

PRESS RELEASE

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Ombudsman begins investigation into Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Ombudsman Margaret Kelly has announced that having considered the responses to her proposal to conduct an Own Initiative Investigation into the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) she will now commence her investigation.

Ms Kelly said that access to good quality housing is an essential foundation for maintaining health and well-being and vital for enabling our children to achieve their full potential.

As the largest social housing provider in Northern Ireland responsible for 83,000 homes, and as the regional housing authority, it is critical that the Housing Executive maintain their properties appropriately and respond to the concerns of tenants.

Ms Kelly said some groups require properties to be adapted to meet their needs and how this process is managed and delivered will also be considered. With the increasing use of temporary accommodation to meet the needs of those who find themselves in housing crisis the investigation will also consider the standards used to ensure temporary accommodation are suitable.

When public services don't get it right it is important they have an effective complaints process which can be easily accessed and has a focus on addressing concerns quickly and fairly. Ms Kelly said the investigation will also consider the experience of making a complaint to the Housing Executive.

The Ombudsman has published her Terms of Reference for the investigation and will issue interim updates on its progress.

At the end of the investigation she will prepare a report which may make recommendations for improving social housing in Northern Ireland.

The report will be published at www.nipso.org.uk and laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

ENDS

For further information contact Andrew Ruston on 07503640551 or communications@nipso.org.uk

Notes:

The Office's own initiative powers were granted in section 8 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016. They allow the Ombudsman to conduct an investigation where there is a 'reasonable suspicion' of systemic maladministration.