

9 December 2024

Michelle O'Neill MLA, Emma Little-Pengelly MLA and Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA  
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Dear Minister O'Neill, Minister Little-Pengelly and Minister Archibald

**RE: URGENT CALL FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS  
FUNDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND'S 2025/26 BUDGET**

As representatives of leading housing and homelessness organisations in Northern Ireland - CIH Northern Ireland, NIFHA, Housing Rights and Homeless Connect - we are writing to urge you to ensure that housing and homelessness receive the necessary capital and resource allocation in the Department for Communities (DfC) 2025/26 budget.

The importance of secure, affordable housing and effective homelessness support cannot be overstated. Yet, the pressures facing these sectors have never been more acute.

**Housing supply and social housing investment.** Northern Ireland is in the midst of a housing crisis, and urgent investment is required to address the chronic undersupply of social and affordable homes. We are calling for funding to allow the delivery of at least 2,200 social homes in 2025/26 to help address current demand and make up shortfalls. Social homes also need significant investment to future-proof them against decarbonisation targets. Underfunding in this area risks further exacerbating homelessness, overcrowding and housing inequality.

**Homelessness and prevention.** Homelessness services are stretched to breaking point. The number of people experiencing homelessness continues to rise, placing extraordinary pressure on already underfunded services. We call on the Executive to protect and increase funding for homelessness prevention services, ensuring that frontline organisations can provide critical support to those in need. This is increasingly important given the rise in national insurance for employers.

Failure to do so would jeopardise the safety and wellbeing of thousands of vulnerable people across Northern Ireland. For every person prevented from experiencing the trauma of homelessness, significant savings are made elsewhere in the public sector, particularly within health and justice systems.

Action must also be taken now to avoid a repeat of the funding challenges facing organisations funded through the homelessness services budget in 2025/26. Without changes to the funding mechanism, the 19 projects funded through this stream will continue to face the precarious situation we are seeing today.

**Supporting People programme.** It is crucial that funding for the Supporting People programme increases by at least the rate of inflation in 2025/26. Ideally, funding should go beyond inflation to help reverse the impact of years of underinvestment, ensuring that vulnerable groups receive the support they need.

**Decarbonisation and energy efficiency.** As we move towards net-zero carbon targets, decarbonising the housing sector must be a top priority. Investment in retrofitting existing homes and building new energy-efficient housing is essential to reduce carbon emissions, alleviate fuel poverty, and protect the most vulnerable from rising energy costs. And yet, Northern Ireland remains the only region across the UK and Ireland without a dedicated fund for housing decarbonisation. We stress the importance of integrating decarbonisation efforts within housing policy and across all tenures to ensure a just and sustainable transition.

**Protecting the most vulnerable.** Our organisations are deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact that underfunding in housing and homelessness services has on those already facing hardship. The Equality Impact Assessments carried out by DfC show that vulnerable groups - including low-income households, those with disabilities, and people from minority backgrounds - are disproportionately impacted by current funding shortfalls. Immediate action is needed to mitigate these inequalities, and we strongly urge the Executive to prioritise housing and homelessness funding as a matter of social justice.

The upcoming 2025/26 budget presents a crucial opportunity to address these issues head-on. We stand united in calling for a budget that reflects the urgency of Northern Ireland's housing and homelessness challenges. We ask for your leadership in securing the capital and resources necessary to ensure everyone has access to a safe, affordable home. Without decisive action now, the situation will only deteriorate, with far-reaching consequences for individuals and communities across Northern Ireland.

We are ready to work with the Executive to deliver solutions, but the first step must be adequate investment. We urge you to ensure that housing and homelessness are prioritised in the 2025/26 budget.

Yours sincerely



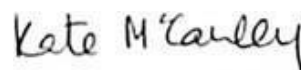
Nicola McCrudden  
Homeless Connect



Seamus Leheny  
NIFHA



Justin Cartwright  
Chartered Institute of Housing



Kate McCauley  
Housing Rights

Cc Minister of Communities, the Chief Executive of the Housing Executive, the Communities Committee and the APGs on Homelessness, Housing and Construction