

## Housing situation report, October 2023

The Housing Executive's **Belfast Housing Investment Plan 2023-2026**, [presented](#) last month to a BCC committee, made interesting reading.

It cited 2021 Census figures of 149,210 households in Belfast: over half of them (51%) owner occupied, 23% private rentals and 26% social homes. This equates to about 38,800 Belfast households in social housing – about 65% of them (25,152 households) in Housing Executive managed properties. (Across the north, the document says, the Housing Executive managed 83,500 homes in 2022/23.)

### How many NI households were allocated a social home in 2022/23?

We know through [Freedom of Information request](#) that the overall waiting list for NI at end 2022/23 was 45,105 households, 32,633 of them in housing stress and 26,310 of those recognised as FDA homeless households. The Housing Executive's document indicates that it allocated '**almost 5,800 homes**' across the north in 2022/23. This would be the equivalent of **roughly one in every 7 or 8 households on the NI waiting list** – or **one in every 4 or 5 homeless households** – to be allocated a social home this past year.

### How does this stack up against need?

Just looking at Belfast, for the **12,175 households on the waiting list** here (**9,531 of those in housing stress** and **8,118** of them – with amongst them at least **5,049 children under 18** -- having FDA **homeless status** as of end March 2023), the Housing Executive:

- allocated **1,582** social homes. (By our calculation, this would be the equivalent of roughly 1 in every 7 or 8 Belfast families on the waiting list -- or **fewer than 1 in every 5 homeless families in Belfast**)

On the 'plus' side in Belfast, in 2022/23 the Housing Executive

- started 302 new social homes
- completed 405 new build social homes
- had a further 1,680 social homes under construction (p. 6).

On the 'minus' side for Belfast, however, in the year up to end March 2023, the Housing Executive **sold 114 social homes** and had **429 voids** (empty social homes).

### What are the plans for new social homes?

According to the Housing Executive document,

*The requirement for new social housing in Belfast has increased consistently since 2010. The five-year assessment for 2022-2027 shows a need for **7,984 units**. (p. 52)*

Interestingly, its assessment of demand for intermediate housing for low income households in Belfast – the subject of much attention and policy making in recent years – will be far lower – only around **2,090 units for the entire 15-year period between 2020 and 2035** (p. 49).



So far (and assuming no double counting), against this projected need of 7,984 new social homes by end 2027, progress has included:

- **302** new social homes started in 2022/23
- **405** new social homes completed in Belfast in 2022/23
- **1,680** new social homes under construction in 2022/23
- Plans for another **1,985** units in Belfast for 2023/24 to 2025/26, according to the Housing Executive's 3-year Social Housing Development Programme (pp. 6, 54)

Together this would add up to 4,372 new social homes planned for Belfast by end March 2026. It's far better than nothing – but still would leave Belfast more than **3,600 social homes short** of the need projected by the Housing Executive for 2027.

So what now?

### **The way forward**

In its Belfast Housing Investment Plan the Housing Executive recognises that

*there was insufficient land zoned for social housing within the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan and it is hoped that the new Local Development Plan currently being drawn up by Belfast City Council will address this (p. 52).*

Take Back the City campaigners hope so too. They are working hard to convince the LPP's drafters to rezone the 20+ acre, publicly-owned Mackies site to allow for housing – it won't meet all of that 5,500-home gap, clearly, but as the [largest publicly-owned vacant site in Belfast](#), it's the obvious place to start.