



Commissioner for **Older People**  
for Northern Ireland

Private Rented Branch

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## **RE: Consultation on Notice to Quit Periods**

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) regarding the consultation on Notice to Quit periods. The present consultation is of great importance for the Commissioner, given the specific and major vulnerabilities that older people in the private rented sector face.

A report that will soon be published by the Commissioner's office assesses that older people in the private rented sector are generally subject to worse structural conditions, higher risks of disrepair, low energy efficiency, greater anxiety, and lower income. All these factors also correlate with age, meaning older private renters experience more disadvantage in all of these areas.<sup>1</sup>

Private renters represent today 5.6% of all older individuals in Northern Ireland,<sup>2</sup> and estimates suggest that they may grow in number to more than 10% in the next 15 years.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, providing security and better living standards to these individuals should be a priority for the Department and the Assembly. For this reason, the main proposal is generally positive, as it provides an additional and essential layer of protection to all private tenants.

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<sup>1</sup> All these issues have been explored in detail in a report due to be published by COPNI in April 2026.

<sup>2</sup> NISRA Census 2021 [tenure \(5 Categories\) by age \(4 Categories\)](#). The numbers have been calculated excluding the category "no code required".

<sup>3</sup> Estimations for other jurisdictions suggest an increase of private renters from 4% to 13% between 2022 and 2040. Williams, R, and Robinson, D. (2024) [Projections of housing tenure and poverty in older age in Great Britain, 2022-2040](#), University of Sheffield for UK Collaborative Centre of Housing Evidence.

## Security of Tenure

Many of the issues experienced by older private tenants arise from the fact that the private rented sector in Northern Ireland offers low security of tenure, and this is particularly relevant to older people. In an environment of rising prices, older people face difficulties increasing their income,<sup>4</sup> they are less likely to find a suitable place due to mobility issues, and the stress of moving homes (either to another rental property or to social housing temporary accommodation) is much greater in old age—a time of life dominated by the desire to settle down—than in other age groups. Therefore, insecurity of tenure places enormous pressure on all tenants, but particularly on older renters.

Similarly, COPNI's report will show that older people tend to experience greater anxiety caused by the constant risk of eviction and tend to be reluctant to make complaints about disrepairs out of fear of retaliatory eviction.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, any effort to reduce insecurity of tenure is welcome by this office. In the case of this consultation, implementation of the increased notice to quit periods as provided by the 2022 Act is a good departure point. The increase in Notice to Quit lengths will provide substantial additional planning capacity if a Notice to Quit is issued, as compared to the present situation.<sup>6</sup>

Another positive development is that the legislation will bring forward the requirement for landlords to respect a standardised process to provide a Notice to Quit, and that failure to comply with the standard process will result in invalid notices.

Therefore, the full implementation of Notices to Quit under the 2022 Act through these regulations is generally positive news for older tenants.

## Standard cases and Special cases

The circumstances considered as special cases in the consultation document are relatively limited (substantial arrears of rent, the tenant has engaged in serious anti-social

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<sup>4</sup> Recent rent spikes have had a significant impact on the real income of older renters. Between 2015 and 2024, the income of renters aged 65 and over increased by 50.1% (not CPI adjusted) substantially below the estimated 60% rise in rent prices over the same period. Between 2015 and 2024, the average monthly rent of Northern Ireland has increased by 60%, from £560 to £896 per month. Sources: Family Resources Survey (Individual Dataset, Department for Work and Pensions). Retrieved through Stat-Xplore. Weighted mean gross income in Northern Ireland of households (weekly, in year prices in nominal terms) by type of individual, tenure type and financial year (2014-15 and 2023-24); Ulster University (2024) [At a Glance. Private rental market performance 2024](#).

<sup>5</sup> These types of circumstances have been communicated to COPNI by individuals who participated in COPNI's survey with private renters, and experts from Housing Rights consulted for our private renters' report.

<sup>6</sup> The Notice to Quit will be extended for those tenancies shorter than 12 months (from 4 weeks to 8 weeks), for those between 1 and 10 years (from 8 weeks to 4-6 months, depending on length of tenancy) and for those longer than 10 years (from 12 weeks to 7 months).

behaviour, the tenant is convicted of a relevant criminal offence, and the landlord wants to repossess the house for occupation by the landlord or landlords' immediate family).<sup>7</sup>

It is hard to determine the impact that these exceptions may have on tenants, as there is little evidence on reasons for landlords to terminate tenancies in Northern Ireland. Available evidence is normally based on tenant surveys, and the present housing legislation does not require landlords to give any reason for eviction. Currently, reasons for termination are not always communicated to tenants, making available evidence hard to evaluate.

In any case, the available evidence—albeit limited—shows that end of tenancy is commonly tenant-led in Northern Ireland. A survey from the CIH shows that in 61% of cases, tenants ended the agreement, compared to 6.5% of cases of landlord-led terminations and 27% of cases in which contract ended.<sup>8</sup>

Among the reasons that tenants state were given by landlords to end tenancies, the most common are: selling the property (15%), repairing the property (3%), breach of tenancy agreement (6%), landlord or relative use of the property (10%) and other (57%).<sup>9</sup> Another survey—conducted by Renters' Voice—offers similar results, with selling the property being the most common reason for landlord-led evictions (48%) followed by landlord seeking a higher rent (11%), landlord being reported (10%), relationship breakdown (8%), landlord or relative use of the property (8%), and repairs/renovations (8%).<sup>10</sup>

Evidence shows that in cases of landlord-led tenancy termination, the reasons are—in the majority of cases—not among the legislation's "special cases". This means that the new extended notices to quit should affect the majority of evictions, and as such, exceptions are not likely to affect a significant proportion of evicted tenants—the only frequent circumstance included among special cases is the landlord's use or family member's use of the property, which represents roughly 8-10 percent of all landlord-led terminations.

Effectively, the new legislation will increase security of tenure for the majority of tenants, and in a very competitive and inflationary environment, this is good news for sitting residents.

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<sup>7</sup> Department for Communities (2025) [Guidance on The Private Tenancies \(Notice to Quit\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2025](#).

<sup>8</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2021) [Private rented tenancies in Northern Ireland and notice to quit periods](#).

<sup>9</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2021) [Private rented tenancies in Northern Ireland and notice to quit periods](#).

<sup>10</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Rights (2021) [Renters' Voice: No-fault eviction survey report](#).

## Shortfalls and recommendation

Despite longer Notice to Quit periods introduced under the 2022 Act, landlords are still not required to provide a reason for ending a tenancy. A survey by the CIH, mentioned in the previous section, found that the most common reason tenants gave for their landlord ending the tenancy was simply “other” (57%),<sup>11</sup> suggesting a lack of clear or stated justification in many cases. This is due to the fact that in the majority of cases, landlords did not provide tenants with any reason for eviction, as they are not legally required to do so.

In Scotland, a no-fault eviction ban has effectively been in place since the 2017 introduction of private residential tenancies by the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016.<sup>12</sup> In England, no-fault evictions will be banned from May 2026 by the Renters’ Rights Act 2025.<sup>13</sup> A no-fault eviction ban effectively means that landlords can only repossess their property in cases where the legal grounds for eviction are met,<sup>14</sup> and notice periods vary depending on each ground.

The absence of a no-fault eviction ban in Northern Ireland contributes to tenant insecurity, despite comparatively longer notice periods than in other jurisdictions. This is particularly evident in situations where a landlord seeks to sell the property. As selling the property is not considered a special case in Northern Ireland, eviction under these grounds would be considered a default eviction, with notice periods ranging from 8 weeks to 7 months.<sup>15</sup> In Scotland, however, this would be an eviction under an accepted ground for eviction with a standard notice period of 84 days (12 weeks),<sup>16</sup> and in England notices for these grounds would require 4 months.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, any tenant living in a property for more than 12 months in Northern Ireland will receive a longer notice if the landlord wants to evict the tenant to sell the property—the main reason for landlord-led terminations.

While this is a positive element in the legislation in Northern Ireland, the absence of no-fault eviction bans still enables landlords to evict tenants without the need to

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<sup>11</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2021) [Private rented tenancies in Northern Ireland and notice to quit periods](#).

<sup>12</sup> [Private Housing \(Tenancies\) \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#).

<sup>13</sup> [Renters’ Rights Act 2025](#).

<sup>14</sup> Eviction grounds in the Private Housing Act of Scotland include selling the property, the property is to be sold by the mortgage lender, refurbishing the property, landlord intends to live in the property, landlord’s family member intends to live in the property, landlord intends to use the property for non-residential purpose, tenant breached a term of the tenancy agreement, rent arrears over 3 consecutive months, tenant’s criminal conviction, and antisocial behaviour, among others.

<sup>15</sup> Department for Communities (2025) [Guidance on The Private Tenancies \(Notice to Quit\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2025](#).

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government (2017) [Private residential tenancies: Landlords guide – Ending the tenancy: Notice to leave](#).

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) [Grounds for possession: guidance for landlords and letting agents](#).

provide any reason, something that is not legally acceptable in other jurisdictions. Circumstances such as relationship breakdown, wanting to increase rent by re-letting at a higher rate, wanting to replace the tenant with a friend or acquaintance, dissatisfaction with a tenant's personality, wanting flexibility to use the property occasionally as a second home (or a holiday home), or any other non-specific reasons are not valid grounds for eviction in England and Scotland. However, despite the new longer notice to quit periods, landlords still have the right to evict tenants for any of these reasons without any justification. Northern Ireland tenants can still be evicted at any point and with no reason provided. For an older person that has been living for three years in a property, the difference between 4 weeks' and 8 weeks' notice is positive, but in a highly competitive market this extension is likely insufficient.

The recent research conducted by COPNI has shown that older renters are often scared to complain about the state of their property due to fear of retaliatory eviction. On many occasions, older people fear exercising their right to improve their living conditions and housing standards because they believe landlords will opt to replace them with other tenants who will accept homes in a poor state.<sup>18</sup> For these tenants, therefore, the existence of default evictions for which landlords are not required to provide any reasons means that they are constantly under the threat of eviction, and any increase in notices to quit will not be sufficient to significantly change this.

A no-fault eviction ban will not alter the housing landscape significantly, for several reasons: the majority of tenancy terminations in Northern Ireland are tenant-led<sup>19</sup> and the introduction of the ban in Scotland almost a decade ago has not altered the housing market—both in terms of costs and availability.<sup>20</sup>

In order to provide an additional layer of security to tenants in a difficult housing environment, a no-fault eviction ban supplementing the current eviction notices would be desirable, and the Department should consider this as the next step in providing security of tenure.

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<sup>18</sup> For a COPNI report that is due to be published in April 2026 on older private renters, professionals of the advise sector and older renters that engaged with COPNI referred to this particular anxiety that is commonly experienced by private renters—and specially by older ones. People believed that making rightful claims put them at risk due to the high competition in the private rented sector, as they believed they could be easily replaced by other tenants that would be happy to accept the bad conditions imposed on them.

<sup>19</sup> Chartered Institute of Housing (2021) [Private rented tenancies in Northern Ireland and notice to quit periods](#).

<sup>20</sup> Average annual rent inflation between 2017 and 2024 has been higher in Northern Ireland than in Scotland. Evidence also suggests that the share of households in the private rented sector has decreased faster in Northern Ireland than in Scotland. Sources: Scottish Household Survey (2025) [Private Sector Rent Statistics, Scotland, 2010 to 2025](#); Ulster University (2024) [At a Glance. Private rental market performance 2024](#); Ulster University (2020) [At a Glance. Private Rental Market Performance 2020](#); Scottish Household Survey (2024) [Housing data tables, Local authority level](#); NISRA (2023) [Continuous Household Survey, Accommodation and Tenure - Household Tenure](#).

**Conclusion**

With the present reform, private renting legislation in Northern Ireland will offer more protection and longer notices to quit than that offered in other jurisdictions. However, the legislation in Northern Ireland still permits landlords to repossess their house without the need to provide any reason and without specifying the grounds for eviction.

In practical terms, the present proposal offers similar protection to those in other jurisdictions, but the absence of a no-fault eviction ban still leaves tenants vulnerable to evictions allowing landlords to evict without giving any reason for their decision. Recent research conducted by this office shows that the absence of a no-fault eviction ban has a direct impact on tenant behaviour, causing fear among tenants who would otherwise raise issues over a house's condition but fear retaliatory eviction.

For this reason, it seems reasonable to supplement the protections presented in this consultation with a no-fault eviction ban, which will offer plausible security for tenants, and increase confidence in the equity of the eviction process.

Yours faithfully,



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