



2 Sept 2026

PPR's response to the Call for Evidence on the Housing (Amendment) Bill extending the 'threatened with homelessness' period from 28 to 60 days

Participation and the Practice of Rights (PPR) is a human rights NGO founded in 2006. PPR supports people to use human rights as tools to fight for economic, social and environmental changes that improve their lives, including in the areas of housing and homelessness. We regularly submit responses to Housing Executive and Department for Communities consultations on housing policy and to surveys intended to inform proposed legislation in this area.

PPR welcomes the recognition implicit in the Housing (Amendment) Bill that a more robust and preventative response to homelessness is needed. We agree with the analysis set out in the bill's Explanatory and Financial [Memorandum](#) of contributing factors to NI's housing crisis, including the detrimental impact of Right to Buy on housing supply, the impact of the failure to build sufficient numbers of new social homes and the resulting rising demand for temporary accommodation.

Our contribution to this Call for Evidence focuses on three areas: the failure of the Housing Executive to respect the current 28-day 'threatened with homelessness' period; the lack of movement to date on the purchase of the 600 homes for temporary accommodation (identified by the Bill Sponsor as the means of meeting any extra demand created by the Bill); and an overview of additional elements that, if included in the Housing (Amendment) Bill, would further strengthen implementation of homelessness-related duties.

Our primary recommendation is that **oversight and enforcement mechanisms** be included in the Bill to ensure that its provisions are respected in practice once it becomes law. More broadly, adequate funding of social housing and its allocation on the basis of objective need is essential for fulfilment of the right to adequate housing.

1. Housing Executive failure to respect the current ‘threatened with homelessness’ period

The Bill’s Memorandum sets out (para. 20) the Housing Executive’s duties pursuant to Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988, including its duty to support people facing the likelihood of homelessness within 28 days. It explains that

the current 28-day period is not long enough, as quite often people will experience a housing related emergency, such as being evicted, where they will have longer than 28 days to vacate the premises... Extending the period from 28 days to at least 60 days would legally require the NIHE to intervene at an earlier stage and the Bill Sponsor believes it would therefore increase the likelihood of a suitable solution being found. (paras. 23-24)

PPR has long expressed its deep concern at the Housing Executive’s failure to respect even the 28 day ‘threatened with homelessness period’. In April 2024, related to its [submission](#) to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ survey on the asylum support move-on period, PPR [recounted](#) how

people report that, despite repeated enquiries and requests for helping in planning and preparing for their move, both the Housing Executive and the Home Office’s contracted asylum accommodation provider, Mears Group, have simply advised them to turn up at Housing Executive offices on the day of their eviction, with their families and belongings, and wait for staff to arrange something for them. People have done so only to wait the entire day before being shifted to a different hotel – one paid for by the Housing Executive rather than by the Home Office.

Since that time, people threatened with imminent homelessness – both new refugees and NI-born families – have continued to report the same conduct: contacting the Housing Executive to give 28 days’ notice of imminent homelessness only to be told that nothing could be done in advance and to just present at Housing Executive offices with their belongings once they had been evicted and had literally nowhere else to go.

Evidence that the 28 day period was routinely ignored continued to come in, despite the February 2026 Public Accounts Committee [recommendation](#) that it be extended to 56 days. For instance, in August 2026, PPR’s post about the Housing Executive’s Data Sharing Agreement with the Home Office and Mears Group, obtained by Freedom of Information request, [noted](#) that

based on evidence from many different people who tried to proactively approach the Housing Executive once they got a positive decision on their asylum claim and received their eviction notice from Mears accommodation following a

positive decision on their asylum claim – people are told just to present to the Housing Executive once they have been physically evicted from the Mears property.

Given this, PPR has grave doubts about the practical utility of the Bill's extension of the 'threatened with homelessness' period to 60 days – unless meaningful oversight and enforcement mechanisms are put in place. PPR believes that only if the Bill were to provide for such mechanisms would its becoming law potentially lead to changes on the ground.

2. Lack of movement to date on the purchase of the 600 homes for temporary accommodation

The Memorandum highlights (para. 13) the March 2025 proposal that the Housing Executive purchase up to 600 homes as temporary accommodation units to reduce its reliance on expensive B&B and hotel accommodation and adds,

the Bill Sponsor believes that the 600 new temporary accommodation units should be more than sufficient to meet any extra demand created by the Bill. When announcing the scheme to purchase these homes, [the Communities Minister] stated that it could save £75 million over 7 years. (para. 42)

PPR welcomed the Department for Communities announcement of the proposed purchase of 600 homes and has been monitoring developments through media reports, tracking of NI Assembly questions and Freedom of Information requests. The most recent (May 2026) FOI response from the Housing Executive, however, was not reassuring. It [indicated](#) that zero of the 600 planned homes had been bought to date and added,

the Housing Executive has already progressed all the preparatory work that is within its control and is ready to move at pace once it receives confirmation from DfC that the Business Case conditions are approved.

The reasons for the Department for Communities' continued delay – fifteen months on from announcing the plan to purchase the 600 homes – remains unclear. Again, effective and meaningful oversight is required to ensure that what happens on the ground matches public statements.

3. Related areas of concern that the Housing (Amendment) Bill could address

Similarly, the Housing (Amendment) Bill could usefully add mechanisms for oversight and enforcement of other areas of the Housing (NI) Order 1988 that do not appear to be uniformly implemented, such as those around Full Duty Applicant determinations. In

June 2026 PPR highlighted how single men with refugee status [reported](#) being denied FDA status on the grounds that they were not vulnerable enough to warrant being deemed to have ‘priority need’:

amongst the people displaced last week were numerous single men granted refugee status by the Home Office but told by the Housing Executive, when they presented for housing support, that they did not meet the ‘priority need’ test for Full Duty Applicant homeless status. They asked for help; the Housing Executive told them that it had no duty towards them. This is not new, and indeed PPR recently assisted a single man left to sleep homeless on the streets to challenge such a decision successfully with the assistance of a solicitor.

Since then, such men have therefore been making their own way, finding shelter where they can as they also try to find and stay in work in hopes of eventually being able to rent privately.

On Friday 12 June Housing Executive staff reopened the files of some men from this cohort who managed to present to them in person. It told these individuals that it would re-assess their cases and offered them emergency accommodation as an ‘interim duty’ while assessments are carried out. This was a welcome step; and the outcomes will bear watching. There are many more however who were not able to physically present to housing officers on the day. Their status is unknown. Having been refused once however, any reluctance is understandable... In light of last week’s violence and the precedents from previous summers, the Housing Executive must reach out to the newcomer men it has refused as ‘not vulnerable’ / ‘not priority need’ in the past; reopen their files; reassess them as ‘vulnerable’ and in need of housing support; and offer them somewhere safe.

The Housing Executive has repeatedly been asked about this issue of ‘priority need’ amongst single male refugees, for instance by MLA Matthew O’Toole (AQW 35016/22-27 of 7 November 2025). Its response was

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.

Another MLA, Diane Forsyth, asked in early 2026 (AQW 37969/22-27) about “the impact of ... asylum seeker homelessness on existing households in need of housing.” The response was that “if an asylum seeker is granted leave to remain, the Housing Executive will consider their application and homelessness risk like any other client group.” PPR received a similar [response](#) when it asked a different version of the same question by Freedom of Information:

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).

Yet PPR [found](#), when reviewing the statistics in the June 2026 [Homelessness Bulletin](#), that the percentage of new refugee households denied FDA status in 2025/26 rose to well over double that in 2024/25.

	Households presenting as homeless - no accommodation in NI: section 95*	Households accepted as homeless – no accommodation in NI: section 95	Households presenting but not accepted as homeless – no accommodation in NI: section 95	% of presenting households not accepted: section 95
Apr-Sep 2024-25	260	250	10	3.8%
Oct-Mar 2024-25	400	339	61	15.3%
Fiscal year 2024-25	660	589	71	10.8%
Apr-Sep 2025-26	365	323	42	11.5%
Oct-Mar 2025-26	465	267	198	42.6%
Fiscal year 2025-26	830	590	240	28.9%

*The note to the Housing Executive's "No accommodation in NI: section 95" category – used in Homelessness Bulletin tables 1.1E and 2.1E – says "those presenting for this reason will generally be former asylum seekers who have been provided with a decision on their application."

The 2025/26 figures show that the number of newly recognised refugees presenting as homeless rose by a quarter on the previous year, to 830; yet the number of FDA grants among this group – like the number of FDA grants overall -- remained static (at 590 for new refugees, against 589 the preceding year). Given the increase in new refugees presenting, this meant that the percentage of new refugee households denied FDA status more than doubled – from 10.8% in 2024/25 to 28.9% in 2025/26.

As indicated in the official response, the policy around FDA assessments may not have changed; but if it has not, what explains the marked change in outcomes? Again,

meaningful oversight of FDA assessment and outcomes is required to ensure full impartial implementation of Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

In conclusion, while the effort to make housing law more impactful and effective is welcome, NI's housing system needs more than a change of timescales to adequately prevent and respond to today's unprecedented level of homelessness. Working mechanisms to oversee and enforce the provisions of housing law – including but not limited to its 'threatened with homelessness' period -- are required; and all political parties must agree adequate funding for new social housing to meet the existing objective need where it exists, regardless of background, community or party affiliation.