

A man with long, dark hair and a beard is looking slightly upwards and to the right. He is wearing a grey, textured zip-up jacket. He stands in front of a wall covered in graffiti, including a large blue and red design. In the background, there are residential buildings under a clear blue sky.

Housing Rights

A Home for Everyone

Working Together to Prevent Homelessness

**Housing Rights' policy priorities ahead of the
2027 Assembly Election**

September 2026

Housing Rights' policy priorities ahead of the 2027 Assembly Election

Housing Rights are calling on the next Northern Ireland Assembly and MLAs to take action to prevent homelessness and ensure everyone has access to a safe, secure, and affordable home.

We are urging elected representatives to prioritise three key actions:

1.Prevent homelessness

2.Provide the homes people need

3.Strengthen renters' rights

By taking action on these priorities, the next Assembly can:

- Prevent more people from becoming homeless
- Improve the outcomes for of people who are currently experiencing homelessness
- Protect those at risk of experiencing homelessness in the future
- Increase access to safe, secure and affordable housing
- Reduce pressure on public services



Prevent homelessness before it happens

Why it matters:

Homelessness is damaging, costly and often preventable. Earlier intervention produces better outcomes for individuals and reduces pressure on public services. Unlike other jurisdictions, there is no legal duty on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) or any other government body to prevent homelessness.

- Homelessness negatively impacts the physical and mental health of those who experience it. Early intervention helps stop it from happening.
- Preventing homelessness should be a key pillar of combatting the housing crisis. It aligns with the goals of the Homelessness Strategy, Housing Strategy and Anti-poverty Strategy.
- Investing in homeless prevention can save money and reduce crisis demand, including the use of temporary accommodation.



We can do this by:

1. Ensuring the next Programme for Government focuses on preventing homelessness.
2. Committing to introduce a legal duty to prevent homelessness that requires a whole-government approach to prevention.
3. Providing support to households struggling to pay their mortgage through a mortgage rescue scheme.



Farag and Bahia, pictured for the Centre for Homelessness Impact's Photo Library

Provide the homes people need

Why it matters:

Northern Ireland cannot end homelessness without increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. A home is more than a roof over your head. It provides the security and stability people need to build a life, reach their potential and contribute to their communities.

- An adequate supply of appropriate homes will help reduce and prevent homelessness.
- A lack of social homes is driving low-income households into the cheapest, poorest quality private rented homes. This also leaves households with complex needs at acute risk of homelessness.
- Increasing interest rates and house prices mean first-time buyers struggle to get on the property ladder. This increases demand on the private rented sector and contributes to rent inflation.

We can do this by:

1. Building more social housing and ending the NIHE House Sales Scheme.
2. Adopting a housing first approach with wrap-around support that meets people's needs.
3. Supporting first-time buyers to purchase a home.



David, pictured for the Centre for Homelessness Impact's Photo Library

Strengthen renters' rights

Why it matters:

The private rented sector now houses more people than the social housing sector in Northern Ireland, but protections have not kept pace with its growth. Private tenants are disproportionately represented in our advice service, showing increased vulnerability to homelessness.

- Lack of repair and maintenance rights negatively affects renters' health. It creates financial and mental stress and puts people at risk of homelessness.
- Renters lack security in their homes. Some renters must leave their homes with as little as 28 days' notice and will face homelessness.
- Uncontrolled rent inflation means private renters are struggling to afford their housing costs and necessities like food and heating. Unaffordable housing costs prevent people from accessing private rented homes when they need to.



We can do this by:

1. Increasing security in private rented homes by ending no-fault evictions and supporting councils to enforce these protections.
2. Updating housing fitness standards in the private rented sector to align with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.
3. Introducing control measures to ensure fair rents in the private sector.
4. Providing support to make private rented properties energy efficient and affordable to heat.



Our principles for effective policy design

Housing Rights believes that to design effective housing and homeless policy, policymakers should adopt these principles:

Put people with lived experience at the centre of policy development

The expertise and insights of people who have first-hand experience of homelessness and housing problems make them Experts by Experience. Their involvement in policy design is key to identifying the issues that need to be addressed and developing solutions that work in practice.

Consider the needs of the most vulnerable

Housing policy should be designed with those facing the greatest barriers in mind. By prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable, government policy will reduce inequality, protect those most at risk of homelessness, and improve outcomes for everyone.

Commit to investing in service provision

Effective housing and homelessness policy creation includes an assessment of the resources needed to turn policy commitments into meaningful outcomes. This should include how proposed changes will be funded and sustained long term.

Be driven by evidence

Policy makers must use reliable data and evidence to inform decisions. Data should be up to date, complete, and accurate when being used to identify problems and potential solutions.

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when everyone has a **home**