



Subject:	Guidance for students and landlords in respect of their rights and responsibilities regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation.
Date:	19 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kevin Bloomfield, NIHMO Manager
Contact Officers:	Kevin Bloomfield, NIHMO Manager Jenna Roddy, Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	At your meeting on 22 January 2025 Councillor McKay requested that officers would seek to provide students who were attending universities and regional colleges with information on their rights in relation to leasing a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).
1.2	After discussion the committee agreed that officers would: <ol style="list-style-type: none">engage with Corporate Communications (Communications, Marketing and External Affairs) in order to update the Council's website with additional and specific guidance for students and landlords in respect of their rights and responsibilities regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. post links to that information through a social media campaign, linking in with the universities, regional colleges and Students' Unions; 3. provide guidance, with a QR code linking to the information online, highlighting the rights and responsibilities, to be circulated to landlords for them to provide to their new tenants; 4. consider the budget requirement for an enhanced information campaign from financial year 2025/26 onwards; and 5. seek to provide information on HMOs across Northern Ireland, rather than just for the City of Belfast. <p>The purpose of this report is to update members on the information campaign</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the content of the report
3.0	Main report
	<p>Campaign background</p> <p>3.1 The NIHMO Unit produced an information guide for HMO tenants, following a request from Licensing Committee in January 2025 that officers would seek to provide students who were attending universities and regional colleges with information on their rights in relation to leasing a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO),</p> <p>3.2 The NIHMO team engaged with Communications, Marketing and External Affairs team to publish the guide on the Belfast City Council website and promote it.</p> <p>Campaign aims</p> <p>3.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of the tenants' information guide, as a useful resource for both prospective tenants and tenants already in HMO accommodation. • Provide information to landlords, who can pass this on to their tenants. • Target secondary audiences such as parents of students and University Students' Unions, who offer advice on accommodation. <p>Key audiences</p> <p>3.4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students from universities and regional colleges • Renters of Houses in Multiple Occupation • Parents of students • HMO landlords and managing agents • Student accommodation advisors <p>Communication approach</p> <p>3.5 The campaign began week commencing 15 September 2025, to coincide with the start of the university year.</p> <p>3.6 Communication channels included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast City Council website (www.belfastcity.gov.uk) • Press • Belfast City Council social media accounts (Facebook and X)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast City Council intranet (Interlink) • City Matters residents' magazine (winter edition 2025) • Communication through partner links – universities and National Students' Unions and Landlords Association. <p>Campaign by channel</p>
3.7	<p><u>Belfast City Council website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your rights – a guide for HMO tenants was published on the Belfast City Council website on 15 September 2025. Content and keywords were optimised for search engines, making information easier to find on the website. <p>So far, the guide has been viewed over 140 times, and we will continue to promote it in the coming months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information for tenants webpage and Information for students webpage was updated with content and a call-to-action button to the information guide. http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/HMOtenants web address was used in press release to direct to the information. <p>Views of the information for tenants webpage have more than doubled since the launch, compared to the previous month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guide was promoted on the Belfast City Council website homepage. • The guide was added to Belfast City Council A to Z page on website.
3.8	<p><u>Press</u></p> <p>A press release was issued on 15 September 2025, which led to media coverage in the Irish News, Belfast Live, U105 and 4NI.</p> <p>The image included the Deputy Chair of Belfast City Council's Licensing Committee and representatives from Queen's Students' Union, Ulster University Students' Union's Belfast branch and National Union of Students NI.</p> <p>Link to press release on Belfast City Council website:</p> <p>www.belfastcity.gov.uk/News/New-guide-on-tenants-rights-launched-ahead-of-Fres</p>
3.9	<p><u>Social media</u></p> <p>Posts from Belfast City Council's social media accounts supported the web content and press release, by encouraging students to access the guide.</p> <p>The posts included a video featuring the HMO Manager and the President of the National Union of Students NI.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Internal communications</u></p> <p>An article was added to Belfast City Council's intranet, Interlink, on 18 September 2025.</p> <p>The content was aimed at parents or guardians of young people looking to rent HMO accommodation and featured the social media video.</p>

	<p>The article received 168 views and was also displayed to frontline staff on 54 screens based at locations across the council.</p>
3.11	<p><u>City Matters</u></p>
	<p>An article about the role and responsibilities of HMO tenants and landlords, including a link to the guide, was featured in the latest edition of City Matters.</p>
	<p>This was distributed to over 160,000 Belfast homes at the start of November.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Other forms of promotion</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets were designed, which the NIHMO team could distribute to landlords for their tenants' information packs or noticeboards. The leaflet gave a summary of the guide's content and a QR code with link straight to the guide on the website. • The Marketing and Communication Coordinator spoke to Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University social media teams to encourage them to share messaging. • The HMO Unit engaged with and provided copies of the campaign material to the Landlords Association for Northern Ireland, Housing Rights, Renters Voice and each of the other 10 Northern Ireland Council. Additionally, the campaign information was shared with the Department for Communities Housing Team.
3.13	<p><u>Future communications</u></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further promotion, including advertising, is being considered for January – February 2026. These have been identified as the months when students start to look for new accommodation again. • A budget of £3,000 has been set aside from licence fee income towards the costs of the campaign in January / February. With a provisional budget of up to £10,000 for the financial year 2026/27
4.0	Financial & Resource Implications
4.1	<p>NIHMO Unit operates on a cost neutral basis</p>
5.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
5.1	<p>None</p>
6.0	Appendices
6.1	<p>Appendix 1 – HMO Press Release</p>
6.2	<p>Appendix 2 – HMO Leaflet for Tenants</p>
6.3	<p>Appendix 3 – HMO Leaflet for Landlords</p>