

09 April 2024

**Our Ref: FOI 361**

## **Request**

We received your request on 25 March 2024 for the following information:

*Can you please confirm if this information I received is accurate, I have quoted below:  
"A letter was sent to all GP surgeries in NI by NIHE confirming their staff should not ask applicants to approach their GP for letters of support. If medical evidence is required, there is an agreed process where NIHE contact the practice directly for more information."*

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

## **Our response**

All applicants seeking social housing must make an application under the Housing Selection Scheme. A housing needs assessment and homelessness assessment, where relevant, is undertaken by Designated Officers with the applicant on receipt of his/her application. The Selection Scheme is designed to minimise the need for detailed medical information to be provided by GPs and other doctors.

It is therefore not routinely necessary to contact GP surgeries. On the rare occasion that any information is needed for a housing or homeless assessment, the obligation to make such enquiries rests with the Housing Executive, that is customers should not contact their GP to ask for a report.

In line with this, I can confirm that on 23 May 2019 a letter was sent to all GP surgeries in Northern Ireland to inform them that Housing Executive staff do not encourage applicants to seek reports from their doctor, as the Housing Executive's housing needs and homeless assessments largely negate the need for this. I have included a copy of this letter for your information along with the poster which was sent for display in surgeries.

**This concludes our response.**

«First»  
«PracticeName»  
«StreetAddress»  
«City»  
«Postcode»

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23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019

Dear «First»,

**Re: Requests by Patients for medical reports in support of housing applications**

The relationship between good housing and general health and well-being is well established and acknowledged by housing, health and welfare professionals. The Housing Executive has therefore had a long standing working relationship at strategic, policy and operational level with Health and Social Services colleagues to ensure that our respective and common goals are achieved for the benefit of the community in general.

The Housing Executive uses the Housing Selection Scheme to award points to an applicant which appropriately reflect their circumstances. Under the current Housing Selection Scheme, the housing assessment is not based on a person's medical condition, but rather centres on the applicant's ability to function within their existing accommodation; their care and support needs, and the extent to which rehousing would alleviate any identified mental or physical health and social well-being problems. Housing Executive staff may therefore ask an applicant about medical conditions during our initial investigations.

However, the Scheme's functionality and self-care matrix adequately takes into account how an applicant's condition affects their ability to cope in their current accommodation and relevant points are awarded accordingly. This in-house assessment has largely negated the requirement for GP reports. As such, Housing Executive staff do not encourage applicants to seek medical reports from their Doctor.

On the occasion a medical report is required, the obligation to make such enquiries rests with the Housing Executive. The Executive would therefore contact you directly, explaining what information is required and why.

Unfortunately, there will always be those who are under the impression medical evidence—such as a doctor's letter—will help their case; or those who feel they have not been awarded sufficient points and decide to seek GP intervention. **You should**

**not feel obliged to provide a medical report to your patients in support of their housing or homeless application.**

In the event an applicant produces medical evidence of their own volition, the Housing Executive will consider this along with any other information which has been obtained in relation to their application. However, may I once again stress that the Housing Executive **does not request or encourage such reports from applicants and you are under no obligation to provide such information.**

The Housing Executive has produced posters for display in doctors' surgeries to explain our policy and I have enclosed two copies of this poster for you to display in your medical centre in order to reinforce this message.

I hope this information is of assistance and has clarified the Housing Executive's position with regard to medical reports. If you require any further information, please contact Housing Policy using the details overleaf.

Yours Sincerely,

**Ian McCrickard**  
**Assistant Director, Housing Services**

