

# Advice for people with disabilities on finding a home Tenant Manual

A manual to assist people with disabilities  
on their housing journey



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**Housing**  
Executive



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# DISCLAIMER

The information in this manual is correct at December 2012.

## About this manual

This manual has been produced by the Housing Executive Disability Forum in association with Disability Action, Supporting Communities NI and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The manual gives information for people with disabilities who are looking for social housing. It also highlights the things that people with disabilities need to think about when they begin their housing journey.

## How to use this manual

The manual covers your complete housing journey when applying and getting a home. It also provides links and references to other useful resources that may help you.

There are two main sections:

- Section 1 - Applying for a home
- Section 2 - The process of getting your home

Each is divided into two parts, covering the different steps required and ‘things to think about’.

The information provided covers the 5 main categories of disability – physical, sensory, learning, mental health and hidden disability.

## **The Northern Ireland Housing Executive Disability Forum**

The Disability Forum was established in 2011 by the NIHE to ensure that disability is represented at all levels within the organisation. The forum, as a user led group, increases the number of people with disabilities involved in the existing district, regional and central Housing Community Networks (HCNs) across Northern Ireland.

The Disability Forum enhances, complements and contributes to Housing Executive structures by providing a two-tier platform in which disability issues can be addressed formally whilst allowing members to feed into their respective HCNs.

The forum provides pan-disability user representation covering visual, hearing, physical, learning, hidden, mental health or multiple disabilities and focuses specifically on the housing issues which affect people with disabilities.

# General help for people with disabilities

When you first make contact with the Housing Executive, to be assessed for social housing, remember you can ask for a range of support and help.

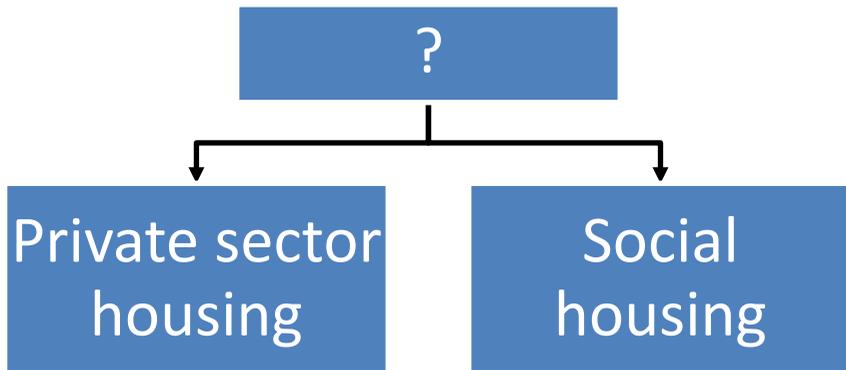
You may request the following services in advance:

- Staff trained in sign language
- Hearing induction loops
- Portable one to one (crystal) loop systems
- Text Relay System
- Large font format leaflets
- Information in accessible formats
- Language line for applicants needing an interpretation service
- A home visit (this can be organised with your local District Office through a named Housing Officer)

Housing Officers are trained to assist you if you have Complex Needs. The Housing Officer will be able to advise on specific accommodation in your selected Areas of Choice, such as sheltered schemes, bungalows etc.

# Section 1 – Applying for a home

There are a number of steps you may follow when finding a home. The first thing you need to do is to consider which type of housing you can afford to live in - social housing (housing association and Housing Executive) or private sector housing<sup>1</sup> (owner occupier and privately rented). You may be entitled to Housing Benefit (currently under review with Universal Credit) to help you pay your rent.



If you are a person with a disability, you may have extra requirements - you might need an accessible house, a house that is close to your family, hospital, shops, public transport. You will need to consider all of these issues before you start your housing journey.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information please contact your local Health and Social Care Trust, who will answer your questions and start the process. Your GP or Social Worker can also make referrals to your Community Occupational Therapist.

If you feel you cannot live independently, your local Housing Executive office can tell you about supported or sheltered housing. Supported or sheltered housing enables people to live independently, but with extra daily support<sup>2</sup>

The Housing Executive can provide a range of information and support to help you.

This can be discussed during a home visit.

See the '[Housing Selection Scheme – Applying for Social Housing](#)' booklet.

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<sup>2</sup> Independence at Home - <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/independence-at-home>

## Things to think about

There are a number of things you should think about:

- Do you need help or support going through the application process?
- Where you want to live and what you can afford?
- What type of house do you want to live in – for example, a detached or terrace house?
- How many rooms do you need and how big do they need to be (for example, an extra bedroom for carers, equipment, play room etc.)
- Do you need the property to be accessible? (Remember there is currently a lack of suitable accommodation for people with a number of types of disability – ask your local Housing Executive office for further information).
- Do you need care or support at home? (In other words, do you need support to live independently?)
- Do you think you have complex needs? If so you may receive more points.
- Do you have intense support care needs or managerial needs?
- Are you entitled to Housing Benefit? Remember to ask or contact the Housing Benefit Enquiry Line on 03448 920 902 (8.30am – 5.30pm)

(Text Relay Number 18001 03448 920 902)

If you are a new applicant, when you have thought everything through, then ask for a Housing Application Form (these are also available online. If you are already a Housing Executive tenant you will need a Housing Transfer Form.)

Return the completed form to your local Housing Executive office. You can also apply by phone on 03448 920 900 (Text Relay Number 18001 03448 920 900)

The Customer Service Unit (CSU) will normally make an appointment for a telephone assessment. At that stage you should tell them that you have a disability and a home visit may be arranged. You may also wish to have someone present during the home visit.

Make sure that Housing Executive staff are aware of your requirements relating to your disability.

## Section 2 – The process of getting your home

The next stage in your housing journey deals with the process of getting your home. Remember, if you want to apply for social housing<sup>3</sup> you should contact your local Housing Executive Customer Service Unit (CSU) or District Office. You can do this, face to face, online and over the telephone. You should complete a Housing Application Form and return it to the Housing Executive.

A Housing Officer will then contact you to identify your housing needs. Your needs will be assessed through the Housing Selection Scheme. You will be awarded points and then put on a waiting list. The length of time this will take can vary depending on your area of choice and the availability and turnover of the type of accommodation you require.

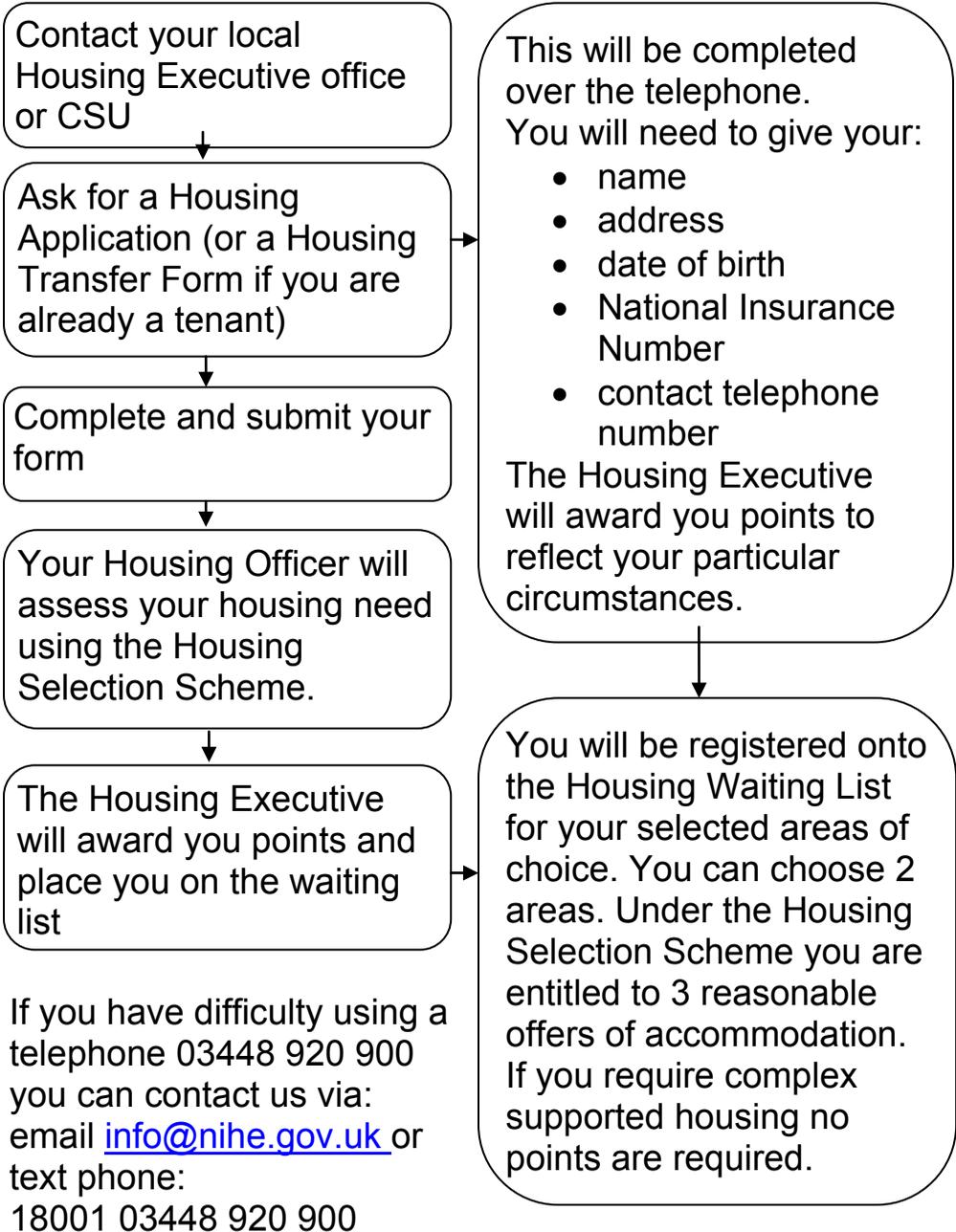
During the home visit the Housing Officer will carry out an assessment of your support and care needs. Depending on the assessment, your application may be referred to the Housing Support Services Officer to see whether you qualify for complex needs points.

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<sup>3</sup> If you are applying for private accommodation the process is different. Contact your local estate agents for a list of available accommodation in your area of choice. There may also be a list available at your local Housing Executive District Office.

If you, or a member of your household, uses a wheelchair every day, both indoors and outdoors, your application will automatically be “case managed” by the Housing Support Services Officer (HSSO). The HSSO will tell you about any suitable wheelchair standard properties and find out whether the kind of accommodation you need could be built as part of a currently planned social housing development.

## This diagram outlines the steps to take



## Things to think about

There are number of things you should think about:

- Do you understand how the process works? (ask about the Points System, the waiting list, areas of choice etc...)
- Ask how your application will take be assessed.
- Ask how long you are likely to be on the waiting list (The housing officer will only be able to estimate this for you).
- Do you understand what happens when you get an offer of accommodation?
- What adaptations do you need?

If you are unhappy with your offer of accommodation you can request a review of the suitability of the offer.

## Useful resources

There is a wide range of useful resources available when finding and applying for your own home. The list below highlights the different organisations, what type of resources are available and where to find the information. For policy interpretation and procedures the Housing Executive should be consulted.

### Northern Ireland Housing Executive

[www.nihe.gov.uk/disability](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/disability)

A range of information for disabled people on the application process, Housing Benefit, housing adaptations, the Housing Selection Scheme, transfers and exchanges.

2 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8PB

Tel(General enquiries): 03448 920 900  
Email: [info@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:info@nihe.gov.uk)  
Textphone: 18001 03448 920 900

### NIDirect

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/home-and-housing-options](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/home-and-housing-options)

A range of information for disabled people on the application process, adapting your home etc.

## Housing Rights Service

[www.housingrights.org.uk](http://www.housingrights.org.uk)

A local housing advice charity offering advice on a range of housing issues - finding a place to live, floating support, advice for complex needs applicant, common problems with the application process.

It also offers a checklist for ease of reference.

4th Floor Middleton  
Buildings  
10 - 12 High Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2BA

Tel: 028 9024 5640  
Fax: 028 9031 2200  
Textphone: 028 90 267929

## **Pamphlets – other useful guides**

### **“Adapting Your Home”- A Public Sector Guide for People with Disabilities**

Contact your local District Office or go to:

[www.nihe.gov.uk/adapting\\_your\\_home\\_public\\_sector\\_december\\_2002.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/adapting_your_home_public_sector_december_2002.pdf)

### **“Adapting Your Own Home”- A Step by Step Guide for People with Disabilities (A Guide for Major Adaptations in Private Sector Housing)**

Contact your local District Office or go to:

[www.nihe.gov.uk/adapting\\_your\\_home\\_private\\_sector.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/adapting_your_home_private_sector.pdf)

### **Inclusive Design through Home Adaptations: A Good Practice Guide. Belfast: Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2003)**

Contact your local District Office or go to:

[www.nihe.gov.uk/inclusive\\_design-home\\_adaptations.pdf](http://www.nihe.gov.uk/inclusive_design-home_adaptations.pdf)

## **Other independent advice services**

### **Disability Action**

189 Airport Road West Portside Business Park  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED  
Telephone 028 9029 7880  
Textphone: 028 9029 7882  
Fax: 028 9029 7881  
Email: [hq@disabilityaction.org](mailto:hq@disabilityaction.org)

### **Supporting Communities NI**

34-35 Henry Street  
Ballymena  
BT42 3AH  
Tel 028 2564 5676  
Fax 028 2564 9729  
Email [info@supportingcommunitiesni.org](mailto:info@supportingcommunitiesni.org)

## For further information please contact us:

Disability Action  
Portside Business Park  
189 Airport Road West  
Belfast  
BT9 3ED

Telephone: 028 9029 7880  
Fax: 028 9029 7881  
Textphone: 028 9029 7882  
Email: [hq@disabilityaction.org](mailto:hq@disabilityaction.org)  
Website: [www.disability.org](http://www.disability.org)

This document is available in a range of formats. Please contact us with your requirements.

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