NI HOUSING ASSOCIATION
Sector Overview

NIFHA
NORTHERN IRELAND
FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) is the representative body for Northern Ireland's 19 registered housing associations. Our members own and manage 62,670 social and affordable homes, including family homes and supported living, as well as providing shared ownership housing solutions for those who want to buy.

Housing Associations provide

62,670

homes across NI

The number of new social homes completed last year:

1,410

The average weekly rent (general needs and sheltered):

£106.87

The number of homes provided through Co-Ownership:

886

Source: NIFHA Sector Global Accounts 2025

Housing associations in Northern Ireland have a strong track record of delivering high-quality, affordable homes and supporting thriving, sustainable communities. They are reliable partners of government, who now own and manage over 62,000 homes across NI and provide vital services to communities.

Housing associations finance the build of new social housing by combining grant funding from the Department for Communities and private finance raised by housing associations. From the 1st December 2025, the grant funding element of this finance from the Department for Communities was reduced from an average of 54% to approximately 46%. This has meant that some critical developments that housing associations had in the pipeline, have now been deemed financially unviable. Without a revised and modernised funding approach for new-build social housing, the number of homes that can be delivered will be significantly constrained.

Northern Ireland is facing a housing emergency, with 91,122 people on the social housing waiting list. While our commitment as a sector to building much needed social homes remains firm, the current trajectory is increasingly difficult to sustain. It is essential that we find better ways to empower housing associations. Housing associations cannot meet the growing demand alone, and the scale of need requires ambition, partnership, and a shared commitment to lasting solutions.

An appropriate funding model for new-build social housing:

Housing associations play a critical role in delivering much needed social homes, and they must be appropriately resourced to do so. This means ensuring that funding structures provide certainty and enable strategic planning over the long term. Without this, the sector risks being constrained in its ability to meet demand. While the review of design standards and development subsidy by the Department for Communities is a positive and necessary step, it must not be seen as a substitute for establishing a long-term, sustainable funding model for housing associations. Adjustments to overly rigid design requirements may contribute to improved efficiencies, but they should not come at the expense of quality or high energy performance. **NIFHA calls for the commitment to a sustainable funding framework that enables housing associations to deliver at scale, to allow the sector to meet the targets outlined in the NI Executive's Housing Supply Strategy, but importantly, to continue to deliver homes for our communities who so urgently need them.**

Prioritisation of infrastructure upgrades in areas of housing need:

Insufficient capacity in the wastewater system is an immediate and significant barrier to social housing delivery across Northern Ireland. Housing association schemes are often delayed or refused as the infrastructure cannot support the development. It is critical that there is a prioritisation of infrastructure upgrades where housing need is greatest, to enable new affordable housing to be built to meet demand. Without sustained investment and forward planning to address wastewater capacity, there is a profound risk that future housing delivery will continue to be constrained.

In the short term, prioritisation based on need will ensure that housing associations can continue to progress large schemes in areas of high demand and ensure maximum social return on infrastructure spending. In the long term, a stable and sustainable funding model for water and wastewater infrastructure is essential to prevent critical housing schemes from being delayed or refused.

Mechanisms to allow public land to be transferred to housing associations:

Land purchase is one of the most significant costs to housing associations who are building new social homes. Therefore, **NIFHA are calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to establish mechanisms to transfer publicly owned land to housing associations to support the delivery of new build social housing at scale.** The provision of publicly owned land, such as that held by councils, government departments or arms-length bodies to housing associations, would lower the cost of new build social housing as well as accelerate the pace of development and reduce the financial risk to housing associations. In addition, the repurposing of this land for housing would also regenerate vacant sites and make a better use of public assets.

Sustainable funding model for the Supporting People Programme:

The Supporting People (SP) programme is at a critical point after almost 20 years of frozen funding levels. During this period, funding allocations have not kept pace with rising operating costs faced by providers, including increases in Employer National Insurance contributions and maintenance and repair costs. As a result, many programmes that are supporting some of the most vulnerable people in society are becoming financially unsustainable. Without a recurrent uplift to the SP funding baseline, the viability of these services will continue to be at risk. **NIFHA is therefore calling for the establishment of a sustainable and coordinated funding and policy framework for organisations delivering the SP programme, ensuring that care and support services are funded to cover the full cost of delivery.** Alongside a sustainable funding environment, stronger collaboration between housing providers, Health Trusts and the Department of Health will be essential to ensure these critical services can continue to support those who rely on them.

A coordinated housing strategy for older people:

Northern Ireland faces rapid age demographic change, but housing, health, and care services are not aligned to support ageing well. There is no clear strategic direction for housing, the supply of suitable homes is inadequate, and siloed systems contribute to avoidable crises, ranging from delayed hospital discharges to rising health and care costs. **NIFHA calls for the development of a coordinated, funded, cross departmental Housing Strategy for Older People, ensuring that housing, health, and social care planning are aligned to meet the needs of a rapidly ageing population.**

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Abbeyfield
Making time for older people

alpha housing

apex

Arbour Housing
Live. Share. Grow.

Ark Housing
Quality homes
strong communities

choice

clanmil HOUSING

Co/ownership

Covenanter Residential Housing Association

Craigowen Housing Association

Grove Community Housing Association

NB Housing
Homes that build community

Newington Housing Association (1975) Ltd.

Radius HOUSING

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St. Matthew's Housing Association

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