



NBEI-EDT North Market Research

**People living with a disability and
the need for housing adaption in
North Belfast**

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**DELIVERING SOCIAL CHANGE
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Outline of the report

To follow on from NBEI’s previous housing paper, this research will examine housing need, but in the context of disabled residents or users with mobility issues. The short paper will start by mapping out the current disability related housing need across Belfast and then focus explicitly on local demand in the SIF North area. The research will then identify what housing based provisions are currently available across Northern Ireland to help people who suffer a disability or mobility constraints live an independent life at home. This will involve examining the value and availability of current provisions like the disabled facilities grant and outlining what NIHE housing adaptations involve and look like in practice. Finally the report will conclude by reviewing the latest NIHE annual figures to better understand the impact of housing adaptation programmes such as the disabled facilities grant since its inception 3 years ago.

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1 Housing need and disability

1.1 NIHE housing need for applicants requiring wheelchair access

- The majority of new NIHE social housing units are currently built to lifetime home standards. This should ensure that future homes are flexible to the needs of tenants throughout the life course and can be responsive to changing circumstances created by a physical disability or limited mobility;
- Regardless of these improved provisions, the latest NIHE waiting list for applicants requiring wheelchair access in Table 1 shows there is still an unmet need across Belfast. The figures show how despite nearly double the number of NIHE allocations in 2015 than the previous two years combined; there was still an unmet need of 84 NIHE applicants – 79 of which were classified as living in housing stress;

Table 1 NIHE housing waiting list for wheelchair users across Belfast

	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Wheelchair applicants on the waiting list	90	85	84
Wheelchair applicants in housing stress on the waiting list	87	81	79
Wheelchair applicants allocated social housing in past year	20	29	46

- The Belfast Investment Plan 2015 shows how the NIHE and the DSD are currently working with other key stakeholders to develop policy approaches and design models to help address the housing needs of wheelchair users or those with mobility problems. The development of an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) for social housing was identified in 2015 as a recommendation within the Inter Departmental Review of Adaptations. This housing register is an information tool that can be used to help housing authorities identify specific properties that may meet the needs of a particular group of applicants on the social housing waiting list. The stock profile within Belfast, which may support independent living, is detailed in Table 2;

Table 2 Breakdown of NIHE adapted properties in Belfast

NIHE property type	Total number in Belfast
Bungalows	1,731
Mobility bungalows (*Mobility bungalows is a subset of the total bungalow figure and based on the former council boundary)	1,207
Properties adapted via extension	460
Properties with vertical lifts	178
Properties with stair lifts	352
Ground floor flats	2,063

- Data from the accessible housing register is not currently available for public viewing. Neither is a breakdown of the housing waiting list specifically for North Belfast. To better understand the potential need for adapted housing in this local area, section 1.2 examines how many North Belfast residents are currently in receipt of disability related benefits.

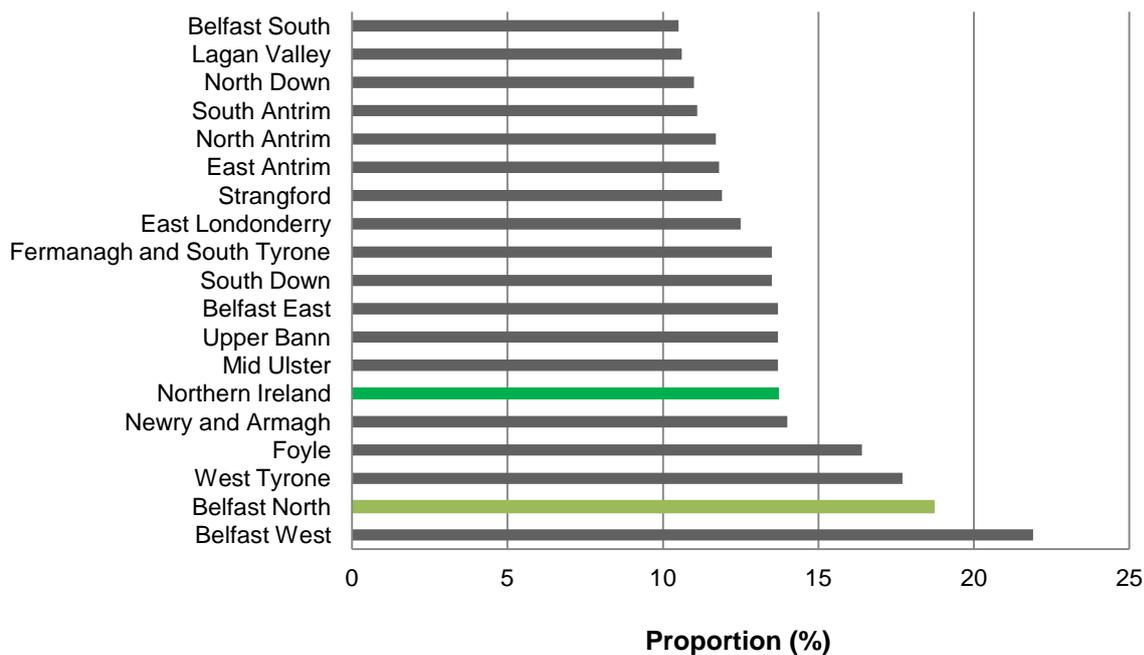
1.2 Mapping disability-related benefits in North Belfast

- Figure 1 presents the number of people in receipt of a disability-related benefit by Assembly Areas across Northern Ireland. The findings show that in February 2014,

there were 19,180 people living in the Belfast North Assembly Area, or 18.7% of all constituents in receipt of at least one disability-related benefit. It also shows how a higher proportion of people living in Belfast North were in receipt of these benefits when compared to the Northern Ireland average of 13.7%;

- In comparison to other Assembly Areas across Northern Ireland, Belfast North recorded the second highest proportion of disability-related benefit recipients. The highest was recorded in Belfast West (21.2%)

Figure 1 Number of people in receipt of a disability-related benefit by assembly area



- Table 2 shows how many (in terms of number and %) are in receipt of disability-related benefits within each electoral ward of North Belfast;
- The findings show that the highest proportion of people in receipt of at least one disability-related benefit (as a percentage of the population) were identified in the wards of New Lodge (29.3%, 1,430 recipients), Crumlin (28.1%, 1,300 recipients), Woodvale (25.2%, 970 recipients), Ardoyne (25.1% 1,480 recipients) and Water Works (24.8 1,460 recipients);
- The lowest proportions were recorded in the wards of Cavehill (9.5%, 460 recipients), Collinbridge (10.5%, 320 recipients) and Glebe (12.1%, 400 recipients);

Table 3 Number of people in receipt of disability-related benefits by wards in North Belfast

Ward	No. of People in receipt of disability-related benefits	% of Ward Population	Ward	No. of People in receipt of disability-related benefits	% of Ward Population
Abbey	450	15.8	Dunanney	460	20.1
Ardoyne	1,480	25.1	Duncairn	1,010	19.8
Ballyhenry	440	16.4	Fortwilliam	680	15.3
Ballysillan	910	16.2	Glebe	400	12.1

Bellevue	770	15.3	Glengormley	450	15.6
Castleview	760	16.1	Hightown	380	16.9
Cavehill	460	9.5	Legoniel	1,130	17.6
Chichester Park	860	16.1	New Lodge	1,430	29.3
Cliftonville	1,010	18.7	Valley	610	16.8
Cloughfern	440	15.2	Water Works	1,460	24.8
Collinbridge	320	10.5	Whitehouse	520	23.6
Coole	480	20.5	Woodvale	970	25.2
Crumlin	1,300	28.1			

- Table 3 presents the number of households across the Belfast Assembly Area whose day to day activities are limited a lot or a little by a resident in that household suffering from a disability. A breakdown of the figures is also presented for residents living in three different tenure types: owner occupied, private rented, social rented;
- Out of the 25,478 residents living in socially rented accommodation in North Belfast, 36.65% (9,337 residents) are affected to some extent on daily basis by a disability;
- In the private rented sector this figure was recorded as 22.65% (3,582) and 21.69% (13,049) for owner occupiers;

Table 4 Day to day activities limited because of a disability by tenure type

Belfast North Assembly Area	All usual residents in households	<i>Day-to-day activities limited a lot or a little</i>	%	<i>Day-to-day activities not limited</i>	%
All usual residents in households	101,489	25,978	25.60	75,511	74.40
Owner occupied	60,154	13,049	21.69	47,105	78.31
Social rented	25,478	9,337	36.65	16,141	63.35
Private rented	15,857	3,592	22.65	12,265	77.35

- Table 4 develops this analysis by focussing on the New Lodge ward. New Lodge Ward was selected as it recorded the highest number of people in receipt of disability-related benefits by wards in North Belfast in Table 3;
- The findings in table 5 show that out of the 2,690 residents in social housing, 1,065 residents (nearly 40%) are in some way limited on a day to day basis by a disability;

Table 5 Day to day activities limited because of a disability by tenure type in the New Lodge

New Lodge Ward	All usual residents in households	<i>Day-to-day activities limited a lot or a little</i>	%	<i>Day-to-day activities not limited</i>	%
All usual residents in households	4,869	1,702	34.96	3,167	65.04
Owner occupied	1,604	481	29.99	1,123	70.01
Social rented	2,690	1,065	39.59	1,625	60.41
Private rented	575	156	27.13	419	72.87

- In the private rented sector this figure was recorded as 27.13% (575 residents) and 29.99% (1,604 residents) for owner occupiers;

- NINIS data shows how compared to other wards in North Belfast the New Lodge measures as one of the most deprived electoral wards in Northern Ireland. The findings in table 5 would suggest that disability-related issues and deprivation are not mutually exclusive. Therefore in general there is a higher proportion of disabled residents living in the most disadvantaged areas of North Belfast;
- However the findings also show that disabled residents are spread across various tenure types. Although smaller than the figures recorded for socially rented housing (22% - 1065 residents), the New Lodge figures show how nearly 15% (637 residents) of owner occupiers as well as private renters are also in some way affected by a disability on a daily basis;
- These findings would suggest that physical adaptations and housing improvements would have traction across all tenure types (not just socially rented). However the need for such physical adaptations and housing improvements is greatest in parts of North Belfast that measure or rank highest in terms of deprivation.

2 The NIHE disabled facilities grant

- If there is someone living in a property that is disabled and requires an adaptation to their home, they may be eligible for an NIHE Disabled Facilities Grant. This public subsidy can be used towards the cost of providing household adaptations and facilities to help a disabled person live an independent life at home;

2.1 Applicant eligibility for a NIHE disabled facilities grant

- The grant is available to owner occupiers, landlords and tenants living in the private rented sector. All grant applications may be subject to a test of the resources of the disabled person and their partner, which assesses how much if anything they must contribute towards the cost of the works;
- All work is means tested (financially as well as personally) and will only be completed after an occupational therapist assessment;

2.2 Value of the NIHE disabled facilities grant

- The amount of grant paid depends on the approved cost of the work as well as an assessment of the applicant's personal and financial circumstances. A contribution may have to be made towards the cost of the work, although if the recommendations are for a child, no contribution is required. The maximum grant allowance currently sits at £25,000;
- Tenants are subject to a test of resources in the same way as owner occupiers. However, grants awarded to private landlords are based on a percentage of the eligible cost of the work, up to the maximum grant amount. Generally there is a 50% grant available, but this percentage may be greater in designated regeneration areas. Landlords in Group Repair Schemes have no contribution to make towards the cost of the work;
- At present Group Repair Schemes have been restricted and no new schemes are currently being identified at present. The Group Repair Scheme was initially targeted

at renovating terraced houses where it was agreed that an area based approach to improvements would be most effective;

2.3 NIHE facilities grant application process

- The process of applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant is initiated by the applicant contacting their local Health & Social Services Trust, GP or Social Worker. An Occupational Therapist will then visit the applicants home to assess their personal needs and decide on whether they require home adaptations;
- The OT will then submit their recommendations to the NI Housing Executive Grants Office. They may also recommend or provide the applicant with minor aids to assist them with other daily living tasks;
- Any questions or queries are usually dealt with by the NIHE Grants Office directly but in some circumstances an independent broker is used to assist the applicant. The box below provides a case study of a current broker service offered by Fold Housing association called the 'Staying put service';

Fold's Staying Put service provides free practical support and advice (which is Government Funded) for disabled and/or elderly people applying for disabled home adaptation via the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Disabled Facilities Grant scheme. The Fold team support the applicant with the grant application as well as provide technical advice and support throughout the adaptation itself. To date the service has completed over 900 visits to new clients, submitted over 650 grant applications ready for NIHE approval and assisted in the satisfactory completion of over 650 disabled grant adaptations.

- Finally the NIHE will visit the applicant to inspect their home to determine what work is required to meet the OT's recommendation. Once this inspection is completed they will send the applicant to the Formal Grant Application documents package;

3 NIHE housing adaptations for people with a disability

- NIHE housing adaptations for people with a disability are classified into two categories - major and minor.

3.1 Minor adaptations which don't need a referral

Examples of *minor adaptations* **which do not** require occupational therapist referral include:

External adaptations

- Handrail at front or rear entrance of dwelling
- Provision of whirly clothes line or path leading to clothes line
- Widening of paths around the property
- Defining steps for people with visual impairments
- Re-situating of coal bunkers
- Outdoor lighting

General internal adaptations

- Additional stair rail

- Changing door knobs to lever handles
- Lowering of Yale locks
- Re-situating of electrical sockets at a convenient level
- Additional power points
- Provision of rocker light switches
- Adjustments to or additional lighting
- Relocation of clothes hanging rails
- Accessible window openings
- Provision of letter cages or delivery shelves in entrance hall.

Kitchens and bathrooms

- Lowering or replacement of high wall hung cupboards
- Additional storage space in kitchen
- Lowering of cooker mains switch
- Installation of extractor fan with accessible controls.

3.2 Minor adaptations which need a referral

There are other minor adaptations **which do require** referral from an occupational therapist. Examples include:

- Level access shower
- Over bath shower
- Provision of non-slip/tactile surface
- Provision of storage space for wheelchair
- Ramps
- Special baths
- Special toilets
- Step in shower
- Widening doors for wheelchair access.
- Provision of intercom & door unlock systems.
- Paved areas for wheelchairs.

3.3 Major adaptations

NIHE are also responsible for carrying out certain major adaptations to tenants homes. Some examples of major adaptations include:

- Bathroom extensions (ground floor showers & W.C's)
- Bedroom extensions
- Hardstandings
- Major internal rearrangements
- Redesign or re-organisation of existing kitchen
- Stairlifts
- Vertical through floor lifts.

4 Impact of the NIHE disabled facilities grant

- During 2015/2016 Table 6 shows how the NIHE spent £8.9 million on a total of 996 disabled facilities grants. This was over a 20% decrease compared to 2014/2015, when 1,205 disabled facilities grants were approved to the value of approximately £10.9 million. A detailed breakdown of the different types of NIHE grants approved during 2015/2016 as well as their total value is also presented in Table 6:

Table 6 NIHE grants approved during 2015/2016

Type of grant	Number approved	Value (£m)
Disabled facilities	996	£ 8,900,000.00
Repair	736	£ 1,000,000.00
Discretionary	303	£ 2,500,000.00
	2035	£ 12,400,000.00

- The NIHE continue to support independent living models in the private sector through the allocation of disabled facilities grants. This scheme will continue to be available during 2016/2017;
- In addition to this grant provision, Repair grants are also available to private landlords and agents towards the costs of repairing homes. Funding for Discretionary grants, (Renovation, Replacement and Home Repair Assistance grants) for improvement and repair however is limited, and these grants are seemingly only available where exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.
- NIHE have stated that they will look to continue to support assisted living across all sectors of the housing market in the forthcoming year, especially through the allocation grants to the private sector. Table 7 shows how during 2015/2016, NIHE spent £20 million on grants for all homes, £9.3 million of this was allocated to the adapt private sector units specifically.

Table 7 Breakdown of NIHE grant expenditure for each sector

Stock tenure	Expenditure (£m)
Housing Executive homes	£ 8,700,000.00
Private Sector homes	£ 9,300,000.00
Housing Association homes	£ 2,000,000.00
	£ 20,000,000.00

5 Interview with choice housing association

This following section along with some recommendations will be completed after an interview with choice housing association. The discussion will focus on whether housing associations would be interested in purchasing properties that had been adapted to meet the needs of disabled users. A key question will be to determine what impact a housing refurbishment to this specification will have on the market sale or rental value of the property.

6 Bibliography

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2015) *Belfast Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019*, Belfast, NIHE

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (2016) *45th Annual report*, Belfast, NIHE