



Policy & Information Briefing

Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) Project

January 2023

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Information Briefing Note

Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) Project

The FRA is a Northern Ireland Housing Association (NIHE) project to implement the proposals for change to the housing allocation service.

The FRA is the outcome of a [lengthy review and consultation process](#) that commenced in 2012, involving a Department-led review, independent research and a public consultation. In November 2020, the Communities Minister [announced](#) that 18 of the 20 proposals arising from the review would be implemented.

The 20 proposals have been divided into four groups to facilitate implementation between December 2022 and April 2025:

Phase	Proposals	Implementation period
1	1, 5, 15 and 16	December 2022 – January 2023
2	6, 12, 14, 17 and 18	February – December 2023
3	2, 3, and 19	January – October 2024
4	4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 20	November 2024 – April 2025

At a recent engagement session, the FRA Project Team provided further information about the first phase of implementation. The information below is a brief summary.

Proposal 1 – Advice

An independent, tenure-neutral housing advice service for Northern Ireland, which will be provided through the existing Housing Solutions and Support Service within the NIHE. The main focus of implementation activity will be to improve awareness and promotion of the Housing Solutions and Support Service, particularly through the NIHE website.

Proposal 5 – Choice

A greater choice of areas for all applicants for a social home, meaning housing applicants will now be able to select as many [Areas of Choice](#) as they wish. In addition, the automatic widening through the General Housing Area will no longer apply. To implement this proposal, changes are required to Rule 52 of the [Housing Selection Scheme](#), and Rule 54 and 55 will be removed entirely. Anyone currently subject to the General Housing Area will have all Areas of Choice added to their application, and can contact NIHE to review and remove any areas they do not wish to retain.

Proposal 15 – Offers

An applicant may receive two reasonable offers of accommodation, which is a reduction from the three offers applicants receive at present. Changes to the Housing Management Service (HMS) will go live from 30 January 2023. Existing applicants who have had two offers will be given another offer. Changes are being made to offer letters to facilitate right of redress.

Proposal 16 – Withdrawals

Social landlords may withdraw an offer of accommodation in specified circumstances, which establishes rules and clear guidance by which a participating landlord can withdraw an offer of accommodation. This requires the creation of a new rules – 58A(1) and 58A(2) – in the [Housing Selection Scheme](#), which will create both a discretionary power and a mandatory requirement to facilitate withdrawals. Applicants will be able to submit a complaint against any withdrawal, which must be made within 7 days of the withdrawal letter.

System Updates

To facilitate required changes HMS is expected to be unavailable from 5pm Wednesday 25th January until 8am Monday 30th January 2023, with contingencies in place on Thursday 26th and Friday 27th January and Out of Hours services over the weekend.

Communications

The following promotional and engagement activity will take place to support implementation of these proposals:

- Housing Association staff will be kept informed via a dedicated Gateway page.
- NIHE website will have a new section added for all stakeholders.
- Awareness sessions to all frontline NIHE and HA staff will take place January 2023.
- Implementation notes will be issued prior to go live.
- All Housing/Homeless Guidance Manuals updated to reflect changes.
- Mail drop to all applicants and transfers advising them of the changes.
- Press release issued to elected representatives.
- “Biteables” available on Facebook and Twitter.

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