

12 November 2024

**Our Ref: FOI 556**

## **Request**

We received your request on 15 October 2024 for the following information:

1. *Please provide the number of currently vacant housing properties owned by the NIHE across (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Belfast.*
1. *Please provide the average time that these properties have lay vacant.*
2. *Please provide the reason for being vacant.*
2. *Please provide the number of people on NIHE waiting lists.*
1. *If known, please breakdown by (a) region and (b) housing need (e.g., Housing Stress, Homeless, etc).*
3. *Please provide the average waiting time of an applicant who is on the waiting list for a NIHE property to receive a property.*
1. *If known, broken down by application type. (e.g., single male, single female, single dad household, single mum household, two-parent household, pensioner, etc).*
4. *Please provide a breakdown of the types of properties you hold.*
1. *E.g., how many 1-bed apartments, 2-bed apartments, 1-bed houses, 2-bed houses, etc).*
5. *Please summarise any plans the NIHE holds to bring vacant properties back into service for public housing.*

*Clarification sought 16.10.24:*

*Regarding Q2, please clarify what you mean by region - is it the NIHE 3 Regions (Belfast, North & South) or regionally i.e. at NI level? We could also provide the data by Local Government District.*

*For Q3 you have not stated any geography, would you like the data at NI level?*

*Response 16.10.24:*

*Q2 – By Local Government District*

*Q3 – At NI level*

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

## Our response

**1) Please provide the number of currently vacant housing properties owned by the NIHE across (a) Northern Ireland and (b) Belfast.**

As of the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, there were 320 actionable, and 1296 non-actionable void Housing Executive dwellings. The respective figures for the Belfast Region were 129 and 815.

**1.a) Please provide the average time that these properties have lay vacant.**

The Housing Executive has a target to re-let properties within 30 days. (LLHS KPI 1.3.1). The year-to-date figure for Northern Ireland is 29 days, and, for Belfast, 30 days.

**1.b) Please provide the reason for being vacant.**

The Housing Executive has two high-level categories for its void properties. The 320 actionable voids are properties which are vacant while in the process of being allocated/awaiting change of tenancy repairs. These may also include properties deemed to be difficult to let or waiting repairs/programmed works. The 1296 non-actionable voids are properties that are not immediately available for allocation and are held vacant for operational reasons i.e. decanting purposes (where they are being used to house a tenant on a temporary basis pending works to their home), planned maintenance schemes, and properties which have been identified for sale/transfer or have approval for demolition.

**2. Please provide the number of people on NIHE waiting lists.**

**If known, please breakdown by (a) region and (b) housing need (e.g., Housing Stress, Homeless, etc).**

Further to your clarification response of 15<sup>th</sup> October, the table below provides waiting list and allocation data, broken down by Local Government District, as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The table should be read in conjunction with the notes provided.

LGD	Applicants	Applicants in housing stress	Applicants with FDA status	Allocations
Antrim & Newtownabbey	3480	2722	2277	411
Ards & North Down	3330	2457	1932	502
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	3994	2544	1765	502
Belfast	12889	10497	9218	1617
Causeway Coast & Glens	3786	2366	1834	432

Derry & Strabane	6260	4878	4312	600
Fermanagh & Omagh	2162	1529	1110	209
Lisburn & Castlereagh	2548	2005	1681	318
Mid & East Antrim	3176	2360	2045	487
Mid Ulster	2317	1508	1103	295
Newry, Mourne & Down	3994	3271	2792	335
<b>NI Total</b>	<b>47936</b>	<b>36137</b>	<b>30069</b>	<b>5708</b>

#### Notes:

- Applicant Information (all applicants and applicants in housing stress) is as at end June 2024.
- Allocation information refers to the number of allocations in the preceding 12 month period.
- FDA refers to Full Duty Applicants – these are applicants accepted as being homeless, to whom the Housing Executive owes a duty under the Homelessness legislation, Article 10(2) of the Housing (NI) Order, 1988 to “secure that accommodation becomes available for his/her occupation”.
- Housing Stress refers to applicants who have been awarded 30 or more points under the Housing Selection Scheme.

Waiting List figures are produced quarterly and so the most up to date figures are as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. However, Waiting List Statistics are included in the Department for Communities Housing Bulletin which is designated as a National Statistic.

Section 13(1) of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 states that ‘the person producing any official statistics which are designated under section 12 as National Statistics must ensure that the Code of Practice for Statistics under section 10 continues to be complied with in relation to those statistics.’ Provision of the requested figures before publication of the DfC Housing Bulletin in which the dataset from which they would be drawn is published would be a failure to comply with the Code in respect of parts [T3.3 and T3.4](#).

The September 2024 figures are therefore currently exempt from disclosure under Section 44 of the Freedom of Information Act - disclosure prohibited by other legislation. The figures can be made available upon request subsequent to the publication of the Bulletin, which is currently expected around w/c 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

3. ***Please provide the average waiting time of an applicant who is on the waiting list for a NIHE property to receive a property.  
If known, broken down by application type. (e.g., single male, single female, single dad household, single mum household, two-parent household, pensioner, etc).***

The table below provides data on the number of housing allocations to applicants on the waiting list in Northern Ireland by Household Composition/Type for a 5-year period from 01/07/2019 to 30/06/2024. The table should be viewed in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

<b>Allocations 01/07/2019 - 30/06/2024 at N. Ireland level by Mean &amp; Median Waiting Time (in months) on the Waiting List at the point of allocation by Household Composition/Type</b>			
<b>Household Composition/Type</b>	<b>No. of allocations</b>	<b>Mean Months at the point of allocation</b>	<b>Median Months at the point of allocation</b>
Single Person Household	13,153	26.9	18.0
Small Adult Household	1,181	30.5	18.0
Small Family Household	8,005	28.4	18.0
Large Family Household	2,147	28.1	17.0
Large Adult Household	416	42.5	28.0
Elderly/Older Small Household	5,069	23.5	10.0
<b>N. Ireland Total</b>	<b>29,971</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>16.0</b>

**Notes:**

- This response is based on the most recently published data from our Housing Management System (allocations up to 30/06/2024).
- Allocations are aggregated over a 5-year period from 01/07/2019 to 30/06/2024 and include allocations to both Housing Executive and housing association properties.
- Household Composition/Type is recorded on our systems at the point of application and may not reflect the composition of the household at the point of allocation.
- Household Composition/Types:

<b>Household Composition/Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Single Person Household	1 person aged 16-59
Small Adult Household	2 persons aged 16-59
Small Family Household	1 or 2 persons aged 16 or over and 1 or 2 persons aged 0-15
Large Family Household	1 or 2 persons aged 16 or over and 3 or more persons aged 0-15 or 3 or more persons aged 16 or over and 2 or more persons aged 0-15
Large Adult Household	3 or more persons aged 16 or over with or without 1 person aged 0-15
Elderly/Older Small Household	1 or 2 persons aged 16 or over, 1 or both of whom aged 60 or over

- When a question of “average waiting times” or “average points” is asked, MEAN and MEDIAN averages are provided.

Property Type	Bedroom Count										Total
	0*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
BEDSIT		129									129
BUNGALOW	1	4589	11584	1665	81	11					17931
COTTAGE		2	432	236	22	5					697
FLAT	3	5582	10681	500	7					1	16774
HOUSE	7	86	9463	32200	3956	372	26	2	4	1	46117
MAISONETTE		5	666	508	22						1201
Total	11	10393	32826	35109	4088	388	26	2	4	2	82849

Reasons for this include:

The MEAN is the arithmetic average and as a statistic can often be unreliable, having been skewed by significant outliers i.e. applicants who have been on the waiting list for a number of years.

This degree of skewing makes the arithmetic average, the MEAN, unreliable.

Therefore, following expert advice on this matter a methodology that utilises the MEDIAN (a measure of central tendency) as a more reliable indicator in relation to Waiting Lists and Allocations is also provided.

**4) Please provide a breakdown of the types of properties you hold.**

**4.a) E.g., how many 1-bed apartments, 2-bed apartments, 1-bed houses, 2-bed houses, etc).**

The table below sets out details of Housing Executive stock, broken down as requested, as of 18<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

\*Please note there are a small number of properties for which bedroom data is not held on our system.

**5. *Please summarise any plans the NIHE holds to bring vacant properties back into service for public housing.***

In areas of Housing Need, the Housing Executive will offer support to Housing Associations who bring forward Existing Satisfactory Purchase or Rehabilitation properties under the Social Housing Development Programme, these ESP and Rehabilitation properties may include currently vacant properties.

Responsibility for the Empty Homes Strategy no longer sits with the Housing Executive. It has been transferred back to the Department for Communities.

In regard to action through planned schemes:

- We have a scheme currently on site in Derry/Londonderry to convert office premises to 3 no. flats
- We have prepared a scheme to reinstate a vacant block of 6 no. flats in Strabane
- We have plans to reinstate 5 vacant properties in Ballymena
- We have a scheme approved to convert a commercial property in Omagh to a dwelling, and are currently exploring the viability of converting some other vacant commercial properties to residential

This concludes our response.