well as whether the proposed period is ambitious enough given legislative developments elsewhere.
 - The Bill Sponsor’s [Consultation Summary](#) suggested strong support for the principle of extending the statutory prevention window: 94% of respondents considered the existing 28 day period inadequate and 83% supported an extension to at least 60 days. However, 91% also supported consideration of a further extension of up to 6 months.
 - The Bill would extend the period during which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s existing statutory responsibilities are engaged. It would not introduce the wider statutory prevention duties that form part of homelessness legislation elsewhere. The effectiveness of the longer

statutory window would depend on the preventative actions taken once a household has been identified as being at risk of homelessness.

- Members may wish to consider whether the proposed extension should be accompanied by wider prevention duties, the provision of additional resources and/or statutory responsibilities for cross-public body cooperation. The Committee may therefore wish to consider whether the Bill represents a sufficient reform in itself or is a first step towards wider legislative change.
- As being homeless or “threatened with homelessness” remains part of the qualifying tests for Full Duty Applicant status, the proposal could result in that status being applied earlier where the other criteria are met. This could have implications for temporary accommodation and housing demand.
- The financial and operational impact of the proposal is uncertain. While earlier prevention may reduce the number of households ultimately becoming homeless or requiring temporary accommodation, lengthening the period of statutory responsibility could also increase NIHE caseloads, staffing requirements and temporary accommodation need.
- The Northern Ireland Audit Office reported that 4,700 households were in temporary accommodation in 2023-2024 compared to 1,700 households in 2017. The costs of temporary accommodation to the NIHE in 2023-2024 were almost £39 million.¹
- A Review of Costs has been prepared for the Committee, which can be found here: NIAR 248-2026.
- Scrutiny of this Bill comes alongside the Minister for Communities’ recent announcement of a new [Homelessness Commission to review Northern Ireland’s homelessness legislation](#).

¹ Northern Ireland Audit Office, ‘[Homelessness in Northern Ireland](#)’, (25 March 2025).

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1 Background to the Bill

1.1 Current Legislation in Northern Ireland

The principal statutory framework for homelessness in Northern Ireland is contained in the [Housing \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#). The 1988 Order:

- Places the statutory responsibility for homelessness on the Housing Executive.
- Provides statutory definitions for key terms such as “homelessness”, “threatened with homelessness”, and “priority need”.
- Sets out the duties of the Housing Executive with respect to those who are homeless, threatened with homelessness, and in priority need.
- Provides for a process of review and appeal for certain Housing Executive decisions about homelessness.

In 2025, the Committee for Communities commissioned the research paper [Homelessness: a comparison of legislative frameworks in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales](#). This research paper sets out the amendments that have been made to the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 legislation over time.

[The Housing \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#) requires the NIHE to investigate cases of homelessness or threatened homelessness; provide interim accommodation where there is an apparent priority need; take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of accommodation for households threatened with homelessness; and secure accommodation for applicants who are eligible, homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless.

The legislation also places a broader duty on the NIHE to provide advice and information on homelessness and the prevention of homelessness to any person in Northern Ireland free of charge.

Article 3(6) of the 1988 Order defines that a person is “threatened with homelessness” where it is likely that they will become homeless within 28 days of giving written notice to the Housing Executive.

Article 11(2) provides that where the Housing Executive is satisfied that an applicant has a priority need and did not become threatened with homelessness intentionally, it shall take reasonable steps to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for their occupation.

The proposed Bill would alter the point at which a person could be defined as being threatened with homelessness and therefore extend the period in which the Housing Executive would have a statutory duty to intervene.

1.2 The Bill Proposal

The Housing (Amendment) Bill was introduced by Colm Gildernew MLA on 30 June 2026. The Bill (as introduced) proposes to amend Article 3(6) of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 to extend the period within which a person is regarded as “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 60 days.

The purpose of the Bill is to enable the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to intervene at an earlier stage where a household is at risk of losing their accommodation.² The Bill Sponsor has proposed that the current 28 day period is insufficient, particularly where a longer notice period has been given by the accommodation provider and therefore action to prevent homelessness could be taken sooner.

The Bill Sponsor raised the issue of the interaction between homelessness legislation and the private rented sector. [The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum](#) (EFM) notes that, under the [Private Tenancies Act \(2022\)](#), a private tenant can receive notice to quit their accommodation up to 56 days before they are required to leave. Under current legislation, the NIHE is not required to determine that the household is threatened with homelessness until they come within the 28 day statutory period. The Bill Sponsor has described this a problematic gap where the risk of homelessness is known but the statutory prevention duties are not engaged.³

² Housing (Amendment) Bill, [The Explanatory and Financial Memorandum](#) (EFM), p. 6.

³ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

The Bill Sponsor maintains that by extending the period from 28 days to 60 days, the NIHE would have a longer window in which to work with households to prevent homelessness.⁴ This could allow more time for a solution to be identified before the accommodation is lost or alternative suitable accommodation to be found.

The Bill Sponsor proposes that where these measures prevent homelessness from occurring, demand for temporary accommodation could be reduced, as could the costs of responding to homelessness once it has occurred.⁵

The Bill Sponsor believes that the provisions contained within the Bill would have “[...] a net positive financial impact as it will lead to more homelessness being prevented, which is the most cost-effective way of dealing with homelessness.”⁶

A Review of Costs has been prepared for the Committee, which can be found here: NIAR 248-2026.

1.3 Impact of the Bill

The [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#) from January to March 2026 reported that the total number of applicants on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) waiting list was 50,381. Of these, 39,008 households were under ‘housing stress’ and 33,412 had Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status.⁷

The [Housing Bulletin](#) from April to June 2026 reported that the total number of applicants on the NIHE waiting list had increased to 50,891. Of these, 39,617 households were in ‘housing stress’ and 34,091 households had Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status.

The Housing Bulletin also reports the number of households awarded Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status each quarter. These figures represent new households accepted during the reporting period, while the overall number of applicants on

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ‘Housing stress’ means that an applicant has 30 or more points under the social housing selection scheme. See: Department for Communities, [Housing Selection Scheme](#) for information.

the NIHE waiting list with Full Duty Applicant status (34,091) reflects all households at that point in time.

The total number of households accepted as Full Duty Applicants in the first quarter ending 31 March 2026 was 2,627.⁸ From April to 30 June 2026, the number of households accepted as Full Duty Applicants was 2,422.⁹ This means that the total number of households accepted as Full Duty Applicants in 2026 up to 30 June has been 5,049.

The total number of households awarded Full Duty Applicant status for the year 2024-2025 was 10,855. In 2025-2026, the number was 10,852.¹⁰

[The next Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin is due to be published in November 2026]

The NIHE uses 'housing stress' as the metric to identify applicants for permanent social housing who have the highest, most urgent levels of housing need. An applicant is assessed under the rules of the [Northern Ireland Housing Selection Scheme](#) and awarded points based on four main categories of need.

Full Duty Applicant status is awarded to applicants who meet the following four criteria:

1. Eligibility: the applicant is eligible for assistance;
2. Homelessness: this includes being statutorily "threatened with homelessness";
3. Priority need: the applicant falls within a priority need category; and
4. Intentionality: the applicant did not become homeless or threatened with homelessness intentionally.

Where these are satisfied, Full Duty Applicant status is awarded and the person is entitled to temporary accommodation while they wait for permanent housing.

The proposed amendment to extend the period in which a household can be "threatened with homelessness" from 28 to 60 days could allow for an earlier

⁸ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#): January-March 2026 (28 May 2026).

⁹ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#): April-June 2026 (27 August 2026).

¹⁰ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Housing Bulletin](#): January-March 2026 (28 May 2026).

assessment of homelessness. If an applicant also meets the other statutory tests, they may be eligible for Full Duty Applicant status earlier than under the present legislation.

The Committee may wish to seek further clarification from the Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on the operational impact of the proposed amendment.

An estimate has not been given as to the number of additional households that would be brought within the NIHE's statutory responsibility by moving from 28 days to 60 days. The Bill Sponsor also acknowledges that it is "difficult to quantify" the impact on existing housing supply.¹¹

The proposed amendment is intended, however, to enable the NIHE to intervene at an earlier stage and to use preventative measures to help households retain their accommodation or secure alternative accommodation.¹²

The Bill Sponsor believes that most people contacting the NIHE within the additional 28 day period would wish to remain in their existing tenancy.¹³ The Bill Sponsor maintains that the number of households requiring temporary accommodation could therefore be relatively low.¹⁴

The Bill Sponsor also acknowledged in the [Consultation Summary](#) that the Bill as proposed may increase NIHE caseload and that additional staff could be required. The potential extent of this increase has not yet been outlined.

The following points may warrant further scrutiny:

- Has there been engagement with the NIHE or the Department on the extent to which caseloads could increase because of the extension of statutory responsibility?

¹¹ [Housing \(Amendment\) Bill, EFM](#), p. 9.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 9

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

- Have the associated administrative and operational costs of this increase in caseload for the NIHE been outlined?
- Have the costs of additional prevention and intervention activities been similarly set out?
- Could the proposed extension result in earlier Full Duty Applicant awards and would this then lead to increased demand for temporary accommodation?
- Could the extension result in additional costs associated with furniture storage and transport, taxis and transport (e.g. transport to temporary accommodation) costs?
- Could the extension have an impact on demand for [Supporting People](#) services?

1.4 Impact Assessments

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places statutory equality duties on designated public authorities. The Bill Sponsor was satisfied that the Bill would not adversely affect any section 75 group, and an Equality Impact Assessment was therefore not undertaken.¹⁵

The Equality Commission were engaged with and no potential adverse effects of the Bill were identified, noting that it may positively affect access to housing.

The [Explanatory and Financial Memorandum](#) also considers the Bill to be compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 9-10.

The EFM does not give a separate Rural Needs Impact Assessment. The Committee may therefore wish to consider whether further impact assessments would assist in the scrutiny of the Bill.

2 Consultation

2.1 Overview

The Bill Sponsor wrote to the Minister for Communities on 1 August 2024 to ensure that no legislation was being developed by his Department to achieve this policy objective. The Minister indicated in writing that he had no plans to bring forward any legislation on this topic within the current mandate.¹⁷

The Bill Sponsor conducted a public consultation on the proposed amendment for a period of 14 weeks from 30 July 2024. The consultation received 174 responses, including from housing support organisations, people with experience of homelessness and private individuals. A period of stakeholder engagement followed the consultation period.

The Consultation Summary can be found [here](#).

The consultation outcome report maintains that there was a high level of support for the principle of extending the statutory period from 28 days, and that the revised period should be at least 60 days. Findings include:

- 94% of respondents did not consider the existing 28 day period adequate protection for people threatened with homelessness;
- 83% supported extending the statutory period from 28 days to at least 60 days; and
- 81% considered that extending to at least 60 days would have a positive impact in reducing the number of people who become homeless.
- 93% considered the number of full duty applicants on the NIHE waiting list indicative of the need for a longer prevention window to assist those threatened with homelessness.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 7.

The consultation also asked whether Northern Ireland should follow the examples of Scotland and Wales and extend the statutory period for up to 6 months. The consultation outcome report states that 91% of respondents agreed that consideration should be given to this. Respondents also largely supported (93%) the proposal that homelessness prevention responsibilities should extend beyond the NIHE.

Over half (54%) of respondents considered that extending the statutory period from 28 days to 60 days would have significant financial implications. There were concerns surrounding the possible cost of providing temporary accommodation, including non-standard temporary accommodation such as hotels and B&Bs.

In response, the Bill Sponsor stated that the plan from the Department for Communities to purchase up to 600 homes over the next 3 years to be used as temporary accommodation would be more than sufficient in meeting any increased demand.¹⁸ The Bill Sponsor also acknowledged that the amendment may increase NIHE caseload and that additional staff could be required.¹⁹ Overall, however, the Bill Sponsor believes that the Bill would have a net positive financial impact as it would lead to more homelessness being prevented.²⁰

Although the majority of respondents were supportive of the proposal, there was concern that if the Bill were enacted in isolation and without a wider legislative preventative duty, it could result in increased provision of temporary accommodation without a corresponding increase in preventative advice and assistance.

2.2 Wider stakeholder engagement

The Bill Sponsor stated that he engaged with the NIHE, The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights

¹⁸ Department for Communities, [Minister announces plan for better value for money and more appropriate Temporary Accommodation](#) (26 March 2025); and Housing (Amendment) Bill, EFM, p. 9.

¹⁹ [Housing \(Amendment\) Bill, EFM](#), p. 9.

²⁰ Ibid.

Commission.²¹ The Bill Sponsor further engaged with organisations involved with housing and homelessness services, including the NIHE, Housing Rights, Simon Community, Shelter NI and Homeless Connect.²²

From the [Consultation Summary](#), broad support was reported from stakeholders on the principle of early intervention and prevention, though concerns were raised about the practical and financial consequences of extending the statutory period.

The NIHE commented on the financial impacts of the Bill:

In 2023/24, the overall cost to the Housing Executive for temporary accommodation was £34,395,077 which is a 360.3% increase from 2019/20 when the overall spending on temporary accommodation costs was £7,472,594. In 2023/24, 35.5% of the spend was on non-standard temporary accommodation. To introduce the proposed Bill, which would seek to extend the time-period for which the Housing Executive would owe a statutory duty (including the provision of temporary accommodation) would have detrimental financial implications on the Housing Executive.²³

The [Chartered Institute of Housing](#) (CHI) responded to the consultation (21 July 2025) expressing strong support for the proposal. They highlighted a range of reasons to support the Bill, including:

- Emphasis on prevention
- Alignment with good practice in other UK regions
- Addressing temporary accommodation costs
- Addressing complex needs
- Advocacy for statutory duty

[Homeless Connect](#) responded (30 July 2025), expressing their overall support for the proposal:

²¹ Ibid, p. 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, p. 9.

In terms of the extension of the legal limit from 28 days to at least 60 days, Homeless Connect is supportive of the proposal. It is widely accepted that if a household is threatened with homelessness four weeks is in practice a very tight window to provide preventative support. Moreover, people facing homelessness should not be expected to wait until four weeks before receiving statutory support and presenting as homeless to the Housing Executive. More time would obviously allow for more meaningful engagement in prevention activity, including advice.

In our estimation, this proposal would remediate the illogicality of the current situation where a household can be presented with an NTQ (notice to quit) eight weeks or twelve weeks before they are due to be evicted but be unable to present to the Housing Executive until 28 days before they are evicted.

Homeless Connect also called for further reform, stating that the Bill as proposed would be “[...] best considered as a potentially helpful first step towards the more wide-ranging reform we need to see.”

The [Simon Community](#) (July 2025) response stated:

Simon Community strongly support the Bill’s proposal to extend the time period whereby the NIHE must support people threatened with homelessness from 28 days to at least 60 days.

We would also welcome consideration of further extending this window to six months as we believe the further upstream we can intervene to prevent homelessness the better. Additional time would allow for better consideration of an individual’s need and preferences in a way that is impossible with crisis response.

Simon Community noted that the potential difficulty of identifying households that may become homeless six months in advance, and recommended learning from the experience of reformed homelessness legislation in Scotland.

Homelessness legislation in other jurisdictions is outlined below.

3 Policy Context

3.1 Overview

The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 places a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. The current strategy, [Ending Homelessness Together 2022-2027](#), prioritises homelessness prevention in its strategic objectives.

On the existing homelessness legislation, the strategy states:

The homelessness legislation in Northern Ireland has remained largely unchanged since its introduction in 1988. The Housing Executive will seek to work with the Department for Communities and other key stakeholders to initiate a review of the primary legislation to consider changes, mirroring those made in other jurisdictions of the UK, in order to place a statutory focus on the prevention of homelessness and provide more person-centred statutory homelessness services.

There has not yet been a full independent legislative review of homelessness in Northern Ireland. The Communities Committee commissioned a piece of research from RaISe, [Homelessness: a comparison of legislative frameworks in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales](#) (April 2025). Further work to scrutinise current homelessness legislation is outlined here.

3.2 The Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report

The Northern Ireland Audit Office report, [Homelessness in Northern Ireland](#) (March 2025), identified the statutory homelessness prevention framework as less extensive than those operating in England, Scotland and Wales. It noted that Northern Ireland's 28 day threshold and priority need requirements mean that the statutory prevention duty is narrower than corresponding duties elsewhere.

The NIAO also found that around 4,700 households in Northern Ireland were in temporary accommodation in 2023-2024. This was a 176% increase from 2017

when 1,700 households were recorded in temporary accommodation. Efforts to prioritise homelessness prevention are hindered, the report found, by the unprecedented demand for temporary accommodation and the cost to the Housing Executive, estimated at almost £39 million.

It has been argued by the Bill Sponsor that extending the period in which a person can be “threatened with homelessness” may prevent households from becoming homeless through earlier intervention.²⁴ This could help to alleviate the demand for temporary accommodation. However, extending statutory eligibility may also increase the number of households requiring assistance before their existing or alternative accommodation has been secured.

Issues around the projected costs of this early intervention measure are explored in the Review of Costs paper found here: NIAR 248-2026.

3.3 Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) [Report on Homelessness in Northern Ireland](#) (Feb 2026) considered whether the existing legislative framework is sufficiently focused on prevention. It concluded that, despite prevention being the first objective of the Homelessness Strategy, prevention response has been “consistently underfunded, short term and reactive.”

The report noted that less than 10% of the Housing Executive’s annual homelessness expenditure had been spent on preventative initiatives since 2020 and that, in 2023-2024, approximately £4.5 million, or 6% of homeless expenditure, was spent on community and strategic prevention.²⁵ The report also noted that expenditure on temporary accommodation had increased from £7.6 million in 2018-2019 to over £40 million in 2024-2025.²⁶

The report identified the absence of a statutory prevention duty as a particular concern.²⁷ It stated that as the Housing Executive has statutory duties in

²⁴ [Housing \(Amendment\) Bill, EFM](#), p. 6.

²⁵ The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), [Report on Homelessness in Northern Ireland](#) (Feb 2026), p. 20.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 10.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 19-20.

relation to accommodation, priority has been given to immediate crisis response rather than longer term prevention.²⁸

The PAC recommended that the Department and Housing Executive explore options for establishing a statutory prevention duty to strengthen homelessness prevention. In doing so, the Department should review and assess similar statutory duties in other jurisdictions, including where the threat of homelessness duty extends to at least 56 days.

The Communities Committee may wish to consider whether the measures set out in the Bill should be viewed primarily as:

- an extension of the existing homelessness prevention system; or
- a first step towards a more fundamental reform of homelessness legislation in Northern Ireland.

It may also wish to consider whether the proposed extension of the statutory “threatened with homelessness” from 28 to 60 days would be sufficient in fulfilling the recommendation (2) of the Public Accounts Committee for the introduction of a statutory prevention duty.

The PAC identified several factors which it considered necessary to support prevention, including:

- a statutory duty
- appropriate and sustainable funding
- improved data and outcomes monitoring
- a single vision for prevention
- improved cross-departmental working
- effective governance; and
- adequate long term housing supply.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Committee may therefore wish to establish whether the Bill as drafted provides sufficient legislative impact or whether additional measures would be required.

3.4 Committee for Communities report

In April 2026, the Committee for Communities published its [Report on Homelessness and the Supporting People Programme](#) (April 2026). The report followed the Committee's engagement work during Homelessness Awareness Week 2025, including written and oral evidence from organisations across the homelessness and supporting people sectors. The report builds on the Committee's continued focus on homelessness and housing-related support as it provides scrutiny to the Department's response to the housing crisis.

The committee expressed concern for the homelessness sector and the need for a greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention. The Committee highlighted a "legislative lag" in Northern Ireland's legislative framework. Specifically, it noted that the 28-day "threatened with homelessness" window is outdated compared to the 56-day preventative models adopted in Wales and England.

The Committee set out five strategic recommendations, including the immediate agreement of a multi-year budget with inflationary uplifts, completion of a comprehensive review of homelessness legislation, and the establishment of a cross-departmental task force.

On the need for a legislative review, recommendation 5 stated that:

At a minimum, such a review should consider extending the "threatened with homelessness" duty from 28 days to 56 days, bringing Northern Ireland into line with the legislative frameworks in Wales and England.

The Committee acknowledged that Department-led primary legislation was unlikely to be brought forward within the current mandate. It concluded that a

comprehensive review could, however, provide the groundwork for wider legislative reform in the next mandate.

The Housing (Amendment) Bill would address the issue of extending the statutory duty identified by the Committee's report. The Bill proposes extending the period from 28 days to 60 days, rather than the 56 days recommended by the Committee.

Members may wish to note both the Committee's conclusion that the existing 28 day period is outdated and its broader view that reform of homelessness legislation should look to enable earlier preventative intervention.

Members may also wish to consider why the Member has chosen a period of 60 days rather than 56 days, as recommended in the Committee report and as is the legislative position in England. It may be beneficial to establish whether:

- the choice of 60 days is intended to align policy in Northern Ireland more closely with the two month period in effect in Scotland;
- it was chosen to reflect evidence given by the Simon Community and other stakeholders calling for a period of "at least 60 days"; or
- if there were other operational or policy reasons for this timeframe.

Members may also wish to note the more recent legislative developments in Scotland and Wales, both of which are moving towards the substantially longer homelessness prevention periods of 6 months. Details of these legislative reforms are set out in detail below.

These developments could raise a broader question as to whether the proposed 60 day period represents an appropriate prevention window.

The [Consultation Summary](#) on the Bill's proposals states that 91% of respondents supported consideration of a further extension of up to 6 months. Consideration could be given to the feasibility of a longer statutory period in light of the legislative developments elsewhere.

4 Regional Comparisons

4.1 Summary

Much of the information set out below is drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) research paper [Legislative Frameworks for Homelessness in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales](#) (NIAR 71-24).

The research paper set out the legislative frameworks for homelessness in each of the jurisdictions and explored the findings of independent reviews of the legislation that have taken place in England, Scotland and Wales.

The paper also identifies key areas of divergence between the legislative frameworks, including the period during which a person is threatened with homelessness, the application of priority need and intentionality tests, statutory prevention duties, and the responsibilities of other public bodies in identifying and preventing homelessness.

Since publication, there have been significant developments in both Scotland and Wales, [The Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#) and the [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Act 2026](#) have both extended the period where a person could be “threatened with homelessness” from 2 months and 56 days respectively to 6 month prevention windows. These provisions have not yet been fully enacted, however, and therefore the previous statutory prevention windows remain in force until they are in place.

The Republic of Ireland does not operate a comparable statutory “threatened with homelessness” timeframe, though detail will be given below on the current homelessness prevention legislation.

Table 1. Summary of “threatened with homelessness” windows

Jurisdiction	Current statutory point at which a person can be “threatened with homelessness”	Difference from current NI 28 day model	Relevant legislative changes
Northern Ireland	28 days (Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988).	-	Housing (Amendment) Bill proposes extension to 60 days
England	56 days (Homelessness Reduction Act, 2017)	+28 days	-
Scotland	2 months (Housing (Scotland) Act 1987) (moving to 6 months)	+32 days (current) +152 days (future model)	Housing (Scotland) Act 2025 extends prevention period to 6 months
Wales	56 days (Housing (Wales) Act 2014) (moving to 6 months)	+28 days (current) +124 days (future model)	Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Act 2026 extends prevention period to 6 months

Northern Ireland is currently the only UK jurisdiction that has a 28 day threshold for identifying if a person is “threatened with homelessness”. Currently, all other jurisdictions have a 56 day or longer prevention window, whilst both Scotland and Wales have brought forward legislation to move to a 6 month statutory period.

The proposed extension from 28 days to 60 days would therefore:

- align Northern Ireland with the 56 day prevention windows of England and Wales, and the 2 month period in Scotland; and
- retain a legislative lag behind Scotland and Wales as they move towards 6 month prevention windows.

There have also been independent reviews of homelessness legislation in [England](#) (2015), [Scotland](#) (2021) and [Wales](#) (2023). These have shifted the emphasis towards a more statutory approach to homelessness, particularly in regard to:

- homelessness prevention; and
- a requirement for specified public bodies to work in co-operation with housing and homelessness services to identify and assist people who are homeless/threatened with homelessness.

The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 has not been subject to the same levels of independent scrutiny as has taken place in England, Scotland and Wales.

4.2 England

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) made a number of substantial changes to the homelessness legislative framework for England.

The Act followed an independent review of homelessness legislation, conducted by a panel of experts from across the homelessness and housing support sectors. The report, [The homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people](#) (2015), proposed a number of amendments to current legislation, many of which were adopted.

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) widened the definition of ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 to 56 days. The prevention duty introduced by this Act applies to all eligible applicants in England (i.e. on the basis of immigration status) who are ‘threatened with homelessness’ (within 56 days) and importantly it applies regardless of “intentionality” and “priority need”.

There is no directly comparable prevention duty within the current legislative framework for homelessness in Northern Ireland ([Housing \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1988](#)).

Where the local housing authority is satisfied that an applicant is “threatened with homelessness” and are eligible, they must:

- take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for the applicant's occupation; and
- make an assessment of the applicant's case.

The Act also places a duty on certain specified public authorities (e.g. the police, social services, health boards) to refer cases of homelessness/at risk of homelessness to the relevant housing authority.

In England, the provision of temporary accommodation is not part of the prevention duty introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Instead, it arises through the accommodation duties in [Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996](#) where the local authority has reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance, and have a priority need.

In October 2024, Bob Blackman MP introduced the [Homelessness Prevention Bill](#) to the UK Parliament (a Private Members’ Bill), which aimed to strengthen homelessness prevention in England by requiring earlier intervention from local authorities and public bodies. However, with the prorogation of parliament on 29 April 2026, the Bill made no further progress.

As introduced, the Bill proposed five key provisions for the further strengthening of homelessness legislation in England:

- The extension of the statutory period in which a person is considered “threatened with homelessness” from 56 days to 6 months;
- strengthening prevention duties on local housing authorities;
- duties on local authorities to keep records of steps taken to prevent homelessness;
- duties of specified public authorities in relation to preventing homelessness; and
- a duty to monitor homelessness for the purposes of assessing the effectiveness of the actions it has taken to prevent homelessness.²⁹

The Bill’s central proposal was to extend the statutory period during which a person is considered “threatened with homelessness” from 56 days to six months, triggering prevention duties at an earlier stage.

4.3 Scotland

Under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#), a person is currently considered to be threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within 2 months.

Section 24(4) of the 1987 Act was amended by [Section 3\(1\)\(c\) of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) which extended the original 28 day timeframe to “2 months”. This provides a longer prevention window than is currently in place in Northern Ireland.

An independent Homelessness Prevention Review Group was convened at the request of the Scottish Government to develop legislative proposals to prevent homelessness in Scotland. The report [Preventing homelessness in Scotland: Recommendations for legal duties to prevent homelessness](#) (2021) informed several aspects of [The Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#) (2025).

The Bill contains amongst other preventative measures:

- a strengthened statutory prevention duty, requiring earlier and more proactive intervention from local authorities;

²⁹ Bob Blackman, [Homelessness Prevention Bill, As Introduced](#) (21 October 2024).

- an “Ask and Act” duty, which requires public bodies to ask about an individual’s housing situation early and to take meaningful action where a risk of homelessness is identified;³⁰
- improved expectations around cross sector cooperation in preventing homelessness; and
- a provision to extend the time in which someone is considered to be “threatened with homelessness” from 2 months to 6 months.

Under [Section 52 of the Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#), which amends section 32 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, where a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is “threatened with homelessness”, it must:

- remove or, where this is not possible, minimise the threat of homelessness to the applicant, and
- secure that accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant.

In doing so, authorities must first take reasonable steps to sustain the applicant's existing accommodation and, where this is not possible, secure alternative accommodation.³¹

That is a materially stronger duty than the prevention duties in England and Wales, where local authorities are generally required to take "reasonable steps" to prevent homelessness but are not required to secure accommodation at the prevention stage solely because the prevention duty is owed.

The Scottish prevention duty, however, is to secure that accommodation is available, and not necessarily to provide temporary accommodation. The authority may, for example, fulfil the duty by helping the applicant remain in their existing home or by securing alternative accommodation before homelessness occurs.

³⁰ The Scottish Government established a £4 million [Homelessness Prevention Pilot Fund](#) to test the implementation of the new duties. [Several projects](#) have received funding and are underway.

³¹ [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2025, Part 5: Homelessness Prevention](#).

The Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee held a public consultation on the Bill from 19 April to 24 May 2024. An analysis of the submissions was carried out by the Scottish Parliament's research service and can be found [here](#).

On the proposal to extend the statutory period from within 2 months to 6 months, respondents were broadly supportive whilst expressing concerns around resourcing, increased pressures on local authorities and the difficulty in identifying an individual as threatened with homelessness 6 months beforehand.

Turning Point Scotland, for example, responded:

We spoke with people we support about what their lives looked like around six months before they became homeless. Nobody talked about housing or housing support need at this stage, instead they talked about losing their job and entering the benefits system for the first time, about mental ill-health, domestic violence, problematic alcohol and other drug use or involvement in the criminal justice system. The early intervention to prevent homelessness has to be led by the departments and organisations agencies working in these areas.

All in for Change responded that many young people wouldn't know if they could be homeless in 6 months' time and raised concerns that the current 2 month window was itself not being fully utilised and that "people end up waiting until crisis point anyway".

These issues may be of particular interest to the Committee, as the proposal to extend the statutory "threatened with homelessness" definition from 28 days to 60 days could lack effectiveness if households at risk are not identified and engaged with in this earlier prevention window. As in Scotland with the "Ask and Act" duty, it could require the cooperation of public bodies and support organisations to help in identifying and working with those at risk of becoming homeless earlier.

Should the proposal to extend the period in which a person can be defined as “threatened with homelessness” also include a prevention duty on public organisations to identify and intervene where a risk can be identified?

4.4 Wales

[The Housing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) introduced a number of reforms to homelessness legislation in Wales, including duties on local housing authorities to review homelessness in their areas and adopt homelessness strategies; duties to strengthen cooperation between public bodies and local authorities on early intervention; and extending the legal definition of “threatened with homelessness” from 20 days to 56 days.

As in England and Scotland, an independent review of homelessness legislation was convened by the Welsh Government in 2022. The [Expert Review Panel](#) consisted of local government, homelessness support organisations, social housing providers and others, including the Chair, Professor Suzanne Fitzpatrick, who also led the independent reviews in both England and Scotland. The panel engaged with individuals with lived experience of homelessness.

In October 2023, the panel published its report [Ending Homelessness in Wales: a Legislative Review](#), which contained over 172 recommendations, including strengthening the statutory homelessness prevention duties, and extending the period in which a person could be “threatened with homelessness” from 56 days to 6 months. These proposals were set out in its [White Paper](#) consultation on ending homelessness in Wales (October 2023).

A [Consultation Analysis](#) (23 April 2024) of the White Paper reported concern surrounding caseloads for housing staff, with one local authority reporting an average caseload of 120 cases per officer in the Housing Options team.

Other respondents mentioned the positive impact that the extension could have, summarised by the report:

They suggested that the increased time period would give local authorities longer to work with clients and enable them to more effectively assess housing need and support clients in finding alternative housing options. One respondent suggested that in the current climate it is taking far longer than it has in the past to find alternative housing in the private or social housing sector, stating that this extended time period would give local authorities the time they need to properly support clients.

The Welsh Parliament conducted its own consultation on the Bill from 22 May 2025 to 20 June 2025 which received a large number of responses that can be found [here](#). There was overall support for extending the statutory time period, though concerns were raised surrounding resource strains and delivery capacity.

The Welsh Government's explanatory memorandum provides a detailed account of the Bill: [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Bill: Explanatory Memorandum incorporating the Regulatory Impact Assessment and Explanatory Notes](#) (May 2025).

The [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Act 2026](#) was passed in February 2026 and extended the “threatened with homelessness” period to include where:

- a) the person has received written notice requiring the person to give up occupation of the person's accommodation,
- b) an application has been made to the High Court or the county court for an order for possession of the person's accommodation by another person, or
- c) it is likely that the person will become homeless within 6 months (whether paragraph (a) or (b) applies or not).

Under Section 66 of the [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Act 2026](#), where a local housing authority is satisfied that an applicant is “threatened with homelessness” and eligible for help it must help to secure that

suitable accommodation does not cease to be available for occupation by the applicant by taking reasonable steps likely to achieve that purpose.

Under [Section 63](#), where a local authority considers that a duty is owed, it must prepare and maintain a prevention, support and accommodation plan for the applicant.

The prevention duty does not require a local authority to secure accommodation for an applicant or provide accommodation solely because the prevention duty is owed. Rather, the duty is focused on taking “reasonable steps” to prevent the loss of existing accommodation.

Separate statutory accommodation duties arise in [Sections 6 and 8 of the 2026 Act](#), which provide for duties to secure accommodation for eligible homeless applicants where the relevant conditions are met.

The Welsh Government published the [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Bill: integrated impact assessment](#) (19 May 2025). It highlighted the government’s intention to phase implementation of the reforms, in order to “work with delivery partners to align implementation with increasing housing supply and local housing authority capacity.”

The Committee may wish to consider the extent to which the additional provisions of the Welsh “threatened with homelessness” definitions could be applied to Northern Ireland. This could include the longer statutory period of 6 months, as well as the inclusion of where a person has been given notice to quit or a possession order has been made.

Research on how these provisions could interact with existing legislation in NI may be of use to the Committee.

The Committee may also wish to consider how concerns raised about deliverability of the proposed extension in Northern Ireland, including those surrounding resource capacity and

housing supply, could be addressed by a similar phased implementation model.

4.5 Republic of Ireland

The legislative framework for homelessness in the Republic of Ireland is comprised of the [Housing Act 1988](#), the [Health Act 1953](#), the [Childcare Act 1991](#) and most recently, the [Housing \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 2009](#). Similar to the legislative frameworks in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the [Housing Act 1988 \(Section 2\)](#) includes a definition of who should be considered homeless.

The Housing Act 1988 does not define a person as “threatened with homelessness” within a specific period, instead providing the definition for a person who is currently experiencing homelessness. The [Homelessness Prevention Bill 2020](#) sought to require local authorities to provide prevention plans and support to people at risk of homelessness before they entered homeless services. It also defined a person as “at risk of homelessness” if they were likely to become homeless within 60 days. The bill lapsed in November 2024 when the Dáil was dissolved.

The Irish government rely instead on homelessness duties and prevention frameworks, including the [Homelessness Prevention Framework 2025](#).

The Framework places a strong emphasis on early intervention before an individual reaches an immediate homelessness crisis. It provides for five key areas of prevention:

- Universal Prevention: General supports for everyone to reduce the risk of homelessness.
- Upstream Prevention: Early help for people showing signs of housing difficulty.
- Crisis-Stage Prevention: Support for people at immediate risk of losing their home.
- Emergency Stage Prevention: Help for people who are already homeless to avoid rough sleeping.

- Repeat Prevention: Support to stop people from becoming homeless again.

The Committee may wish to consider whether the proposed extension of the “threatened with homelessness” period would provide sufficient opportunity to tackle homelessness effectively on its own. The Prevention Framework in the Republic of Ireland places emphasis on earlier, upstream intervention, alongside coordinated action from public services and support organisations.

The Committee may therefore wish to consider if the proposed 60 day period should be accompanied by clear expectations or statutory responsibilities for the preventative action to be taken once the risk of homelessness has been identified.

5 Impact of Legislative Changes

This section examines the available evidence for the impact of extending the period during which a person is considered “threatened with homelessness”.

Evaluations such as those that have been carried out in England and Wales have largely focused on the impact of legislative reforms and the operation and outcomes of broader homelessness prevention frameworks. Therefore, while these evaluations provide insight into the potential impacts of earlier intervention and extended prevention duties, it is often difficult to distinguish the specific impact of the extension of the “threatened with homelessness” statutory period from the effects of other measures introduced alongside it.

Similar evaluations do not appear to have taken place in Scotland. Instead, available Scottish evidence focusses on wider homelessness legislation, policy developments and service reforms.

More recent legislative developments in Scotland and Wales, which move to extend the statutory duty even further, have been considered in the section above.

5.1 England

In 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published its [Evaluation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#), examining the Act's implementation during its first 12 months of operation. The review comprised an independent evaluation undertaken by ICF, alongside a call for evidence on the implementation of the Act.³²

Overall, the review concluded that the Act had significantly strengthened England's homelessness safety net at both national and local levels. The extension of the prevention duty, which increased the period during which a household is considered "threatened with homelessness" from 28 to 56 days, was identified as the aspect of the Act that had delivered the most positive outcomes for service users.³³

The evaluation found that 67% of respondents agreed that the 56-day prevention duty enabled earlier and more effective homelessness prevention, while the new [H-CLIC \(Homelessness Case Level Information Collection\)](#) data showed that 58% of prevention duty cases ended with the household securing accommodation.³⁴

Some local authorities reported challenges associated with increased administrative demands, larger caseloads and difficulties recruiting staff. However, authorities experiencing these pressures had either recruited, or were in the process of recruiting, additional staff, reflecting a view that earlier intervention produces better outcomes for both applicants and local authorities.³⁵

The evaluation found that 57% of respondents reported an increase in the use of temporary accommodation following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act.³⁶ Whilst temporary accommodation was recognised as an

³² ICF Consulting Services Limited, [Evaluation of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report](#) (16 March 2020).

³³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Evaluation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) (2019), para. 20.

³⁴ [Homelessness Reduction Act: Final Report](#) (2020), p. 34 and p. vii.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 35.

³⁶ [Evaluation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) (2019), para. 29.

important safeguard, concerns were raised about increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation, longer stays, and higher costs for local authorities.³⁷

The 2017 Act also introduced a relief duty, requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to help homeless applicants secure suitable accommodation for up to 56 days, regardless of intentionality or priority need. This differs from the Housing (Amendment) Bill's proposal, which would extend the period during which a person is considered "threatened with homelessness" while retaining the existing qualifying tests for Full Duty Applicant (FDA) status.

Consequently, while the evaluation reported increased use of temporary accommodation following the implementation of the Act, the combined effects of both the prevention and relief duties make it difficult to isolate the specific impact that extending the prevention period had.

This is similarly the case in the National Audit Office (2024) report, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), which evaluated the impact of both the prevention and the relief duties. For example, it reported that the number of households owed a prevention or relief duty rose from 64,080 in Quarter 3 (2018-19) to 78,980 in Quarter 3 (2023-24), an increase of 23%. The number of households in temporary accommodation also rose from 83,540 in Quarter 3 (2018-19) to 112,660 in Quarter 3 (2023-24), an increase of 35%.³⁸

While these figures suggest increasing demand for homelessness assistance, they cannot be attributed solely to the operation of the prevention and relief duties. The period examined coincided with broader economic and housing market pressures, which may also have contributed to growth in homelessness presentations and the use of temporary accommodation. It is therefore difficult to draw direct links between these trends and the legislative reforms alone.

Similarly, the NAO findings do not provide a specific assessment of the impact of extending the statutory prevention period from 28 days to 56 days, as the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ NAO, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), (3 July 2024) p. 8.

measure was introduced as part of a wider package of legislative reforms, making its individual impact difficult to isolate.

Between January and March 2026, 39,200 households were assessed as being “threatened with homelessness” in England and were therefore owed a prevention duty. This was an increase of 1.8% compared to the previous year.³⁹

5.2 Wales

The Welsh Government commissioned a [Post-implementation evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2014](#) (2018). The evaluation included surveys of all 22 local authorities and fieldwork with local authorities, housing associations, third-sector service providers and service users across six case-study areas.

The 56-day prevention period was regarded by service providers as a key strength of the Act. The report found that it provided more time to prevent homelessness; undertake a person-centred and informed assessment; identify underlying causes of housing instability; and to implement support plans or mediation measures.⁴⁰ Providers reported that the extended timeframe enabled more meaningful engagement with service users and landlords, increasing opportunities to sustain accommodation. However, despite the longer prevention window, many applicants continued to seek assistance only at the point of crisis, limiting opportunities for early intervention.⁴¹

A 2017 study, '[Homelessness Prevention: Reflecting on a Year of Pioneering Welsh Legislation in Practice](#)', examined the first year of the new framework using administrative data and interviews with service users and service providers. It found that services had been reorientated with a focus on prevention, and that there had been reductions in temporary accommodation

³⁹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2026](#) (13 August 2026).

⁴⁰ A. Ahmed, M. Wilding, A. Gibbons, K. Jones, M. Rogers and I. Madoc-Jones, [Post-implementation Evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2014: Final Report](#), Welsh Government (2018), p. 55.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 55-56.

use, as well as a reduction in the number of applicants who remained homeless after seeking assistance.⁴²

Of the 7,128 households assisted under the prevention duty, 65% had their homelessness successfully prevented, while 45% of the 6,891 households assisted under the relief duty had their homelessness relieved.⁴³ The study also reported reductions in the use of temporary accommodation and in the number of applicants who remained homeless after seeking assistance.⁴⁴

“It was anticipated that under the new legislative framework, if homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing interventions increased and were prioritised, there would be a reduction in the number of households accommodated in expensive and often undesirable temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation statistics are reported on a quarterly basis and they confirm expectations, showing an 18% reduction from 2295 households accommodated during the final quarter of 2013/14 to 1875 households accommodated in the same quarter in 2015/16.”⁴⁵

It should be noted that the study evaluated the wider package of reforms introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Although broadly positive, analysis of the specific impact of the extension of the “threatened with homelessness” statutory period is difficult to determine.

The most recent statistics on prevention outcomes for Wales were published in the [Homelessness: April 2025 to March 2026](#) report. In 2025-2026, 7,662 eligible households were assessed as “threatened with homelessness” within 56 days. Homelessness was successfully prevented for at least six months in 4,671 cases, equivalent to 61% of cases.⁴⁶

⁴² P. Mackie, I. Thomas and J. Bibbings, '[Homelessness Prevention: Reflecting on a Year of Pioneering Welsh Legislation in Practice](#)' (2017), European Journal of Homelessness, Vol. 11, pp 81-107.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 89.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 91.

⁴⁶ Welsh Government, [Homelessness: April 2025 to March 2026](#) (22 July 2026).

The successful prevention rate increased from 58% in 2023-2024 to 59% in 2024-2025 and 61% in 2025-2026. It nevertheless remained below the rate of approximately 66% recorded between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022.⁴⁷

6 Considerations

6.1 The proposed 60 day prevention period

- What is the policy and evidential basis for selecting a 60 day period rather than 56 days, as recommended by the Committee for Communities and currently provided for in England and Wales?
- In light of legislation in Scotland and Wales providing for a 6 month prevention window, and the Bill Sponsor's consultation finding that 91% of respondents supported consideration of an extension of up to 6 months, has the feasibility and impact of a longer statutory period been assessed?
- Should the definition of a person who is "threatened with homelessness" be broadened beyond a fixed time period, for example to include circumstances where written notice to leave accommodation has been given or possession proceedings have commenced, as provided for in the Welsh legislation?

6.2 Wider prevention duties and legislative reform

- Is the Bill intended to operate as a sufficient reform in itself, or as a first step towards a more fundamental review of homelessness legislation in Northern Ireland?
- Would extending the statutory period from 28 to 60 days, without further changes to prevention duties, be sufficient to address the Public Accounts Committee recommendation for a stronger statutory focus on homelessness prevention?

⁴⁷ Ibid.

- What preventative advice, assistance or other action would the NIHE be expected to provide during the additional statutory prevention period, and are the existing duties sufficiently clear to ensure that the longer window results in earlier preventative intervention?
- Should statutory prevention responsibilities extend beyond the NIHE to specified public bodies, including duties to identify, refer or act where a risk of homelessness is identified?
- How would the Bill fit with any future wider review of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and the Committee's previous recommendations for reform of homelessness legislation?

Specifically, how would the Bill fit with the recent announcement by the Minister for Communities of the establishment of a Homelessness Commission for Northern Ireland, given the intention of this is to carry out a more comprehensive review of the legislative framework for homelessness in Northern Ireland?

6.3 Operational impact and Full Duty Applicant status

- Has there been engagement with the NIHE and the Department on the number of additional households likely to fall within the NIHE's statutory responsibility as a result of an extension from 28 to 60 days?
- What impact is the proposed extension expected to have on NIHE caseloads, staffing levels, training, case-management processes and other operational capacity?
- Could the extension result in applicants receiving Full Duty Applicant status earlier where the other statutory tests are met, and what effect could this have on entitlement to and demand for temporary accommodation (and other potential associated costs such e.g. furniture storage and taxis)?

6.4 Impact assessment and implementation

- Would further impact assessments, such as a Rural Needs Impact Assessment, assist the Committee in assessing the potential consequences of the Bill?
- What lead-in time, guidance, systems changes and implementation planning would be required before commencement of the extended statutory period?
- Could a phased or pilot implementation model help address concerns about delivery capacity, resource pressures and housing supply, as planned for in Wales?

6.5 Monitoring and evaluation

- What baseline data and outcome measures should be established before the provision is made so that the effect of the extended prevention window can be assessed?
- How would the success of the Bill be assessed, including its effect on homelessness prevention, tenancy retainment, access to alternative accommodation, temporary accommodation use and overall costs and savings?