

19 June 2024

Our Ref: FOI 431

Request

We received your request on 05 June 2024 for the following information:

We wish to understand more fully the impact of the Right to Buy scheme on social housing stock. According to a 2020 NIHE report, roughly 120,000 of NI's social homes have been sold under the scheme.

a) What is the most current estimate of the number of social homes sold to tenants? How many of these were Housing Executive homes?

The report referenced a study which found in 2019 that around a quarter of the purchased homes surveyed were in the private rental market (p. 14).

b) What is the most current estimate of the number of these homes currently in the private rental market?

c) How many of these homes have since been re-purchased by the Housing Executive (for example using the 'first choice' clause of the contract of sale)?

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

Our response

a) What is the most current estimate of the number of social homes sold to tenants? How many of these were Housing Executive homes?

The 2020 Housing Executive [Research Report](#) referred to reported on sales of approximately 120,000 Housing Executive properties under the House Sales Scheme, it did not include data on sales of properties by registered Housing Associations in NI.

The report was based on sales data up to November 2018, see Appendix 2, Table B1.

As at 31st May 2024 the total number of Housing Executive properties sold under the House Sales Scheme is now 122,733.

Since the Housing Executive assumed responsibility for the Social Housing Development Programme in April 2007, the total number of Housing Association properties sold under House Sales Scheme is 1,130.

Please note, that this figure only reflects the number of sales which qualified for discount under Voluntary Purchase Grant. Any sales which did not attract a discount are not included within this figure, as the Housing Executive would not have been advised. If further details are required, this would need to be sought direct from DfC or the registered Housing Associations.

The report referenced a study which found in 2019 that around a quarter of the purchased homes surveyed were in the private rental market (p. 14).

b) What is the most current estimate of the number of these homes currently in the private rental market?

The 2020 research report was a bespoke project commissioned to mark 40 years of the House Sales Scheme. It has not been repeated. The data provided in the published report is the most up to date data held by the Housing Executive.

c) How many of these homes have since been re-purchased by the Housing Executive (for example using the 'first choice' clause of the contract of sale)?

Thank you for your clarification of 12th June 2024, in which you confirmed that you would like to receive information on the number of re-acquisitions since 2004.

The Housing Executive does not hold complete information meeting the description of your request and so a comprehensive answer cannot be given. The Housing Executive's Housing Management System does not include a specific indicator to show if a property is a new acquisition or a re-acquisition of formerly sold stock.

However separate records are held in relation to properties purchased under the Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED) which show that from 2004 to date 28 properties, formerly sold under the House Sales Scheme, which were acquired under the SPED Scheme have been retained as Housing Executive stock and let to tenants.

Further, recent records on active reacquisition programmes in relation to the Tower Blocks Action Plan, The Upper Long Streets Re-development Area and other smaller scale regeneration initiatives, show that from 1st April 2021, the Housing Executive has re-acquired 66 properties that were previously sold under the House Sales Scheme. Though in these cases the properties may not be let following acquisition but held pending demolition and redevelopment works.

The Housing Executive policy on exercising the Option to Purchase under the standard House Sales deeds, since 2004, is to offer the properties to a registered housing association for purchase if it is in an area of Housing Need as they are able to leverage private finance to facilitate any purchase.

Recording uptake of Option to Purchase referrals by registered housing associations has only commenced in recent years, and so a complete response in respect of how many may have been acted upon cannot be given. However records held for all 3 NIHE regions over the last 2 financial years indicate that uptake is in single figures.

This concludes our response.