

THE NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

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31st May 2007

**Mr Patrick Anderson
Housing Associations Branch
Regulation and Inspection Team
Department for Social Development
James House
2 – 4 Cromac Avenue
Belfast
BT7 2 JA**

Dear Patrick,

Re: Revised Regulatory and Inspection Framework Document

I refer to the above consultation document which was recently issued by the DSD for consultation.

On behalf of our members, NIFHA generally welcomes the revised document and we are pleased that the Department is committed to the new procedures and processes as outlined within the proposal. In particular, we would strongly endorse the on-line sharing of information.

We would be grateful if the following points were also seriously considered as part of the overall review:

1. There has been some concern among some members that there has been a very ad hoc approach to the inspection process, e.g. not knowing when inspectors were coming to the office or how long they were to stay at each visit; or which part of the inspection was being done when. We would urge that such matters be addressed as a key priority to ensure a smooth procedure during the inspection process.
2. Members are also conscious that the period of notice was very limited and in some cases, it proved very difficult to provide information at short notice. We recommend that a programme of inspections is advertised at the beginning of each year.
3. There have been occasions when the timescales are NOT complied. This finds a number of organisations waiting on their draft/interim report after a long period of time. At the time of writing, as far as we are aware, only one completed report has been issued. It is important that there is some accountability should these timescales slip.

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4. Section E on Page 8 of the document refers to fair and open competition as the way forward, although this clearly conflicts with the principle of the new procurement groups for development as outlined in the recently issues draft procurement strategy.

I trust that you will find these comments useful and that they are taken into account in the publication of the final document. Should you have any queries regarding any of the points raised, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



DONALL HENDERSON
HOUSING POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER