

Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3TT
16/02/2021

Dear Minister Foster and Minister O'Neill

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT – HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

We write collectively in relation to the Programme for Government (PfG) draft Outcomes Framework document, to express our concern about the absence of a specific housing outcome.

In 'New Decade, New Approach', a commitment was made for the PfG to be **“augmented with a new outcome and indicators to provide specific focus on ensuring every household has access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home that is appropriate for its needs.”**¹ We are deeply disappointed that this commitment has not been met in the draft Outcomes Framework. Housing and homelessness have instead been considered only as indicators under other proposed outcomes.

As leaders of organisations with significant membership including housing associations, homeless service providers, advice agencies and housing professionals it remains our strong belief that housing must be included as an outcome in the final PfG framework.

Ensuring households have access to good quality, affordable housing is fundamental to achieving an equal and prosperous society where no one is excluded as articulated in the draft Outcomes Framework: “An inclusive society in which people of all ages and backgrounds are respected and cared for and in which we all prosper. A society which has no barriers to prevent people from living fulfilling lives.”

The importance of “home” and the impact of not having one has been brought into sharp focus during the coronavirus pandemic. Homelessness levels are unacceptably high and will rise as a direct consequence of the social and economic fallout from the pandemic. Housing need is growing. There are many families and individuals living in unsafe, unsuitable and unsecure accommodation. The statement by the Department for Communities Minister to reform and revitalise the Housing Executive underlines the importance of good quality, affordable housing to our society.

In summary, having good quality, affordable and sustainable housing appropriate to needs is, we believe, a significant priority for the people of NI and should be a PfG outcome. We therefore request that you reconsider the draft Outcomes Framework

¹ 'New Decade, New Approach', January 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/856998/2020-01-08_a_new_decade_a_new_approach.pdf p39.

and revise to include the specific housing outcome committed to in 'New Decade, New Approach.'

We would like to request a meeting with you both to discuss our concerns on this matter further.

Yours sincerely



Janet Hunter

Housing Rights



Nicola McCrudden

Council for the Homeless



Justin Cartwright

Chartered Institute of Housing



Ben Collins

NIFHA

Organisational Biographies

Chartered Institute of Housing

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the independent voice for housing and the home of professional standards. Our goal is simple – to provide housing professionals with the advice, support and knowledge they need to be brilliant. CIH is a registered charity and a not-for-profit organisation. This means that the money we make is put back into the organisation and funds the activities we carry out to support the housing sector. We have a diverse membership of people who work in both the public and private sectors, in twenty countries on five continents across the world. Further information is available at: www.cih.org

Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland

Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland (CHNI) was founded in 1983 to represent organisations working with people experiencing homelessness. Our vision is to see an end to homelessness, and we exist to prevent and alleviate homelessness in Northern Ireland. We do this by working collaboratively to create a community of support, by being the voice of the sector and by delivering direct assistance through our projects.

Housing Rights

Housing Rights is the leading provider of independent advice, training and information on housing and homelessness issues in NI. We also undertake housing and homelessness policy work to affect positive change. All our work is aimed at preventing homelessness, helping people access appropriate accommodation, and where possible, helping people sustain their existing accommodation. We recognise that this is not always possible, and we also work to help alleviate homelessness for people who, for whatever reason, find themselves facing this crisis.

Northern Ireland Association of Housing Federations

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations is the representative body for NI's twenty registered housing associations.