



20 January 2026

Dear Applicant

Our Ref: FOI 1050

Your request for information received on 16 January 2026 has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Request

We have noted NI Assembly question AQW 35016/22-27 of 7 November 2025 from MLA Matthew O'Toole,

To ask the Minister for Communities whether his Department instructed the Housing Executive to remove priority need status, for single refugees seeking temporary accommodation

We have also noted Minister's response of 9 January 2026, Priority Need is defined in Article 5 of the Housing (NI) Order, 1988. This has not changed. The Department has not issued any new guidance or direction in relation to the definition of priority need.

We wish to understand this issue further. To that end, please indicate:

1) Whether the Housing Executive has itself developed, issued or disseminated any new or updated guidance or direction in relation to the definition of priority need or any other of the 4 tests for Full Duty Applicant status, for all applicants or general or for any particular group of applicants (eg newly recognised refugees who are single and male)

2) If so, please provide a copy of the new or updated guidance or direction that has been developed, issued or disseminated.

Our response

The Housing Executive can confirm that it has not developed, issued, or disseminated any new or updated guidance or direction in relation to the definition of priority need or any

other of the 4 tests for Full Duty Applicant status, for all applicants or general or for any particular group of applicants (e.g. newly recognised refugees who are single and male).

This concludes our response.

Review procedure

You can ask us to review our response. If you want us to carry out a review, you should send an email to: foi@nihe.gov.uk or alternatively write to: Freedom of Information, Information Governance Team, Legal Services, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB.

Your request for an internal review should be submitted to us within 40 working days of you having received this response.

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you have a further right of appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review. A complaint can be made to the Information Commissioner, through the online portal at: [FOI and EIR complaints | ICO](#) or alternatively by post at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact: foi@nihe.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely
Brian O'Kane
Assistant Director
Housing Services

Personal Information

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