



20 May 2025

Dear Applicant

**Our Ref: FOI 764**

Your request for information received on 30 April 2025 has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

**Request**

*I would like to know the policies and procedures of the NIHE when it comes to bed room allocations.*

**Our response**

The minimum number of bedrooms required for a housing applicant (and their household) are identified at Schedule 3 of the Housing Selection Scheme Rules.

**Schedule 3**

***Minimum Size of Accommodation for Allocations***

Single Person	1 Bedroom	1 Bed Space
Couple	1 Bedroom	2 Bed Spaces
2 Persons (not a couple) or 1 Parent and 1 Child	2 Bedrooms	2 Bed Spaces
Couple and 1 Child or 1 Parent and 2 Children	2 Bedrooms	3 Bed Spaces
Couple and 2 Children	2 Bedrooms	4 Bed Spaces

1 Parent and 1 Adult and 1 Child	3 Bedrooms	3 Bed Spaces
1 Parent and 3 Children or Couple and 1 Adult and 1 Child or 1 Parent and 1 Adult and 2 Children	3 Bedrooms	4 Bed Spaces
Couple and 3 Children or 1 Parent and 4 Children or Couple and 1 Adult and 2 Children	3 Bedrooms	5 Bed Spaces
Couple and 4 or more Children or 1 Parent and 1 Adult and 3 or 4 Children	4 Bedrooms	6 Bed Spaces

Notes: Other household compositions analogous to those above will be considered for equivalent accommodation. For the purpose of this table all children sharing a bedroom are assumed to be under 7 years of age or of the same sex. Children of different sex over the age of 7 years should not normally have to share a bedroom. A greater number of bedrooms may be reasonably required depending on the particular needs of the Applicant or the Applicant's household. Where there are no other Applicants with the required household size on the Waiting List for the type of accommodation on offer, for example in a difficult-to-let estate, consideration should be given to smaller household Applicants.

Guidance for staff regarding bedroom requirements is contained in Chapter 3.10.2 of the Housing Selection Scheme Guidance Manual:

### **3.10.2 BEDROOM REQUIREMENTS / DEFINITIONS: RULE 29**

Rule 29 details the criteria which Designated Officers need to observe when determining whether an Applicant's accommodation is suitable for his / her needs. Designated Officers will need to determine the size of available rooms in order to decide whether or not a room could be considered as a bedroom, as described in the Rules of the Scheme, or is reasonable for use as a bedroom for the Applicant's family or household members.

A room will not be considered suitable for use as a bedroom where it is less than 3.7 square metres (40sq. ft.). Subject to the minimum size criteria being met, where a dwelling has 2 reception rooms, one of these will be considered as a bedroom provided there is ample space in the kitchen for the family to cook and dine. Any additional reception rooms will similarly be considered to be bedrooms and will be subject to the same size criteria.

Separate bedrooms are needed for:

1. The Applicant (and partner, if applicable) if over 18 years of age,
2. Couples, Single parents and all Adults over 18 years of age,
3. Persons of different generations e.g. mother / daughter, grandmother / granddaughter etc
4. Members of different family units e.g. aunt / niece, cousins etc.

The sizes of bedrooms that will be considered adequate for meeting Applicants' needs are as follows:

i. Bedroom: over 3.7 – less than 6.5 sq. m. (40 - 69sq. ft) is adequate for 1 child under 7 years old

ii. Bedroom: over 6.5 – less than 9.3 sq. m. (70 - 99 sq. ft.) is adequate for any of the following:-

- 1 person of any age
- any 2 persons of the same gender under 18 years of age
- any 2 children under 7 years of age regardless of gender

Bedroom: over 9.3 sq. m. (100+ sq. ft.) is adequate for any of the following:-

- 1 person of any age
- 2 persons living as a couple
- any 2 persons of the same gender under 18 years of age
- any 2 children under 7 years of age regardless of gender

Unborn child should be considered in bedroom calculations see NOTE below.

Bedsits should be considered as having no bedrooms for the purposes of the overcrowding assessment.

In addition to meeting certain size criteria, a room must also be capable of being used as a bedroom. The room's shape and the amount of available head room must be reasonable for the room to accommodate a bed (of relevant size), appropriate furniture e.g. wardrobe and chest of drawers, and there must be sufficient access space.

NOTE –

In schedule 3 of HSS Rules it states that 'other household compositions analogous to those above will be considered for equivalent accommodation', and 'Depending on the particular needs of the Applicant's household a greater number of bedrooms may be required' thus allowing flexibility on the bedroom assessment.

### **Unborn Children:**

Where the applicant has provided proof that they are pregnant then the assessing officer should consider the unborn child in the bedroom calculations i.e. – Single person and pregnant: entitled to a 2 bed, a single person with 1 child under 7 and pregnant: entitled to a 2 bed, a couple with 2 children (under 18) and pregnant: entitled to a 3 bed etc.

HMS should be updated by amending the '2nd Entitled' to the appropriate number of bedrooms. Staff should continue with the normal practice of recording the information on the pregnancy tab/Folder on HMS which will enable the case to appear on the H009 Critical Date Report as 'Confinement'. The report should be actioned accordingly and the applicant contacted to assess the change in circumstances.

It should also be noted that this should only be considered for bedroom entitlement assessment; at no point should the unborn child be considered with in the point's assessment.

### **Additional Bedrooms:**

When an applicant/transfer is being considered for an additional bedroom they should be advised about potential benefit implications. Although Welfare Supplementary Payments have been extended indefinitely, the range of welfare mitigation measures is subject to review in 2024/2025, therefore, staff in discussions with incoming/ transferring tenants should advise them of the current position i.e.:

- (i) SSSC still applies in Northern Ireland but is currently fully mitigated.
- (ii) There is no end date set for mitigation payments.
- (iii) There is however, a review date of 2024/25 for the measures and it is not certain what the position will be after that.

This will allow customers to make as informed a choice as possible.

### **NOTE - RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN:**

(a)Where the Applicant does not have dependent children from a previous relationship (see 3.11), but has regular overnight staying access, he / she should only be considered for 1 additional bedroom, whatever the number of children.

(b) Alternatively, where the Applicant has dependent children from a previous relationship, the children must be included on HMS as part of the Applicant's household and must all be considered when determining the size of accommodation required.