



# Response to Consultation

**Date:** 9 October 2009  
**Consultation:** Volunteering Strategy for N Ireland

## 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](http://www.nifha.org)

## Background

Each of the 40 housing associations mentioned above in the Introduction is governed by volunteer Board members. In total, over 300 such individuals are carrying responsibility for multi-million pound social enterprises that build all the new social housing in Northern Ireland using private loans to supplement capital grants of about 65% from the Department for Social Development.

## General Comments

The Federation welcomes the draft strategy and accepts the proposals.

In view of the importance of the housing association movement for delivering priorities for the Social Development Minister (e.g. affordable housing, Shared Future / Cohesion Sharing and Integration, housing support services for vulnerable people) we are disappointed not to find reference to the voluntary housing sector in the consultation document. Neither was our sub-sector invited to join the Volunteering Strategy Steering Group.

This exemplifies our recurring concern that government generally – even the DSD with its special responsibility for the voluntary sector - often seems to forget that housing associations are independent voluntary organisations and not government agencies.

We respectfully remind the Department and other statutory bodies of that fact.

**Submitted on behalf of NIFHA by:**

**Christopher Williamson**  
Chief Executive