

THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

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30th September 2005

**Ms. Dolores Ferran
Assistant Director Strategic Partnerships
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
The Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street
BELFAST
BT2 8PB**

Dear Dolores,

Re: NIHE Policy Review into Housing Needs for Older People

Thank you for affording us the opportunity to make comments at the initial stage of the consultation process on the above. Further to your letter dated 28th September 2005, I would like to express NIFHA's willingness to be involved in this ongoing review.

Our members have highlighted a number of key concerns, in relation to the terms of reference as outlined in your previous letter and have requested that the following points be given due consideration.

1. Housing associations are currently facing problems in securing funding for some of their schemes, particularly in relation to supporting people and would require clarification on whether the matter will be considered as part of this review process.
2. Members are uncertain whether the type of housing provision taken into account will be specific or all encompassing to include both private and public housing, as well as any accommodation provided through the health trusts i.e. general needs, sheltered accommodation and residential care homes. Furthermore, if private housing is to be included how does the NIHE propose to assess this sector's overall level of provision for elderly people?
3. Is it anticipated that this review will relate to demographics from the most recent census. However, we would seek clarification on the methodology and research to be used for this review as well as any other predictive measures, to establish factual evidence on the choices and aspirations of elderly people. It should also take account of the effectiveness of adaptations for both users and providers in terms of the length of time taken to carry out adaptations and the level of service delivery.
4. Our members would welcome an explicit definition for "alternative provision". as it would appear that this review will put a great deal of emphasis on people staying in their own homes. This raises concern about how elderly people will be directed to access funding to allow them to remain in their own homes as well as the type and level of provision needed e.g. Fold's staying put department and disabled facilities grants.

Representing and promoting housing associations in Northern Ireland

Chairperson: Mr Arthur Canning Dip (Est Man) MBEng Chief Executive: Mr Chris Williamson MCIH

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5. In addition to this, there must be some reference to the importance and availability of funding for SMART technology as a means of reducing the need for resources and a possible way forward to empower independence and enable people to stay in their own homes as long as possible.
6. Members require information on any other organisations other than those in the housing sector that may have been asked to consult on this review.
7. There is no reference to joint working and NIFHA would recommend that agencies such as Age Concern and Help the Aged are afforded the opportunity to contribute so that this is an all-inclusive strategy which will reflect the needs of elderly people in Northern Ireland and make better use of the resources available.
8. The review should also examine the de-registration process and the impact that this has on the provision of housing services.
9. The process should take account of best practice, and give recognition to those already in place. It is also important to be aware that some best practice models in England, Scotland and/or Wales may not necessarily work within the context of Northern Ireland.
10. It is important that the review addresses income support entitlement for the elderly and in particular the low barrier means testing and savings threshold which is not realistic at present.
11. The NIHE ought to consider the benefits of working in partnership to produce an all-inclusive directory of housing providers and support services across all sectors in Northern Ireland.

The points in your letter do not refer to future funding mechanisms or where additional resources will come from. It does not identify the impact that this will have on the type or level of service provision nor does it specify the any priorities.

I trust that you will find these comments useful to ensure that these matters are addressed in full and look forward to NIFHA's involvement in the next stage of the review process.

Should you have any queries regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

DONALL HENDERSON
HOUSING POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER