

HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2002

S.I. 2002 No. 3154 (N.I. 8)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

INTRODUCTION

1. The Housing Support Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 was made on 17 December 2002.

BACKGROUND

2. The purpose of the Order is to introduce a new method for funding the costs associated with providing housing support services for vulnerable persons in supported accommodation. This will combine a number of existing funding sources for such services into a single fund, which will be administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). It will streamline the existing funding arrangements, which are, in many respects complex and fragmented and will introduce an increased emphasis on quality.

CONSULTATION

3. The proposals were subject to widespread consultation in the document 'Towards Supporting People' which was issued in May 2001. All respondents broadly welcomed the proposals. Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the proposals from an equality perspective but did not identify any equality implications.

Overview and Commentary on Articles

4. The Order makes provision for combining all funding sources for housing support services into a single fund, which will be administered by the NIHE. Housing support services will cease to qualify as an eligible charge for housing benefit.
5. The Order has 8 Articles.

Article 1: Title and commencement

Article 1 cites the title of the Order and provides that the Order is to come into operation on a day appointed by the Department.

Article 2: Interpretation

Article 2 provides for the interpretation of the Order and defines certain terms.

Article 3: Provision of housing support services

Article 3 of the Order extends the functions of the NIHE to include securing of the provision of housing support services and gives it power to do such things as it considers appropriate for that purpose.

*This Explanatory Memorandum refers to the Housing Support
Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 No. 3154 (N.I. 8)*

Article 4: Grants for housing support services

Article 4 of the Order gives the NIHE the power to pay grant to those eligible persons who are providing housing support services. The Department may prescribe the description of persons who are to be considered eligible for support and the terms and conditions on which grants may be paid.

Article 5: Consultation

Article 5 of the Order requires the Department to consult appropriate bodies before it makes Regulations under Article 3 or 4.

Article 6: Disclosure of information

This Article allows the Department and persons holding information on its behalf and relating to income support or income-based jobseekers allowance to pass such information to the NIHE for purposes relating to its powers to pay grant for housing support services.

Article 7: Unauthorised disclosure of information

This Article makes it an offence to disclose, without lawful authority, any information about income support or income-based job seekers allowance, which has been provided in relation to the payment of grant for housing support services.

Article 8: Housing Benefits

This Article amends Section 129 of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992 to exclude payments in respect of housing support services from the charges that are eligible for financial support through housing benefit.