

Private Rented Sector 2026

Keeping People Housed:
Affordability, Security and the Future of Private Renting

TENANCY DEPOSIT SCHEME NORTHERN IRELAND
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Agenda

Welcome from Housing Rights

Welcome from Chair Paddy Gray

Section 1: Understanding the Challenges in the PRS

Exploring the economic, social and policy factors affecting renters' housing security.

The Department's Legislative Agenda
Julie Lavery, Department for Communities

Setting the Economic Context
Jordan Buchanan, PropertyPal

The Experience of Private Renters: Security and Standards
Renters' Voice

How is the Private Rented Sector Driving Inequality?
Michael Byrne, University College Dublin

Morning panel

Section 2: Solutions in Policy and Services

Examining the policies, services and innovations that help people access, sustain and remain in their homes.

Affordability Challenges to Sustaining and Accessing Tenancies – What Needs to Change?
Renters' Voice

Debt, Homelessness and the Private Rented Sector
Niamh Flannigan, Centre for Homelessness Impact

How tax reforms would make rent controls feasible to deliver
Rosie Worsdale and Joseph Elliott, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Private Rented Sector as a Solution to Homelessness
Emma Murray, Simon Community



Break-out Sessions

Can Community Led Housing help address the housing shortage for marginalised groups?
Tom and Aidan will be joined by Professor Brendan Murtagh, Queens University Belfast and Dr Lynne McMordie, ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University.

Warm Healthy Homes Fund and Private Rented Sector Decarbonisation
Una McConnell, Department for Communities

Deposit Protection: What You Need to Know
Eamonn Hunt, Tenancy Deposit Scheme Northern Ireland

Section 3: Prevention and Legislative Reform

Exploring how prevention, reform and political action can create a private rented sector that keeps people housed.

Joining the Dots: Systems Thinking for Homelessness Prevention
Ann-Marie O'Reilly, Threshold

What Renters Need from the Next Programme for Government
Renters' Voice

Political Panel Discussion: Keeping People Housed - Political Priorities for Homelessness Prevention

Close and Thanks



Kate McCauley

Chief Executive Officer, Housing Rights

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.

Professor Paddy Gray OBE

Paddy Gray is an established academic and has wide experience of academic and applied research. He is an established academic with over 300 publications. In 2010 he became the first Irish President of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). He is past Chair of the Wheatley Foundation in Scotland, and is alsi past Vice Chair of Wheatley Homes Glasgow. In Ireland he is past Chair of Tuath Housing, and is Chair of iCare Housing. He is also a past board member of Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).
In NI he Chairs the Private Rented Tenants Voice and is a board member of Woven Housing Association. He is also 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. In 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.





Julie Lavery

Deputy Director of Housing and Sustainability Group, Department for Communities

Julie is the Acting Deputy Director of the Housing and Sustainability Group in the Department for Communities. She has extensive experience in strategic housing policy, leading major policy development and reform programmes. Her previous roles included leading the development of Northern Ireland's first Housing Supply Strategy and Private Rented Sector reform. In her current role, Julie leads the Department's work in support of the Homelessness Commission, provides strategic oversight of the Department's sponsorship arrangements with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and oversees the Group's corporate functions.



Renters' Voice

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.

Jordan Buchanan

Chief Executive Officer, PropertyPal

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





Michael Byrne

Associate Professor, University College Dublin

Dr. Michael Byrne is Associate Professor at UCD's School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice. His research concerns the political economy of housing, with a particular focus on rental housing. He recently published Beyond Generation Rent: Political Economy, Inequality, and the Private Rental Sector (Polity Press) and writes The Week in Housing on Substack.



Ann-Marie O'Reilly
National Advocacy Manager, Threshold

Joining leading housing charity Threshold, as Policy Officer in 2018, Ann-Marie has held the role of National Advocacy Manager, since 2022. Threshold provides support 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.

Niamh Flannigan
Head of Implementation, Centre for Homelessness Impact

As Head of Implementation at the Centre for Homelessness Impact, Niamh focuses on translating evidence into action to end homelessness. Her work brings together systems thinking, data and implementation practice to support sustainable change. She is particularly interested in facilitating action on homelessness prevention across systems, bringing organisations together to drive collective impact.





Joseph Elliott
Lead Analyst, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Joseph Elliott is a Lead Analyst at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. His current current research focus is on housing security and affordability. His role at JRF involves providing analysis and evidence to work towards the outcome of ensuring more people live in a decent, affordable home.



Rosie Worsdale

Senior Policy Adviser, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Rosie is a Senior Policy Adviser at JRF, where she leads JRF's work on housing and land work.

Emma Murray

Senior Operational Lead, Simon Community

Emma Murray is Senior Operational Lead at Simon Community and a member of the Senior Management Team. She has almost 15 years' experience in homelessness services, complemented by an earlier career in the youth sector. Drawing on extensive frontline and operational experience, Emma oversees temporary accommodation services and helps shape Simon Community's long-term strategy, with a particular focus on prevention.



Political Panel



David McCann

Commentator and Election Analyst

Dr David McCann, is the host of the Stormont Sources podcast, a columnist with the Irish News and an election analyst focusing on Northern Ireland.



Colm Gildernew MLA

Sinn Féin

Colm Gildernew has been involved in republican and community activism since his early teens. His family were actively involved in the Caledon Sit-in protest, which was a catalyst in the Civil Rights era and which led to the formation of the Housing Executive, among others. He was involved in the business sector for many years, running his own engineering business in South Tyrone. Colm is a qualified Social Worker, having graduated with a First Class Honours degree, and was working in this field for a number of years prior to his becoming an MLA. Colm is a founder member of Aghaloo Credit Union and Brantry Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann and is currently chairperson of the Brantry Bard Community Centre. Colm has been an MLA in the six county Assembly since 2017. He was chair of the Assembly's Health Committee throughout the Covid crisis. He is currently chair of the Committee for Communities and sits on the Public Accounts Committee.

Kellie Armstrong MLA

Alliance Party

Kellie is the Alliance Party spokesperson on Housing, Chair of the All Party Group on Homelessness. Kellie advocates for rights for private renters, challenges NIHE on allocation of social homes and its limits on where social housing is located across NI.



Political Panel



Gerry Carroll MLA
People Before Profit

Gerry Carroll has been the People Before Profit MLA for west Belfast since 2016. In recent months, he has successfully passed a motion calling for greater protections for tenants living with damp and mould. His 'People's Housing Bill' to ban no-fault evictions and implement rent controls is currently being drafted, ready to bring to the Assembly in the next mandate.

Cllr Carl Whyte
Social Democratic and Labour Party

Carl was elected in May 2019 and represents the Castle DEA in North Belfast. He was re-elected in 2023. Before he was elected, Carl worked in finance and economics in his early career before founding a communications consultancy in 2011.
He is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, Johns Hopkins University and Queen's University Belfast, where he was also a teaching assistant in the Queen's Management School. A former member of the Commission for Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition, in his work as a Belfast City Councillor Carl is committed to working for and representing all those who live in Castle, and focuses especially on economic and environmental regeneration.



Break out sessions



Tom Dinnen, Chief Operating Officer and Aidan Byrne, Homelessness Service Manager Hosford House

Can Community Led Housing help address the housing shortage for marginalised groups?

Tom and Aidan will be joined by Professor Brendan Murtagh, Queens University Belfast and Dr Lynne McMordie, ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University.

Dr Lynne McMordie, ISPHERE at Heriot-Watt University

Dr Lynne McMordie is a Research Associate at I-SPHERE (Institute for Social Policy, Housing and Equalities Research), Heriot-Watt University. Her research focuses on the relationship between temporary accommodation and homelessness, with a particular focus on the effectiveness of differing models in facilitating an exit from homelessness. Lynne recently obtained a PhD from Heriot-Watt University on the intended and actual outcomes of hostel accommodation use for single homeless households. Prior to taking up a PhD, Lynne worked in the homelessness sector in Northern Ireland, developing and managing a range of frontline services, including hostel accommodation, drop-in centre, and street outreach services.



Professor Brendan Murtagh, Queens University Belfast

Brendan Murtagh is a Professor of Urban Planning at Queen's University Belfast. He is a town planner who has researched and written widely on social economics, community development and urban regeneration. He is a board member of Community Places and was a member of the Ministerial Advisory Panel on Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland.



Eamonn Hunt, Head of Tenancy Deposit Scheme Northern Ireland

Deposit Protection: What You Need to Know

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



Una McConnell, Deputy Director Warm Homes and Climate Change Division, Department for Communities

Warm Healthy Homes Fund and Private Rented Sector Decarbonisation

Una McConnell is the Deputy Director of Warm Homes and Climate Change Division in the Department for Communities. The Division leads on the Residential Buildings Sector of the Climate Action Plan, the development of policies and proposals to reduce residential carbon emissions, the implementation of the Warm Healthy Homes Strategy and the development of the Warm Healthy Homes Fund.

Thanks to our sponsors

TENANCY DEPOSIT SCHEME NORTHERN IRELAND

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

Electrical Safety First

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.

Landlord Registration Scheme

Audio/Visual sponsor

The Landlord Registration Scheme NI provides a central register of private landlords across Northern Ireland, supporting greater transparency, promoting good practice within the private rented sector, and enabling tenants, landlords and local councils to access key information relating to landlord registration. The Scheme makes it a legal requirement for all private sector landlords to be registered.

Find out more: Landlord Registration NI
Follos us on Socials: Facebook and Landlord Registration Scheme Northern Ireland: Overview | LinkedIn

when everyone has a home