

## Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill

**Date:** 19 August 2010

### Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents all registered and 6 of the non-registered housing associations in Northern Ireland. Collectively, our members provide around 32,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at [www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org)

In general NIFHA broadly supports the contents of the Bill and welcomes the opportunity to comment on specific aspects contained therein. While we recognise that this is a condensed version of the original Bill we are disappointed that it does not contain the proposal, from the original Bill, which dealt with repealing the provisions in the primary legislation relating to the Rent Surplus Fund.

### Background

NIFHA's members are responsible for about twenty five percent of all social housing stock in Northern Ireland. Our members within the Housing Association movement are volunteer led, community focused housing businesses where financial surpluses are re-invested to produce social benefit rather than private gain.

NIFHA has a vision is for the Housing Association movement to be a powerful engine of social inclusion, drawing on its own ethos and experience of self help, community development and environmental responsibility. We therefore welcome the opportunity to brief the Social Development Committee to on the Housing (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill which will to some extent assist our members, especially with regard to managing the implications of anti-social behaviour and community safety.

### The Federation's Views on the Housing (Amendment) (No.2) Bill

#### 1. The Introduction of a Mandatory Registration Scheme for Private Landlords

NIFHA are in favour of this proposal and we agree that the registration scheme should incorporate a light touch regulatory regime. As significant amounts of money are paid to private landlords in the form of Housing Benefit, we envisage that it would be prudent, in terms of accountability for public expenditure, to develop a low cost scheme for the registration of private landlords which would allow for the identification of properties for private rental.

## **2. Power to Allow Social Landlords to Withhold Consent for the Exchange of Tenancies**

NIFHA are in broad agreement with the proposal to allow social landlords to withhold consent for the exchange of tenancies where an injunction or anti-social behaviour order is in force. Our members within the Housing Association movement are keen not to allow tenants who have created problems through anti-social behaviour to move to other areas, bringing anti-social behaviour problems to those areas. Housing Associations would need to have robust procedures in place to record the incidents of anti-social behaviour to ensure, where necessary, evidence could be provided and where necessary shared with other agencies.

## **3. Powers to Allow Individuals to Disclose Information to a Registered Housing Association or NIHE with Respect to Anti-social Behaviour**

The inclusion of powers within the draft Bill which will allow the sharing of information between Registered Housing Associations and NIHE should assist them to reduce or eradicate anti-social behaviour in the relevant communities.

NIFHA considers the sharing of information between housing providers to be fundamental in ensuring that our tenants can live in quiet enjoyment of their homes and communities. Housing Associations as responsible landlords want to assure their tenants that they are taking measures to ensure the communities they live in are safe and are free, as far as is reasonably practicable, from behaviour or the potential for such behaviour that would be in breach of their capacity to live in quiet enjoyment of their homes and communities.

NIFHA has been working with NIHE, for some time, to develop an information sharing protocol between Registered Housing Associations and NIHE. Agreement in principle to the protocol has been reached and it is anticipated that the Bill will support the protocol in facilitating the sharing of information between our sectors.

## **4. Further Information**

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