

SHELTER NI MANIFESTO 2022

**WANT TO END HOMELESSNESS
IN NORTHERN IRELAND?**



**HERE'S YOUR
GUIDE TO HOW!**



Four decades after Shelter NI was formed, the housing situation in NI could not be worse. The number of households on the waiting list in need of high quality, secure, affordable, social housing including families with and without children who are homeless is a clear statement of the failure of successive Governments to act.

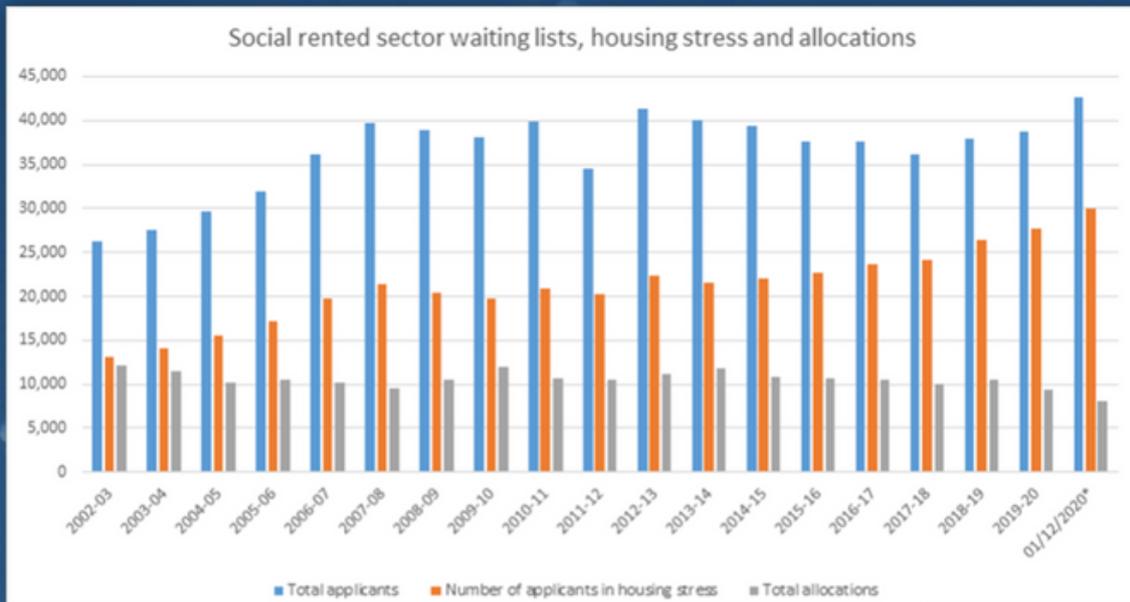
Because we don't have many people sleeping on the streets, homelessness has become invisible. Invisible homeless people who find a temporary solution by staying with family members or friends, living in squats or other insecure accommodation. Invisible homeless people who are not entitled to state support and have nowhere to live. Invisible older people who need support and adaptations to their homes to prevent them becoming homeless. Invisible households who struggle to pay rents which are unaffordable trying to avoid becoming homeless.

For those thousands of homeless households who are registered, the lack of affordable housing to rent often means spending long periods in places designed to be temporary. This semi-permanent living provides no basis for a stable home environment or for creating sustainable communities.

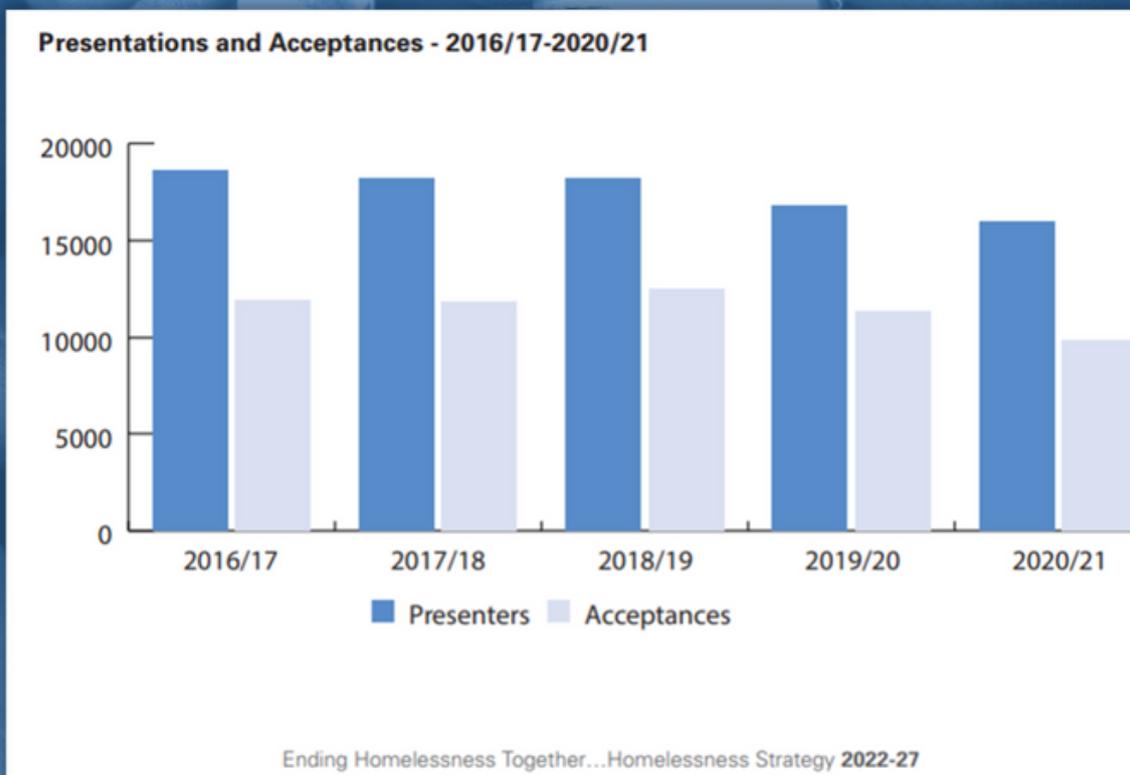
Politicians know that homelessness is an extreme form of social exclusion, resulting in multiple inequities in housing, education, health and employment and causing long term impacts on the quality of life of our citizens.

It is time to act to end homelessness and poor-quality housing.





Source: Paul Price, DFC. 2021



*Presentations refers to homeless people

**Acceptance refers to homeless people deemed 'full duty applicants' who the NIHE have a legal responsibility for

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ERADICATING HOMELESSNESS DEMANDS 5 VITAL STEPS

1

Give every household access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home in a shared neighbourhood, that is appropriate to their needs

2

Strengthen Legislation around homelessness prevention

3

Transform the Private Rented Sector

4

Retain the Housing Executive as a Public Body with the added ability to borrow from financial institutions

5

Tackle the growing numbers of households living in poverty including those with no recourse to public funds

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THIS?

Give every household access to a good quality, affordable and sustainable home in a shared neighbourhood, that is appropriate to their needs

TO ACHIEVE THIS - WHAT IS REQUIRED:

- A. Set a target of building 2,500 homes annually over the life of the Assembly**
- B. Identify surplus land in public ownership for social housing**
- C. Enhance legislation to promote Housing Co-operatives and Self Build**
- D. Abolish the Housing Executive's, 'Right to Buy' house sales scheme**
- E. Make use of Developer Contributions, as set out in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, to help finance new build social housing**
- F. Provide regular updates on bringing empty homes back into the housing stock**
- G. Determine the future need for the portfolio of government buildings and make plans to convert underused or vacant government buildings for public sector housing**

2

Strengthen Legislation around homelessness prevention

TO ACHIEVE THIS - WHAT IS REQUIRED:

- A. Place a statutory duty to prevent homelessness on all statutory agencies and a duty to co-produce a strategy with the Housing Executive in relation to all aspects of homelessness**
- B. Publish a Homelessness Code of Guidance**
- C. Abolish the Priority Need Criteria for homelessness, to bring it into line with other UK jurisdictions**
- D. Amend the current definition of 'intentionality' to one that involves, deliberate manipulation' and set out the specific circumstances when it can be used**
- E. Increase the time when a person is considered as being threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days**
- F. Impose a statutory duty on the Housing Executive to comply with set accommodation standards when using the private rented sector to discharge their Full Duty**

Transform the Private Rented Sector

TO ACHIEVE THIS - WHAT IS REQUIRED:

- A. Introduce legislation to strengthen the regulatory standards in respect of landlords and their agents**
- B. Introduce in Northern Ireland a, 'Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) that will include improved thermal comfort and higher energy efficiency ratings**
- C. Introduce independent means by which landlord and tenant disputes can be resolved**
- D. Increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to median rent level**
- E. Abolish the 'Shared Accommodation Rate'**
- F. Do not apply HB welfare sanctions to those threatened with homelessness**
- G. Provide greater transparency on how LHA rates are calculated and publish the same**
- H. Undertake a policy review of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)**

4

Retain the Housing Executive as a Public Body with the added ability to borrow from financial institutions

TO ACHIEVE THIS - WHAT IS REQUIRED:

- A. Retain the Housing Executive as a public body with democratic accountability and control
- B. Provide the Housing Executive with powers to borrow from financial institutions to build new social housing in cooperation with Housing Associations and refurbish its housing stock
- C. Abolish historic debt owed to Government and Councils
- D. Make any future rent increases affordable to those on low incomes

Tackle the growing numbers of households living in poverty including those with no recourse to public funds

TO ACHIEVE THIS - WHAT IS REQUIRED:

- A. Pass an Anti-Poverty Act putting into law the commitment of the United Nations to eradicate poverty**
- B. Produce a standalone Child Poverty Strategy**
- C. Introduce a legal duty to end Child Poverty**
- D. Establish an oversight body to monitor the progress on reducing poverty and inequality**
- E. Take a multi-sectoral partnership approach to end asylum destitution**
- F. Establish a Task Force to produce a Fuel Poverty Strategy**
- G. Retrofit Housing Executive homes and provide means-tested grants to those living in the Private Sector to insulate their homes**
- H. Ring fence Supporting People(SP) funding and increase on an annual basis SP funding in line with the retail price index**
- I. Seek legal clarification on the powers of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to assist non-profit organisations to build capacity and infrastructure to provide accommodation and support services to refused asylum seekers**



GABLE project team, 2022



SLATE team & SHELTER staff at Omagh Office opening, 2021



Shelter NI was founded in 1980 as a charity by a group of people concerned about homelessness and poor housing here.

Homelessness is an extreme form of social exclusion, resulting in multiple inequities in housing, education, health and employment and causing long term impacts on the quality of life of our citizens.

Our mission is about campaigning to end homelessness and innovating to create sustainable homes and communities.

We believe in a collaborative approach to resolving homelessness and we work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies, homeless people themselves and the public in general.

We believe everyone has a right to an affordable, accessible, decent, warm and safe home and to have legal protection to remain in that home.

We believe that government and public authorities have a duty to prevent homelessness and the risk of homelessness, to secure services and facilities which support people to remain living independently in their own home, and to act quickly and effectively to assist those who become homeless to find a decent home with support.

For more information contact us:

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