



# **NORTHERN IRELAND FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS**

## **The Charities (NI) Bill:**

**Consideration by the Social Development Committee, February 2008**

### **Background Information on the Federation and Its Members**

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) represents 43 housing associations which provide 30,000 decent, affordable homes for people in housing need.

The great majority of these associations, including all 36 registered by the Department for Social Development (DSD), are recognised by the Revenue and Customs as having the legal status of charities.

The DSD exercises comprehensive regulation and monitoring of registered housing associations. It has considerable powers to investigate them and intervene when necessary.

By law, all DSD-registered housing associations must also be registered as Industrial and Provident Societies. These associations are subject to a degree of regulation by, and accountability to, the Registrar of Industrial and Provident Societies.

### **Our Recommendation about the Charities Bill**

The Federation warmly welcomes the draft legislation but wishes to ensure that the further regulation of its charitable members by the proposed Charity Commission for Northern Ireland does not duplicate the existing regulation by the DSD (under the housing legislation) and the Registrar (under the Industrial and Provident Societies legislation).

We are aware that the same issue has been addressed in Scotland by section 38 of the Charities and Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. To avoid unnecessary duplication, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the regulator of registered housing associations.

NIFHA recommends that Article 11(2) 4 of Northern Ireland's Bill should be amended slightly by including in the bracketed clause "and avoiding duplication with other statutory regulators".