



Statement on Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities in Northern Ireland

SUMMARY





- 1.1 The provision of housing faces new as well as existing and persistent challenges. This document provides a summary of our '*Statement on Key Inequalities in Housing and Communities in Northern Ireland*'.
- 1.2 In compiling the *Statement*, the Commission has drawn on a wide range of sources including independent research from The Centre for Housing Policy, University of York¹, and on information from stakeholders.
- 1.3 Alongside a number of differences and wider inequalities, seven key inequalities were identified in housing and communities in Northern Ireland:
- Catholic household reference person applicants for social housing continue to experience the longest waiting times.
 - Access to appropriate accommodation for Irish Travellers is limited.
 - The homes of minority ethnic people and migrant groups may be vulnerable to racial attacks.
 - Migrant workers are vulnerable to becoming subject to tied accommodation with poor conditions and overcrowding.
 - Those with a learning disability are not always afforded an opportunity to live independently.
 - Many people with disabilities live in homes that are not adequate to meet their disability related needs.
 - Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people can feel harassed and unsafe in their own homes and neighbourhoods.
- 1.4 These are summarised below along with short explanations. An important caveat, is that there remain significant data gaps and a lack of data disaggregation across a number of themes in relation to a number of equality categories (gender; gender identity; religion; race; political opinion; sexual orientation; disability status; marital status; and, dependency status). These shortfalls limit the Commission's ability to draw wider conclusions about key inequalities, and/or progress in addressing the same, across the full range of equality categories and groups.

1 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).



- 1.5 The full *Statement*, from which this summary version is drawn, provides further information on each key inequality as well as on a number of other inequalities and observed differences. Where barriers to equality of opportunity have been identified they are also considered and reported in the full *Statement*. The full *Statement* does not itself seek to consider or evaluate the effectiveness of Government strategies, policies or practices, but rather seeks to draw attention to persistent and/or emergent inequalities so that actions can be developed to better advance equality.
- 1.6 **Further information**, including a 2 page 'Key Point Briefing' and the full version of the *Statement* can be downloaded from: www.equalityni.org/KeyInequalities-Housing



KEY INEQUALITY:

Catholic household reference person applicants for social housing continue to experience the longest waiting times.

- 1.7 An examination of Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) waiting list time data for social housing for the period 2004 to 2009 and for 2013/14 shows that Catholic household reference person applicants experienced the longest median waiting times for social housing at the point of allocation in Northern Ireland as a whole^{2,3}.
- 1.8 A comparison of aggregated figures for 2004 - 2009 with data for the year 2013/14 showed that while median waiting times had increased for all groups, more substantive increases were noted for households with a 'Catholic' or 'Other' religion household reference person^{4, 5}.

2 Catholic applicants waited an average of 8 months between 2004 to 2009 and an average of 15 months in 2013/14. Whilst applicants of an Unknown religion waited slightly longer (17 months) during 2013/14 the composition of this group is Unknown and is likely to be made up of multiple religious backgrounds.

3 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

4 Between 2004 to 2009 and 2013/14 median waiting list times at the point of allocation for Catholic household reference persons increased from 8.0 to 15.0 months, respectively; the increases for Other religion household reference persons was from 6.0 to 13.0 months, respectively; compared to an increase from 6.0 to 9.0 months for Protestant household reference persons.

5 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

- 1.9 Aligned to this, Wallace (2015)⁶ found that compared to households with a Protestant reference person, both Catholic and Other religion reference person households consistently waited longer^{7,8} to be allocated social housing in each of eight areas she identified as experiencing most social housing shortage⁹.
- 1.10 Although Northern Ireland saw a decrease in residential segregation, across all sectors, between 2001 and 2011^{10, 11}, the existence of segregated residential housing patterns can have the effect of fragmenting and limiting the operation of wider housing markets. This adds complexities when stock availability (supply side factors) differ from individual housing needs and preferences (demand side factors) - meaning that a lack of stock relative to demand for social housing in sometimes narrowly defined geographical areas may not easily be met by excess supply in other nearby areas¹².
- 1.11 For example, Nolan (2013) reported that, although there is a huge demand for additional housing for Catholics in north Belfast¹³, the properties left vacant by Protestants moving out of the area cannot be filled by Catholic applicants as the “*peace line*’ is not transgressed”¹⁴. With reference to Northern Ireland, Wallace (2015) notes that ‘dual markets operate in close proximity and yet properties may not be substitutable for each other’¹⁵.
- 1.12 Consideration of a range of barriers suggests that effectively addressing objective need in the immediate and longer term is likely to be maximised by taking a range of steps to address both supply and demand factors. For example, on the supply side - how appropriate stock can best be made available to meet objective housing need. On the demand side - taking key steps which might widen areas of housing preference, thereby expanding housing markets and increasing the range of opportunities available for objective housing need to be met.

6 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

7 It should be noted here that there were no Protestant applicants to social housing in Lisburn Dairyfarm during 2013/14.

8 Wallace considered those in housing stress.

9 North, east, west and south Belfast; Lisburn Dairyfarm; Ballymena; Coleraine; and Newry

10 Shuttleworth, I. and Lloyd, C. (2013) [Moving apart or moving together? A snapshot of residential segregation from the 2011 Census](#).

11 Nolan, P. (2014) [Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. Number Three](#).

12 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

13 North Belfast contains District Office numbers 4 and 6. Applicants however cannot apply to these areas as a whole, but rather must apply in either one General Housing Area (GHA) or two Common Landlord Areas (CLAs).

14 Nolan, P. (2013) [Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report. Number Two](#). Page 115.

15 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). Page 83.



KEY INEQUALITY:

Access to appropriate accommodation for Irish Travellers is limited.

- 1.13 The Travellers Needs Assessments (2002, 2008, 2014)¹⁶ record that around one-fifth to one-third of all Irish Traveller households travelled. Further, those who travel are spread across a range of accommodation types and tenures^{17,18}.
- 1.14 The provision of Traveller accommodation must therefore be such that it continues to cater for those with a nomadic lifestyle. As noted in Wallace (2015), for some Irish Travellers, ‘bricks and mortar’ / ‘settled’ accommodation may be inappropriate where it does not accord with their nomadic lifestyle¹⁹.
- 1.15 In 2007²⁰, the Commission highlighted a ‘lack of adequate housing and accommodation for Travellers’ as a key inequality. In 2009, the Commission expressed its concerns regarding the ‘*severe undersupply of decent, culturally sensitive accommodation for Travellers, which provides meaningful choice for households regarding their way of life*’.²¹
- 1.16 Whilst the NIHE Traveller Needs Assessment (2015)²² identified three council areas in 2014 that presented the most need for Traveller accommodation (Belfast²³; Dungannon²⁴; and, Craigavon²⁵) the planning data supplied by the NIHE shows that, of the eight applications lodged between 2007 and 2015, none were in two (the Belfast or Dungannon council areas) of the three areas of identified need. A total of six of the eight applications (75%) were however in one of the areas of most need - the Craigavon area²⁶.

16 In 2014, 18% (69 out of 384 respondents) of Traveller households travelled. In 2002 - 20% (62 out of 316 respondents) and in 2008 - 29% (130 out of 449 respondents) of respondents said that they travelled. See: NIHE Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessments (2002; 2008; 2015).

17 In 2014, of those who travelled, 30% (21 out of 69 respondents) lived in social housing; 20% (14 out of 69 respondents) lived in privately rented or owned accommodation; 16% (11 out of 69 respondents) lived on serviced and transit sites; and 13% (9 out of 69 respondents) lived in grouped accommodation. NIHE (2015) [Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2014](#).

18 ‘**Grouped Accommodation**’ refers to residential housing developments with additional facilities and amenities specifically designed to accommodate extended families of Travellers on a permanent basis. ‘**Serviced sites**’ are managed accommodation where Traveller families have a permanent base to park their caravan or erect timber framed sectional buildings. ‘**Transit Sites**’ are permanently operational sites that provide temporary accommodation for Travellers; ‘**Tolerated**’ / ‘**Co-operated**’ and ‘**Side-Of-The-Road**’ sites are unauthorised. The Co-Operation Policy, managed by the NIHE allows camping on a temporary basis. ECNI (2009) [Outlining minimum standards in Traveller accommodation](#).

19 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

20 ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

21 ECNI (2009) [Outlining minimum standards in Traveller accommodation](#). Page 9.

22 NIHE (2015) [Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2014](#).

23 Now the Belfast District Council areas.

24 Now the Mid Ulster District Council areas.

25 The Craigavon area is now part of the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council.

26 The other two applications were in: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council; and, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

- 1.17 Additionally, the 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study²⁷ reported poor housing conditions for Irish Travellers on sites. The Commission has however not been able to identify up-to-date information with regards to the general levels of adequacy of specific types of sites. Consideration should therefore be given to the extent to which such factors persist and any prevalence within certain types of accommodation and/or tenures etc.



KEY INEQUALITY:

The homes of minority ethnic people and migrant groups may be vulnerable to racial attacks.

- 1.18 Northern Ireland Police Recorded Crime Statistics (2014)²⁸ show that while the number of ‘criminal damage to a dwelling crimes’ that had a racist motivation experienced a year on year decrease between 2008/09 and 2012/13, the most recent data (from 2013/14 to 2015/16) showed an increased number of incidences of criminal damage compared to 2012/13²⁹.
- 1.19 Whilst a study by McVeigh (2013) found that good relationships between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and people from minority ethnic groups exist, poor responses from frontline police, who failed to show understanding of the impact of harassment, were also found^{30, 31}.
- 1.20 Additionally, whilst research indicates that minority ethnic and migrant groups are not interested in becoming involved in sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland³², Shimada (2010) found that they are nonetheless impacted by the challenges of navigating contested space^{33, 34}.

27 Abdella, S. (with 24 others) (2010) [Our Geels: All Ireland Traveller Health Study. Technical Report 1: Health Survey Findings.](#)

28 ‘Recorded crime data are based on an aggregated count of each crime within the notifiable offence list’. PSNI (2014) [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland.](#)

29 Increase was 65 crimes; from 110 crimes in 2012/13 to 175 crimes in 2013/14, 258 crimes in 2014/15 and 197 crimes in 2015/16. PSNI (2016) [Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2015/16.](#)

30 McVeigh, R. (2013) [Race and Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland.](#)

31 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland.](#)

32 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland.](#)

33 Shimada, L.D. (2010) [Transforming Earth and Fire: New Narratives of Identity and Place in Northern Ireland Peace Process.](#)

34 Bell et al. (2010) define contested space as a ‘situation where there is tension over access to public space in a largely segregated community’. Bell, J., Jarman, N. and Harvey, B. (2010) [Beyond Belfast: Contested Spaces in Urban, Rural and Cross Border Settings.](#)



- 1.21 Wallace (2015) argues that this has implications with regard to their housing choices and experiences³⁵. Access to adequate and sustainable accommodation will clearly be maximised where families and individuals from across the Section 75 categories are able to feel safe in their homes and communities.



KEY INEQUALITY:

Migrant workers are vulnerable to becoming subject to tied accommodation³⁵ with poor conditions and overcrowding.

- 1.22 Our 2007 Statement on Key Inequalities highlighted that migrant workers are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination and that tying accommodation to employment creates the conditions under which exploitation is possible.³⁷
- 1.23 In 2011, Allamby et al. reported that for migrant workers in Northern Ireland, 'work and accommodation are often linked, [where] many cannot leave their job as this would also render them homeless, creating a vicious circle of working long hours and living in poor conditions'³⁸. This accommodation can also be expensive, overcrowded, excessively controlled by landlords, and unsuitable for children³⁹.
- 1.24 In addition, Allamby et al., (2011) reported that migrant workers in tied accommodation have little general understanding of their rights and entitlements, and they lack security of tenure since their home is dependent upon their employment⁴⁰.

35 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

36 Accommodation that is provided as a part of a person's continued employment.

37 ECNI (2007) [Statement on Key Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

38 Allamby, L., Bell, J., Hamilton, J., Hansson, U., Jarman, N., Potter, M. and Toma, S. (2011) [Forced Labour in Northern Ireland: Exploiting vulnerability](#). Page 22.

39 Allamby, L., Bell, J., Hamilton, J., Hansson, U., Jarman, N., Potter, M. and Toma, S. (2011) [Forced Labour in Northern Ireland: Exploiting vulnerability](#).

40 Allamby, L., Bell, J., Hamilton, J., Hansson, U., Jarman, N., Potter, M. and Toma, S. (2011) [Forced Labour in Northern Ireland: Exploiting vulnerability](#).

**KEY INEQUALITY:**

Those with a learning disability are not always afforded an opportunity to live independently.

- 1.25 The Bamford Review (2007) found that whilst the resettlement of people with learning disabilities and mental health problems away from hospital settings and into the community had taken place many people were resettled in similar institutional shared settings. Additionally, there was evidence of an overreliance on support from family carers to support those with learning disabilities^{41, 42}.
- 1.26 Wallace (2015) reported that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO, 2009) had raised continuing concerns about the resettling of people with learning disabilities from hospital settings which should have been completed by the Government in 2002 but had been repeatedly pushed back to 2013⁴³.
- 1.27 Byrne et al., (2014) reported that the Bamford Action Plan 2012-2015 committed £64 million to resettle long-stay patients not in need of treatment and that this was to be completed by 2015^{44, 45}. In 2016, the Department for Social Development advised that the resettlement programme was still ongoing but nearing completion⁴⁶. As of March 2017, the Commission has been unable to confirm if the resettlement programme has completed.⁴⁷

41 Bamford (2007) [Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability \(Northern Ireland\) Consultation](#).

42 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

43 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

44 DHSSPS (2012) [‘Delivering the Bamford Vision: The Response of the Northern Ireland Executive to the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability Action Plan 2012-2015’](#).

45 Byrne, B, Harper, C., Shea Irvine, R., Russell, H. and Fitzpatrick, B. (2014) [UNCRPD: Shortfalls in public policy and programme delivery in Northern Ireland relative to the Articles of the UNCRPD. Final Report](#).

46 DSD correspondence with the Commission, January 2016.

47 DfC (March 2017) – email correspondence from DfC included: ‘DoH are finalising an evaluation of the Bamford Action Plan. That evaluation is expected to conclude that the actions within the Bamford Action Plan are largely complete However, there is still more to do, and the DoH evaluation will be useful in identifying the needs and gaps that need to be addressed...’.



KEY INEQUALITY:

Many people with disabilities live in homes that are not adequate to meet their disability related needs.

- 1.28 Although becoming dated⁴⁸, the Northern Ireland Survey of Activity Limitation and Disability (NISALD), conducted in 2006/07, found that nearly a fifth of those respondents who did not have modifications or adaptations to their homes did have a requirement for modifications or adaptations^{49, 50}.
- 1.29 Wallace (2015) highlights that ‘the intersection between an individual’s disability and their residential environment is critical’⁵¹. The 2011 Census for Northern Ireland shows that, at the time of the census, social rented homes had the greatest proportion of adapted homes^{52, 53}.
- 1.30 Although Lifetime Homes standards were adopted in 1998 for social housing, the same standards do not apply to the private sector. Further, in 2013 the Interdepartmental Review on Housing Adaptations called for specific wheelchair standards as coverage of these standards within Lifetime Homes was not considered adequate⁵⁴.
- 1.31 In addition, the NISALD showed that most of those eligible for a private sector Disabled Facilities Grant, or a public sector Disabled Adaptations Grant, to make necessary modifications or adaptations to their homes had never applied for one⁵⁵. The rate of grant applications was affected by a lack of knowledge that grants are available. Over half of NISALD respondents were unaware of either private sector or public sector grants^{56, 57}.

48 NISALD however remains the best available data source in this regard as Government have not produced any update to the information contained therein.

49 71% did not have any modifications or adaptations, of these 18% needed a modification or adaptation.

50 NISRA (2007) [The Prevalence of Disability and Activity Limitations amongst adults and children living in private households in Northern Ireland](#).

51 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#). Page 136.

52 11.8% for wheelchair users and 13.7% for other mobility difficulties

53 Wallace, A. (2015) [Housing and Communities Inequalities in Northern Ireland](#).

54 NIHE (2013) [Inter-Departmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services](#).

55 84% of those eligible for a private sector grant and 78% of those eligible for a public sector grant.

56 The respective percentages are 58% and 57%.

57 NISRA (2007) [The Prevalence of Disability and Activity Limitations amongst adults and children living in private households in Northern Ireland](#).

**KEY INEQUALITY:**

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) people can feel harassed and unsafe in their own homes and neighbourhoods.

- 1.32 Whilst there is a limited evidence base with regard to sexual orientation and housing and communities, 2009 research⁵⁸ found that around a fifth of homophobic incidents occurred in the LGB person's home. The incidents themselves were reported as ranging from physical to psychological, with many of those who suffer homophobia in their homes suffering on an ongoing basis. Nearly a quarter of homophobic incidents involved a perpetrator who was a neighbour or lived locally⁵⁹.
- 1.33 Police Service of Northern Ireland crime statistics show increased year-on-year 'Violence against the person offences' between 2007/08 and 2013/14⁶⁰. In addition, this type of crime continually accounted for the majority of crimes with a homophobic motivation between 2007/08 and 2013/14⁶¹.
- 1.34 Police Service of Northern Ireland crime statistics also show that the number of 'criminal damage to a dwelling' offences increased between 2007/08 and 2013/14, although the increase was less substantial. However, this type of crime still accounted for around a tenth to a fifth of all crimes with a homophobic motivation between 2007/08 and 2013/14⁶².
- 1.35 It is important to note that both the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Service of Northern Ireland recognise that the under-reporting of homophobic hate crimes is an issue⁶³.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For the full version of our Statement – visit:

www.equalityni.org/KeyInequalities-Housing

April 2017

58 O'Doherty, J. (2009) [Through Our Eyes](#).

59 O'Doherty, J. (2009) [Through Our Eyes](#).

60 Except for during 2009/10 and 2011/12 when decreases were evident. This increase saw the number of offences rise from 74 in 2007/08 to 133 in 2013/14.

61 PSNI (2014) [Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2013/14](#).

62 PSNI (2014) [Trends in Hate Motivated Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2013/14](#).

63 O'Doherty, J. (2009) [Through Our Eyes](#).



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April 2017

