



Chartered
Institute of
Housing
Ireland

Elevating Excellence: The State of Housing Professionalism in Ireland

A Sector Snapshot Report



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Foreword

Housing professionals play a critical role in shaping communities, supporting vulnerable households, and delivering services that directly affect people's quality of life. Despite this vital role, housing has not always been recognised as a clearly defined profession with shared standards, qualifications, and career pathways.

This report represents the first national snapshot of housing professionalism in Ireland. Through CIH Ireland's inaugural sector survey, we sought to understand how professionals working across the housing sector perceive professionalism, what support they need, and what barriers may be limiting progress.

The results highlight a workforce driven by purpose and a commitment to tenant wellbeing. At the same time, they point to structural gaps in professional standards, training pathways, and sector-wide recognition.

The findings presented in this report provide an important baseline for strengthening professionalism in Irish housing. They also underline the sector's appetite for clearer standards, stronger professional identity, and a national framework that supports career development.

CIH Ireland is committed to working with government, housing providers, and practitioners to champion housing as a career and support the evolution of professionalisation in the sector.



Kathleen Cottier,
Chair, CIH Ireland
Board



Caroline Moloney,
CIH Ireland national
director



Executive summary

This report presents the findings of CIH Ireland's inaugural survey exploring professionalism across the Irish housing sector. Conducted between October and December 2025, the survey gathered 65 responses from housing professionals working across approved housing bodies, local authorities, government agencies, and the private sector.

The findings reveal a workforce strongly motivated by social purpose and committed to delivering high-quality services for tenants. However, they also highlight a professional landscape that lacks consistent standards, shared definitions, and clearly defined development pathways.

More than half of respondents believe there is no clear or shared definition of professionalism across the sector. While many organisations demonstrate strong values-led practice, inconsistencies remain in areas such as codes of conduct, access to professional development, and formal qualifications.

At the same time, there is strong support for strengthening the profession. Three quarters of respondents support the introduction of mandatory housing qualifications for senior professionals, reflecting a clear appetite for stronger professional frameworks.

The report identifies key barriers that prevent housing from being widely recognised as a career of choice, including sector perception challenges, recruitment pressures, and limited structured professional pathways.

To address these challenges, CIH Ireland proposes five strategic actions: developing a professional qualifications framework, encouraging adoption of CIH professional standards, promoting housing as a career, strengthening tenant engagement skills, and launching a national professionalism initiative.

Together, these actions aim to support a more recognised, skilled, and resilient housing profession capable of meeting Ireland's evolving housing challenges.

Introduction

From homelessness prevention and social housing delivery, tenant engagement, and community development, housing professionals operate in roles that require a broad range of technical, regulatory and interpersonal skills. They also have the responsibility for managing and maintaining significant community assets and infrastructure, while playing a critical role in climate change action and achieving justice for their tenants.

Despite this complexity, housing in Ireland has not historically developed as a clearly defined profession with widely recognised qualifications or shared professional standards.

To better understand the current state of professionalism within the sector, CIH Ireland undertook its first national survey of housing practitioners between October 2025 and December 2025. The survey aimed to explore:

- How housing professionals define professionalism
- The values and behaviours associated with effective practice
- Access to professional training and development
- Sector attitudes toward qualifications and standards
- Barriers preventing housing from being viewed as a professional career

The findings provide a snapshot of how professionalism is experienced across the sector and establish a baseline for future work to strengthen professional identity and standards.

The professional landscape

The Irish housing system is delivered through a diverse network of organisations, each contributing to the planning, delivery, and management of housing services.

Sector composition

Survey respondents represented a broad cross-section of this ecosystem:

- Approved housing bodies (AHBs): 67.7%
- Local authorities: 13.8%
- Government agencies: 10.8%
- Private sector/consultancy: 7.7%

Housing stock managed

Respondents represented businesses managing housing portfolios of varying scale, from small community-based providers to some of the largest housing organisations in Ireland:

- Up to 250 homes: 21.0%
- 251 – 1,000 homes: 24.2%
- 1,001 – 5,000 homes: 17.7%
- More than 5,000 homes: 37.1%

Workforce size

The survey also reflects a broad range of organisational sizes in terms of staffing and operational capacity:

- Up to 10 employees: 22.0%
- 11– 50 employees: 30.5%
- 51– 200 employees: 27.1%
- 200 + employees: 20.3%

Professional roles represented

Participants held a wide variety of roles across operational, technical, and strategic functions, including:

- Housing officers
- Homelessness service managers
- Tenant engagement specialists
- Compliance and regulatory staff
- Construction and asset management professionals
- Policy specialists
- Finance and HR professionals
- Senior leadership roles

This breadth of representation provides insight into how professionalism is experienced across different parts of the housing sector and across organisations of varying size and complexity.

Defining the housing professional

The identity gap

Professionalism is commonly understood as a combination of knowledge, skills, and behaviour. However, the survey findings suggest that this concept is not consistently defined across the Irish housing sector.

51 per cent of respondents do not believe a clear and shared definition of professionalism currently exists across the sector.

Without a shared definition, organisations may interpret professionalism differently, leading to inconsistent expectations around conduct, training, and performance.

Respondents often framed professionalism in terms of values and service quality. Many highlighted the importance of treating tenants with respect, communicating clearly, and delivering fair and transparent services.

Others emphasised technical expertise, regulatory knowledge, and professional competence as the foundations of professional practice.

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate a sector with strong professional instincts but without a unified framework that clearly defines housing professionalism in Ireland.

“There is no real definition and as a concept it is not widely discussed.” – Survey respondent

“Professionalism means treating tenants with respect and fairness, communicating clearly, acting honestly, and delivering high-quality services.” – Survey respondent



Standards, values and behaviours

Despite the absence of a shared definition, the survey reveals strong alignment around the values that underpin housing practice.

Key professional values

Respondents most frequently identified the following values as central to their work:

- Excellence in service delivery
- Valuing tenant voices
- Accountability
- Transparency.

These responses highlight the sector's commitment to delivering services that respect tenant rights and prioritise fairness and integrity.

"The tenant voice should be central to everything we do as housing professionals." – Survey respondent

Codes of conduct

Codes of conduct provide an important framework for professional behaviour within organisations.

The survey found that:

- 61.9% of organisations currently have a code of conduct
- 25.4% do not have one in place
- 12.7% are currently developing one.

The absence of universal ethical frameworks suggests an opportunity for greater alignment across the sector through shared professional standards.

Training, skills and professional confidence

Professional development is essential for ensuring practitioners can respond effectively to evolving housing challenges.

Most respondents report receiving professional development opportunities at least once per year. However, access remains uneven.

10.8 per cent of respondents report that they rarely or never receive professional development opportunities.

As housing roles become increasingly complex, ensuring consistent access to training will be important for maintaining service quality and professional confidence.

Confidence in professional practice

Respondents were asked how confident they felt that colleagues consistently apply professional standards in their day-to-day work.

- 29.2% reported being very confident
- 44.6% reported being somewhat confident.

However, approximately one quarter of respondents expressed neutral or lower confidence, indicating that professional expectations are not always consistently embedded across organisations.

The case for mandatory qualifications

One of the strongest findings from the survey is the level of support for introducing formal qualification requirements for senior housing professionals.

75 per cent of respondents support the introduction of mandatory housing qualifications.

Respondents believe that formal qualifications would help:

- Strengthen professional standards
- Increase accountability
- Support career development pathways
- Improve sector credibility.

Many respondents also suggested that a professionalism module or structured induction programme could help establish shared expectations for all housing professionals entering the sector.

"A professionalism module that all staff are required to complete as part of their induction into the housing sector would significantly improve standards." – Survey respondent

"To boost professionalism, we need clear qualifications for staff and stronger leadership." – Survey respondent

Barriers to professional excellence

The survey explored the challenges preventing housing from being widely recognised as a career of choice.

Key barriers identified

Perception of the sector

Housing is not always seen as a clearly defined professional career, which may discourage graduates and early-career professionals from entering the field.

Recruitment and retention

Organisations report ongoing challenges attracting and retaining skilled professionals.

Limited professional pathways

The absence of widely recognised qualifications and structured career pathways makes it harder for individuals to build long-term careers within housing.

Addressing these barriers will be essential to strengthening the sector's workforce.

"Housing is not viewed as a professional path. We need role models with housing careers." – Survey respondent

"Making housing jobs more attractive would help bring new talent into the sector." – Survey respondent

Strategic recommendations

Based on the survey findings, CIH Ireland proposes five key actions to strengthen professionalism across the housing sector.

1. Legislative consultation

Government should begin consultation, in partnership with the sector and wider stakeholders through CIH Ireland, on a professional qualifications framework for housing professionals in Ireland.

2. Adoption of professional standards

Housing providers should formally adopt [CIH Professional Standards](#) as a benchmark for professional practice.

3. Repositioning housing as a career

Government should introduce [a national campaign](#), in conjunction with CIH Ireland, to promote housing as a career to graduates, students and early-career professionals.

4. Tenant voice as a core competency

Tenant engagement should be recognised as a core professional skill, supported through training and professional development.

5. A national professionalism initiative

CIH Ireland should lead the development of a national professionalism programme to support practitioners and strengthen standards across the sector.

Methodology

The report draws on responses gathered from CIH Ireland's professionalism survey, carried out between October and December 2025. The survey was distributed via email and social media channels.

A total of 65 responses were received from professionals working across the housing sector in Ireland.

The survey captured perspectives from organisations including approved housing bodies, local authorities, government agencies, and housing-related consultancies.

The findings presented here provide a baseline for future CIH Ireland research, advocacy, and professional standards initiatives.



Annex survey questions

This annex provides the full list of questions included in the survey.

1. Which type of organisation do you represent?

Local authority	
Approved housing body (AHB)	
Government agency	
Other (please specify)	

2. Approximately how many homes does your organisation manage?

3. How many full-time housing professionals are currently employed in your organisation?

4. How does your organisation define "professionalism" in the housing sector?



**5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement:
"There is a clear and shared standard of professionalism across the Irish housing sector."**

Strongly agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly disagree	

**6. What values or behaviours do you associate most with professionalism in housing?
(Select up to three)**

Transparency	
Accountability	
Leadership	
Valuing tenant voice	
Compliance	
Excellence in service delivery	
Up to date and continual professional development	
Relevant skills	
Ethical decision-making	
Other (please specify)	

7. Does your organisation have a code of conduct or professional standards policy for housing staff?

Yes	
No	
In development	



8. What training or qualifications are required for housing staff in your organisation?

No formal qualifications are required, with training provided on the job	
Customer service training	
Industry-recognised housing qualification from the Chartered Institute of Housing or Institute of Public Administration	
Mandatory in-house induction and ongoing CPD	
Other (please specify)	

9. How often are professional development opportunities provided to staff (e.g. CPD, workshops,)?

Regularly (at least once a year)	
Occasionally	
Rarely	
Never	

10. How confident are you that housing staff in your organisation apply professional standards in their day-to-day work?

Very confident	
Somewhat confident	
Neutral	
Not very confident	
Not confident at all	

11. In England, the UK Government has introduced qualification requirements for senior social housing managers. Do you think there should be a qualification requirement introduced in Ireland?

Yes	
No	
Unsure	



**12. What are the main barriers to improving professionalism in the housing sector?
(Select all that apply)**

Lack of training/resources	
Lack of qualifications	
Recruitment challenges	
Housing not viewed as a professional pathway	
Lack of leadership on the issue	
Other (please specify)	

13. In your view, what would most improve professionalism across the housing sector in Ireland?

14. Would your organisation be interested in contributing to a national initiative to improve professionalism in housing?

Yes	
Maybe	
No	

15. Any further comments



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Institute of
Housing
Ireland

E: customer@cih.org

www.cih.org



June 2026 - 0508 © Chartered Institute of Housing