



Response to Consultation

Date: 25 February 10
Consultation: Commissioner for Older People

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents registered and non-registered housing associations in Northern Ireland. Collectively, our members provide 30,000 good quality, affordable homes for renting or equity sharing. Further information is available at www.nifha.org

General Comments

NIFHA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the aforementioned consultation document. The Housing Association movement recognises the need for older people, within our society, to have strong voice and representation. Our movement provides a diverse range of accommodation, much of it, such as sheltered dwellings and the provision of housing with care, have been specifically designed and built to suit the needs of older people. Over recent years the majority of our homes have been built to lifetime home standards enabling older people, especially those needing care and support to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Specific Comments

NIFHA's main areas of concern for our members within the Registered Housing Association movement are the duplication of information requested from and provided to a number of investigatory and regulatory bodies. Registered Housing Associations are subject to a number of internal and external investigations and controls from organisations such as their own internal and external auditors, the Department for Social Development and the Charities Commission.

The consultation document states that it is intended that there should not be duplication or conflict of responsibilities between different organisations. NIFHA are asking on behalf of their members what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that people, making a complaint, are prevented from moving around different organisations in an effort to have their problems resolved. Even the initial re-investigation of cases that have already been examined has time and therefore cost implications for our members and we seek to have these kept to a minimum.

The Commissioner will have various and wide ranging powers, this suggests that there will be resources to meet the responsibilities those powers will bring. Government departments are presently evaluating their spending and are seeking ways to make significant reductions. In the light of these circumstances can the expenditure on the Commissioner for Older People be justified especially in terms of the benefits and value it will bring generally to

society within Northern Ireland and specifically the value it will bring to older people.

I hope you find these comments useful and many thanks for allowing NIFHA the opportunity to reply to this document.

Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:

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