

Housing Rights

Private Rented Sector 2025

When everyone has a *home*
The private rented sector and
homelessness prevention

Hybrid conference

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The Speakers

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Kate McCauley
Chief Executive Officer, Housing Rights

@HousingRightsNI/ @K8McCauley 

Kate is the Chief Executive of Housing Rights, Northern Ireland's leading specialist housing advice organisation. Since 2015, Kate has worked in a variety of roles within Housing Rights leading the policy, research and development services prior to becoming Chief Executive in February 2023.

With over 15 years' experience working in housing and within the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, Kate previously worked in a grassroots human rights project focused on socio economic rights and has served on the Boards of a number of organisations in the sector. Her background is in law and human rights and she is especially interested in innovation to prevent homelessness and in the empowerment of marginalised groups.



Professor Paddy Gray OBE

@Paddygray1 

Paddy Gray is an established academic and has wide experience of academic and applied research. He is currently an Ambassador for the Housing Safety and Well Being Task Force set up by Aico. Paddy Gray is an established academic with over 400 publications. In 2010 he became the first Irish President of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). He is Chair of Wheatley Foundation in Scotland, and until recently was Vice Chair of Wheatley Homes Glasgow. In Ireland he Chairs Tuath Housing, and iCare Housing, and is a board member of Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). In NI he Chairs the Private Rented Tenants Voice and is a past Chair of Connswater Homes, Ulidia Housing Association and Citizens Advice North west. In 2017 he was named the top housing power player in the UK. 2019 awarded an OBE. 2021 appointed to the new Housing Commission in Ireland. 2023 was named Property Personality of the year at the Belfast Telegraph Property Awards and in 2024 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Aico Community Awards in Birmingham.



David Polley
Director of Housing Supply Policy, Department for Communities

@communitiesNI 

David's area has responsibility for the development and implementation of most aspects of policy in relation to the Supply of Housing in tenures other than social housing, as well as the design and implementation of a programme of strategies aimed at improving housing supply. Work that Housing Supply Policy is responsible for includes:

- Role and regulation of the private rented sector
- Affordable Housing
- Shared neighbourhoods under Together: Building United Communities (TBUC)
- Homelessness
- Housing supply across all tenures
- Affordable warmth scheme



Jordan Buchanan
Chief Executive Officer, PropertyPal

@Propertypal/ @jbuchanan0707 

As Chief Executive of PropertyPal, Jordan acts as the company's spokesperson and is a trusted expert on economic and housing matters across the UK and Northern Ireland. He sits on the Board of Co-Ownership, Northern Ireland's shared ownership provider, previously lectured in Economics at Ulster Business School, and is a regular media commentator.

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Julie Rugg

Reader in Social Policy, University of York

Dr Julie Rugg specialises in research on the private rented sector (PRS) and has – since 1993 – completed multiple projects for the UK government, charities and local authorities. In 2024 she completed a scoping review for the Nationwide Foundation, to guide its PRS funding programme, and is currently engaged in an ESRC project exploring landlord-perpetrated crime in the PRS.



Renters' Voice

@RentersVoice 

Renters' Voice is a group for people who rent from a private landlord or through a letting agent in Northern Ireland. Their experience of renting motivates them to create change by campaigning for improvements across the private rental sector: they speak out to influence public and political discussions; they ask to be involved in relevant decision making; they empower other renters to create change. As well as being a strong voice for renters in NI, Renters' Voice want to embed a culture of tenant participation among decision makers.



Kevin Cunningham

Lecturer in Politics, TU Dublin and Founder of Ireland Thinks

Dr Kevin Cunningham is founder/managing director of the polling and analytics firm Ireland Thinks. He also lectures in politics at TU Dublin. He has published in several high ranking academic journals in addition to regular newspaper articles and other media appearances concerning politics and public opinion.

@kevcunningham 



Ann-Marie O'Reilly

National Advocacy Manager

Joining leading housing charity Threshold, as Policy Officer in 2018, Ann-Marie has held the role of National Advocacy Manager, since 2022. Threshold provides supports to renters to resolve difficulties in their tenancies and to own their rights, keeps people in their homes and prevents homelessness. Ann- Marie worked in homeless services for 10 years prior to joining Threshold. She holds a Master of Social Science and focussed her research on homeless prevention and the private rental sector.

@ThresholdIRE 

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Eamonn Hunt

Head of Tenancy Deposit Scheme Northern Ireland

@TDSNI 

Eamonn has over 20 years experience within the Private Rented sector, dealing with various aspects of lettings industry and disputes.



Maria Curran

Landlord Registrar for NI, Landlord Registration Scheme

Maria Curran is the Landlord Registrar NI following the transfer of this function from Department for Communities to councils. Maria and her team are based in Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. As work continues with the redesign of the website and registration portal, the team looks forward to working with all stakeholders to improve the future of the Scheme.



Catherine Quinn

Staff Officer in Private Rented Branch, Department for Communities

@CommunitiesNI 

Catherine Quinn is a member of Private Rented Branch in the Department of Communities. The team has responsibility for policy and legislation for the private rented sector. At this event, Catherine will lead a pre-consultation engagement session on Notice to Quit periods, inviting discussion on proposed changes and their impact on tenants and landlords.



James Mullaney

Senior and Best Practice Manager, Crisis

@crisisscotland 

James Mullaney is a Senior Best Practice Officer with over a decade of experience in housing law, policy, and frontline practice. This has included projects focused on improving tenant engagement and increasing access to the private rented sector. More recently, James has specialised in identifying and sharing good practice around homelessness prevention, including research to influence the Scottish government's new Housing Scotland Bill.

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Luke Arundel

Evidence and Data Lead, Centre for Homelessness Impact

@homelessimpact 

Luke Arundel is Evidence and Data Lead at the Centre for Homelessness Impact, where he leads multiple research projects, including several of the Test and Learn evaluations. His focus is on impact evaluation, having worked on multiple randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental designs in homelessness and higher education.

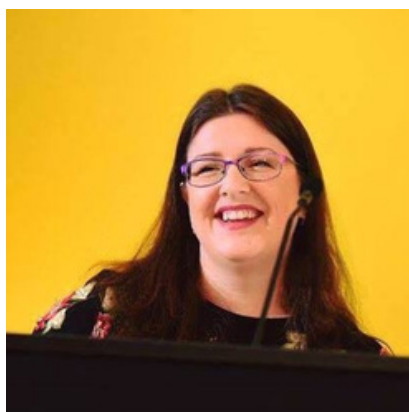


Brian O'Kane

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

@nihecommunity 

Brian has over 25 years' experience working in the Housing Sector in Northern Ireland. During his career in the Housing Executive Brian has extensive experience of leading on the delivery of the Supporting People Programme, and the development and implementation of the Housing Solutions model. In recent years Brian has led NIHE's Central Homelessness Unit overseeing strategy and policy, project development and delivery, and the management of the temporary accommodation portfolio.



Kellie Armstrong MLA

Alliance Party

@Kelmba / @allianceparty 

Kellie Armstrong MLA is the Alliance Party spokesperson for Housing. Kellie is the Chair of the All Party Group on Homelessness. Kellie has recently joined CIH as an associate to the NI Board. First elected to the Assembly in 2016, Kellie has served on the Infrastructure and Communities Committee. Kellie successfully introduced the Integrated Education Act through her private members bill. Kellie is currently the Chair of the Committee for Procedures that manages and reviews the Standing Orders of the NI Assembly.



Mark H Durkan, MLA

SDLP

@SDLPlive / @markhdurkan 

Mark H Durkan as the SDLP MLA for Foyle, is a champion of social justice since being elected in 2014. He is determined to fight poverty, housing inequality and health injustice. He campaigns for safe, affordable homes, welfare protections, fair pay and mental health support. Mark works tirelessly to ensure no one is left behind in society.

The Speakers

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Gerry Carroll MLA
People Before Profit

@GerryCarrollPBP 

Gerry Carroll has been the People Before Profit MLA for west Belfast since 2016.



Colm Gildernew MLA
Sinn Féin

@GildernewColm 

Colm is Sinn Féin MLA for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. He currently serves as the Chair of the Communities Committee and is a Committee Member on the Public Accounts Committee. He is also the Sinn Féin spokesperson for housing.

He is also a founding member, former Chairman of and current director of Aghaloo Credit Union, a member of and keen follower of Aghaloo CLG, founding member of The Brantry Area Rural Development Association

He received a first class honours degree in social work, it is in this field he has been working until his local area selected him to be co-opted to the Assembly.

AGENDA

09:30am - 10:00am Registration and refreshments

10:00am - 10:10am Welcome from Housing Rights Chief Executive Officer, Kate McCauley

10:10am - 10:15am Welcome from Chair Professor Paddy Gray

Section 1: Setting the scene

10:15am - 10:30am David Polley, Director – Housing Supply Policy, Department for Communities: 'Homes, Not Just Houses: Reforming PRS Together'

10:30am – 10:50am Jordan Buchanan - Chief Executive, PropertyPal: The State of Renting 2025/26

10:50am - 11:10am Julie Rugg - Reader in Social Policy, University of York: Homelessness and the private rented sector: perspectives on trends in England

11:10am - 11:30am Panel discussion: Setting the context
David Polley, Department for Communities
Julie Rugg, University of York

11:30am - 11:45am Coffee break

Section 2: Key Challenges for Private Rented Tenants

11:45am - 12:15pm Jenni Millar - Renters' Voice: Security of Tenure and Illegal Letting Fees

12:15pm - 12:40pm Kevin Cunningham – Lecturer in Politics, TU Dublin, and Founder of Ireland Thinks:
Present the findings of the all-island tenant research

12:40pm - 1:00pm Panel discussion: Deep dive into all-island tenant experience research
Kevin Cunningham, Ireland Thinks
Ann Marie O'Reilly, Threshold
Amy Thornton, Expert by Experience and member of the research advisory group
Stephen Morrison, Housing Rights

1:00pm - 1:45pm **Lunch**

Break-out Sessions

1:45pm - 2:15pm Landlord Registration Scheme: An overview of the Landlord Registration Scheme
Department for Communities: Consultation session on extended notice to quit periods
Tenancy Deposit Scheme: Tenancy deposit protection- what you need to know

Section 3: Impact and Solutions

2:20pm - 2:45pm James Mullaney – Senior Best Practice Officer (Homelessness Prevention), Crisis : Prevention is the Key

2:45pm - 3:10pm Luke Arundel - Evidence and Data Lead, Centre for Homelessness Impact: A Smarter Approach to Homelessness: Prioritising Prevention

3:10pm - 3:30pm Brian O'Kane - Northern Ireland Housing Executive

3:30pm - 3:50pm Panel discussion:
Kellie Armstrong MLA, Alliance Party
Mark H Durkan MLA, Social Democratic and Labour Party
Gerry Carroll MLA, People Before Profit
Colm Gildernew MLA, Sinn Féin

3:50pm - 4:00pm Close and thanks

Private Rented Sector 2025

Thank you to our sponsors

Headline sponsor



Special thanks to our headline sponsor and long-standing supporter of our conference, TDS Northern Ireland.

Award-winning TDS are Northern Ireland's leading and only not-for-profit tenancy deposit protection scheme.

TDS protect deposits for private tenancies and resolve disputes over their return.

[Latest news from TDS](#)
[Tools and guides for tenants](#)
[Check out their blog #AskTDS](#)

Workshop sponsor



Electrical Safety First is a campaigning charity that aims to reduce deaths and injuries caused by electricity in UK homes.

They do this by working closely with Government, the electrical industry, manufacturers, retailers and consumer safety organisations to improve safety regulation and standards.

They run media and digital campaigns to share advice and guidance with consumers that will help them to stay safe in their homes.