



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number 07174, 9 June 2017

# Comparison of Right to Buy policies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

By Elizabeth Parkin  
Wendy Wilson

### Inside:

1. Right to Buy in England
2. Right to Buy in Scotland
3. Right to Buy in Wales
4. Right to Buy in Northern Ireland



# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Right to Buy in England</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Policies to incentivise the Right to Buy	4
Extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants	6
<b>2. Right to Buy in Scotland</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Abolition of Right to Buy	8
2.2 Policies to restrict the Right to Buy	9
Pressured areas designation	9
First-time tenants	9
Newly built housing	9
Modernised Right to Buy	10
<b>3. Right to Buy in Wales</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Abolition of the Right to Buy	11
3.2 Policies to restrict the Right to Buy	13
<b>4. Right to Buy in Northern Ireland</b>	<b>14</b>

## Summary

The devolution of housing policy to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is resulting in increasingly diverse approaches in certain areas - the Right to Buy is one such policy area.

The statutory Right to Buy scheme was first introduced by the *Housing Act 1980*. The Act gave qualifying council tenants the Right to Buy their home at a discount. The scheme has been subject to various amendments over the intervening years, including several changes to the qualifying period as a tenant and the level of discount available. In England, the current Right to Buy scheme is governed by the *Housing Act 1985* (as amended).

The 2010 Coalition Government 'incentivised' the Right to Buy in England. Key policy changes included the abolition of regional variations in maximum discounts and a significant increase in the maximum discount available, together with a reduction in the qualifying period. The Government's stated aim was to increase the number of tenants exercising the Right to Buy.

The Conservative Party's 2015 Manifesto included a commitment to "extend the Right to Buy to tenants in Housing Associations to enable more people to buy a home of their own." An [offer](#) developed by the National Housing Federation (the representative body of housing associations) was accepted by the 2015 Government and work began to extend the Right to Buy to assured tenants of housing associations on a voluntary, rather than a statutory, basis. No implementation date for the roll-out of the extended voluntary Right to Buy was announced before the 2017 General Election.

In contrast, the Scottish Government has restricted the Right to Buy and legislated to abolish it completely in 2014. Eligible tenants had up to 31 July 2016 to exercise their Right to Buy.

The Welsh Government has also decided to abolish the Right to Buy. The *Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill* was introduced on 13 March 2017 and is now progressing through the Assembly.

Northern Ireland has a Right to Buy scheme (the House Sales Scheme) in place for both Housing Executive (the largest social housing provider) and housing association tenants, and has a qualifying tenancy period of five years. At the time of writing no plans to extend or restrict the scheme have been announced.

# 1. Right to Buy in England

The governing legislation is the *Housing Act 1985* (as amended) and associated regulations. Secure local authority or housing association tenants (or assured housing association tenants with a preserved Right to Buy) who are eligible, can receive a discount of up to £78,600 (or £104,900 in London).<sup>1</sup> As a general rule, assured tenants of housing associations do not currently have the Right to Buy although they may have a [Right to Acquire](#), which offers less generous discounts than the Right to Buy.

Since April 2015, the maximum discount levels have increased annually in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Tenants are generally eligible for the Right to Buy if:

- They are a local authority tenant or were a local authority tenant before their property was transferred to a different landlord, i.e. a housing association.
- They have been a public sector tenant for at least three years.
- They don't live in sheltered housing or other housing particularly suitable for elderly or disabled people.
- Their home is not due to be demolished.
- They don't have any legal problems with debt.
- They don't have any outstanding possession orders.<sup>2</sup>

The discount level under the Right to Buy scheme increases with the amount of time the tenant has lived in the property:

- For houses, discounts start at 35% for 5 years' tenancy,<sup>3</sup> and increase by 1% for each extra year of tenancy up to 70% or the cash maximum, whichever is lower.
- For flats, discounts start at 50% for five years' tenancy,<sup>4</sup> and increase by 2% for each extra year of tenancy up to 70% or the case maximum, whichever is lower.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.1 Policies to incentivise the Right to Buy

Major changes made to the Right to Buy in April 2012 and July 2014 were intended to expand the scheme and increase the number of tenants exercising their Right to Buy.

In November 2011, the Coalition Government published "Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England", which set out its plans to "get the house market moving again." The Government proposed an increase to the caps on Right to Buy discounts to encourage more tenants to buy their homes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Maximum discounts from April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, [Right to Buy: summary booklet](#), 31 July 2014, page 5

<sup>3</sup> This will reduce to three years when section 28 of the *Deregulation Act 2015* comes into force.

<sup>4</sup> This will reduce to three years when section 28 of the *Deregulation Act 2015* comes into force.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, [Right to Buy: summary booklet](#), 31 July 2014, page 7

## 5 Comparison of Right to Buy policies in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

We are reinvigorating the right to buy—to support social tenants who aspire to own their own home, by raising the discounts to make it attractive to tenants across England.

We are matching this with a commitment that for every additional home bought under right to buy, a new affordable home will be built.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to this, the maximum discounts available ranged from £16,000 in most parts of London to £38,000 in parts of the South East.<sup>7</sup>

The Government consulted on the proposed changes in December 2011 - [Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One for One Replacement: Consultation](#). The consultation set out proposals to increase the cap on Right to Buy discounts and included options for meeting the Government's commitment to ensure that every additional home sold would be replaced with a new home at an Affordable Rent.<sup>8</sup>

The Government's response to the consultation exercise was published in March 2012. It confirmed that the discount cap would be increased to £75,000 across England with effect from 2 April 2012<sup>9</sup>:

The increased discount will allow a greater number of social tenants to exercise their Right to Buy and meet their home ownership aspirations, support social mobility and will help create and sustain mixed communities.<sup>10</sup>

There was no change to the qualifying criteria for Right to Buy or Preserved Right to Buy.

As part of Budget 2013 the Chancellor announced that the maximum discount in London would rise to £100,000 with effect from 25 March 2013. The then Housing Minister, Mark Prisk, explained the Government's rationale:

In London, higher property prices have meant fewer council tenants have been able to benefit from this renewed [Right to Buy] deal. That's why, from today, we've increased the maximum discounts available in the capital to £100,000 – bringing home ownership within reach of even more Londoners.<sup>11</sup>

In January 2014, the Government announced further plans to “reinvigorate” the Right to Buy scheme in order to increase the number of tenants buying their home. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced that the maximum discount for a house would increase from 60% to 70% of its value, and that the £75,000 cap would start increasing in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Also, a £100 million fund was announced to improve access

---

<sup>6</sup> [HC Deb 21 Nov 2011 c6WS](#)

<sup>7</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, [Reinvigorating the Right to Buy and One for One Replacement Consultation](#), December 2011, page 6

<sup>8</sup> i.e. a rent set at up to 80% of the market rate.

<sup>9</sup> DCLG, [Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One for One Replacement: Consultation - Summary of Responses, and Government response to consultation](#), March 2012, page 9

<sup>10</sup> DCLG, [Reinvigorating Right to Buy and One for One Replacement: Consultation - Summary of Responses, and Government response to consultation](#), March 2012, page 5

<sup>11</sup> DCLG, [Mark Prisk offers £100k Right to Buy discount to the capital's social tenants](#), 25 March 2013

to mortgage finance and provide new Right to Buy agents to guide people through the buying process.

The then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, explained the aims of the changes:

For years the Right to Buy was slowly strangled, with a miserly cap on discounts killing the prospect of home ownership for most social tenants.

We don't think governments should be in the business of vetoing aspiration. That's why we reinvigorated the Right to Buy. It's all part of our long-term economic plan to make Britain a country on the rise, where hard-working people can be rewarded with the security and peace of mind that comes from owning their own home.

Eighteen months later and with over 13,400 hard-working tenants taking up the offer, it's clear the public shares our view. But we want to go further, that's why we will soon be increasing the maximum percentage discount for houses, and ensuring that the cash cap rises with inflation, so more social tenants can make Right to Buy their New Year's resolution for 2014.

We'll also continue to plough the cash from additional sales back into delivering new affordable homes for rent, which will help drive up the rate of housebuilding across the country.<sup>12</sup>

Section 28 of the *Deregulation Act 2015* reduced, with effect from 26 March 2015, the qualifying period for the Right to Buy from five years to three years spent as a public sector tenant. This change was intended to give more tenants the opportunity to buy their home.<sup>13</sup> The Government said that reducing the qualification period would extend the possibility of home ownership to an additional 200,000 households.<sup>14</sup>

In March 2015, the then Housing Minister, Brandon Lewis, outlined the impact of the 2010 Government's changes to the Right to Buy:

The Right to Buy Scheme (including preserved Right to Buy), allowing eligible social tenants to buy their homes at a discount, has achieved over 40,000 council and housing association sales since April 2010. Over 33,000 of these sales have been achieved since the discounts were increased in April 2012.<sup>15</sup>

For further information see the Commons Library briefing [SN06251 Incentivising the Right to Buy](#).

## Extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants

The Conservative Party's 2015 Manifesto set out an intention to extend the Right to Buy to housing association tenants and require local

<sup>12</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, [Make Right to Buy your New Year's resolution](#), 3 January 2014

<sup>13</sup> [HC Deb 26 March 2015 Housing and Planning Delivery: Written statement - HCWS509](#)

<sup>14</sup> Cm 8642, page 3

<sup>15</sup> [HC Deb 26 March 2015 Housing and Planning Delivery: Written statement - HCWS509](#)

authorities to sell off their most valuable properties in order to pay for this measure:

We will extend the Right to Buy to tenants in Housing Associations to enable more people to buy a home of their own. It is unfair that they should miss out on a right enjoyed by tenants in local authority homes. We will fund the replacement of properties sold under the extended Right to Buy by requiring local authorities to manage their housing assets more efficiently, with the most expensive properties sold off and replaced as they fall vacant. We will also create a Brownfield Fund to unlock homes on brownfield land for additional housing.<sup>16</sup>

Subsequently, the 2015 Queen's Speech announced that a *Housing Bill* would be introduced to "dramatically extend the Right to Buy to the tenants of Housing Associations – putting home ownership within the reach of 1.3 million more families."

Before the *Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16* was introduced, the National Housing Federation (NHF) put an [offer](#) to the Government in which it proposed the implementation of an extended Right to Buy on a [voluntary](#) basis. This offer was described as a compromise with a view to securing the independence of housing associations and the best deal on compensation (for discounts) and flexibilities (the ability to refuse the RTB in relation to certain properties). During his speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 7 October 2015, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that agreement had been reached on the NHF's offer and that the first housing association tenants would be able to buy their homes in 2016. The *Housing and Planning Act 2016* does not, therefore, include measures to give housing association tenants a statutory Right to Buy. The Act *does* include provisions which set out how associations will be compensated for selling their assets at a discount.

No implementation date for the voluntary Right to Buy was announced before the 2017 General Election. During the Autumn Statement and Comprehensive Spending Review 2015 the Chancellor announced that the extended RTB would be piloted by five housing associations. These pilots are now complete and a [report on the findings](#) was published in January 2017.

The Autumn Statement 2016 announced "a large-scale regional pilot of the Right to Buy for housing association tenants." It was expected that over 3,000 tenants would be able to buy their own home with RTB discounts under this extended pilot. The NHF said that the pilot would last for one year and would test two aspects of the voluntary agreement that the original pilots did not cover, namely:

- One-for-one replacement; and
- portability of discounts.

On 8 March 2017 the then Housing Minister, Gavin Barwell, said that he was working with the NHF to "identify the most effective location or locations for the regional pilots" and that he hoped to announce a

---

<sup>16</sup> [Conservative Party Manifesto 2015](#), page 52

decision “shortly”. More information can be found in Library Briefing Paper 07224, [Introducing a voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants in England](#).

## 2. Right to Buy in Scotland

In contrast to the extension of Right to Buy in England, the Scottish Government has increasingly restricted the scheme and in 2013 confirmed that it would abolish the Right to Buy.

### 2.1 Abolition of Right to Buy

In July 2013, then Deputy First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announced the Scottish Government’s intention to scrap the Right to Buy in order to prevent the removal of properties from the social rented sector:

We can no longer afford to see badly needed homes lost to the social sector. That is why I am today announcing the final stage of the abolition of the right to buy – a decision that will safeguard Scotland’s social housing stock for the benefit of citizens today and for our future generations.<sup>17</sup>

The Scottish Government said that the abolition of the Right to Buy would protect up to 15,500 social houses from sale over the next decade.<sup>18</sup>

The Right to Buy was abolished under Part 1 of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), which received Royal Assent on 1 August 2014. Any social housing tenant who still had the Right to Buy had until 31 July 2016 to exercise this right before losing it.<sup>19</sup>

The Equality Impact Assessment for the 2014 Act outlined the intended outcomes of the policy:

- up to 15,500 houses will be kept in the social rented sector that would otherwise have been sold. These will now be available to tenants for rent over the lifetime of the properties
- this will contribute to increasing housing supply and choice and reducing waiting lists
- the asset base of social landlords will cease to be eroded and this will assist their forward planning
- by not being marginalised, social housing will play a vital role in building sustainable mixed communities
- entitlements will be easier to understand and the system will be easier to administer<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The Scottish Government, [Safeguarding Scotland's social housing](#), 3 July 2013

<sup>18</sup> Equality Impact Assessment Record, [Ending Right to Buy entitlements for tenants of social housing in Scotland](#), July 2013

<sup>19</sup> The Scottish Government, [Right to Buy](#) [last accessed 6 May 2015]

<sup>20</sup> Equality Impact Assessment Record, [Ending Right to Buy entitlements for tenants of social housing in Scotland](#), July 2013

The Scottish Government published [guidance](#) for tenants of social housing on exercising their Right to Buy during the notice period before 1 August 2016.

## 2.2 Policies to restrict the Right to Buy

Prior to the decision to abolish the Right to Buy, the Scottish Government enacted several changes to restrict the scheme.

### Pressured areas designation

Pressured area designation suspended the Right to Buy for tenants living in an area, or a particular house type, where demand exceeded supply and where the tenant entered into a new tenancy on or after 30 September 2002.

The *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010* made significant amendments to the way in which pressured areas were designated. The power to make, amend and revoke pressured area designations was transferred from the Scottish Government to local authorities with effect from 30 June 2011. The power to designate a pressured area could be exercised if the following two conditions were met:

- In the relevant part of the authority's area, the need for housing provided by the authority or by Registered Social Landlords substantially exceeded (or was likely to exceed substantially) the amount of housing which was (or was likely to be) available.
- The exercise of the right to buy (RTB) by tenants in the area was likely to worsen the situation.<sup>21</sup>

The Act provided that particular housing types could be designated as pressured for the first time. It also increased the maximum period for which a pressured area could be designated from five to ten years.<sup>22</sup>

Further information on the changes can be found in the [Statutory Guidance For Local Authorities On Pressured Areas](#).

### First-time tenants

The *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010* ended the Right to Buy for first-time tenants to the social housing sector whose tenancies began on, or after, 2 March 2011. The explanatory notes to the Act stated that:

This is intended to ensure that tenants taking up a Scottish secure tenancy for the first time (following commencement of section 141) and those returning to the social rented sector after a break will not have the right to buy over any property they rent from a social landlord.<sup>23</sup>

### Newly built housing

The *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010* ended, from 1 March 2011, the Right to Buy a property built or acquired after 15 June 2008.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Scottish Government, [Statutory Guidance For Local Authorities On Pressured Areas](#)

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government, [Statutory Guidance For Local Authorities On Pressured Areas](#)

<sup>23</sup> *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010*, Explanatory notes, [Part 14, Limitation on right to buy: new tenants](#)

<sup>24</sup> *Housing (Scotland) Act 2010*, [Section 143 - Limitation on right to buy: new supply social housing](#)

## Modernised Right to Buy

The *Housing (Scotland) Act 2001* restricted the Right to Buy by introducing a “modernised” scheme for tenants entering into a tenancy after 30 September 2002 and for many housing association tenants. The modernised Right to Buy had less generous discounts and a longer qualifying period than the preserved Right to Buy.<sup>25</sup> It had a five-year qualifying period and a maximum discount for all properties of 35% or £15,000, whichever was lower,<sup>26</sup> compared to a two-year qualifying period and a discount of up to 70% of the market value of the property for a flat and 60% for a house for the preserved Right to Buy.<sup>27</sup>

The modernised Right to Buy for housing association tenants was subject to a 10-year exemption, meaning that it was only after September 2012 that most housing association tenants could exercise their Right to Buy. The 2001 Act also contained provisions to allow housing associations to apply to the Scottish Government to extend the 10-year exemption with the result that some housing association tenants may never have had the opportunity to exercise their Right to Buy before it was abolished in 2016.

For further information see the Scottish Executive’s briefing on [Housing \(Scotland\) Act: The Modernised Right to Buy 2001](#).

---

<sup>25</sup> The preserved Right to Buy applies to council tenants (with a statutory Right to Buy) whose landlord transferred their stock to a housing association.

<sup>26</sup> Scottish Government, [Right to buy for housing association tenants](#) [last accessed 12 May 2015]

<sup>27</sup> Scottish Government, [Your Right to Buy Your Home: A guide for Scottish Secure Tenants](#), October 2011, page 5

## 3. Right to Buy in Wales

### 3.1 Abolition of the Right to Buy

In May 2015, the Welsh Government made the decision to end the Right to Buy. This decision was reached following a consultation which found that 63% of respondents – including councils, housing associations and social housing tenants – were in favour of developing legislation to end the Right to Buy in Wales.<sup>28</sup>

The consultation on [The Future of the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire](#) ended in April 2015. The White Paper put forward two proposals for public consultation, which the Welsh Government said were aimed at protecting the existing social housing stock from further reduction:

- Changing existing legislation to reduce the maximum discount from £16,000 to £8,000.
- Developing new legislation – which, if passed by the National Assembly for Wales, would end the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire.<sup>29</sup>

The Welsh Government explained that the proposed changes were intended to protect the social housing stock:

Over the last thirty years or so, the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire have allowed many tenants in social housing to buy their home from their Local Authority or Housing Association. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in our social housing stock. The reduced number of social rented homes available to help people who are on housing waiting lists is adding to the pressures on housing supply and on people's ability to find a home they can afford.

In the current financial climate, for housing, economic and other factors have combined to cause considerable pressure on the supply of homes. The pressures affect many but the effect on people whose needs cannot be met by the housing market is particularly noticeable. Some people cannot afford to buy a home, or to rent a home from a private landlord. They are dependent on social housing or some other form of subsidised provision. Social housing is a particularly important safety net.<sup>30</sup>

On 3 June 2015, the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, Lesley Griffiths, announced that, after considering the consultation responses, she had decided to proceed with both proposals. A Statutory Instrument to reduce the maximum discount from £16,000 to £8,000 came into force on 14 July 2015<sup>31</sup>. The Minister said she was also taking action to develop new primary legislation to end the Right to Buy:

I have given very careful consideration to the response to the consultation and have decided to proceed with both proposals set

---

<sup>28</sup> Welsh Government, White Paper Consultation Summary Report, [The Future of the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire: A White Paper for Social Housing](#), May 2015

<sup>29</sup> Welsh Government, [Consultation on the future of Right to Buy and Right to Acquire – a White Paper for social housing](#), January 2015

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> SI 2015/1349 [The Housing \(Right to Buy and Right to Acquire\) \(Limits on Discount\) \(Amendment\) \(Wales\) Order 2015](#)

out in the White Paper. Social housing is a vital and very valuable part of our housing system and is an essential safety net for people for whom the housing market does not work, either by buying a property or by renting from a private landlord. Significantly, this includes some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

I am now making arrangements to amend existing legislation to reduce the maximum discount available under the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire from £16,000 to £8,000. I intend to make this Statutory Instrument before the summer recess. Whilst the response to the consultation indicates some support for reducing the maximum discount to less than £8,000, I consider the reduction to be reasonable and proportionate in terms of our desire to stem the continued reduction in our social housing.

I am also putting in place action to develop new primary legislation to end the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire. Ultimately, I believe this is the only way to protect our social housing stock from further reduction and, most importantly, to ensure as many people as possible have access to a home they can afford.<sup>32</sup>

The [Legislative Programme for 2016-17](#) contained a commitment to bring forward a Bill to abolish the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire in Wales:

Finally, Llywydd, we will bring forward a Bill to abolish the right to buy and the right to acquire. We must safeguard our social housing stock in Wales and ensure it's available to people who need it and who are unable to access accommodation through home ownership or the private rented sector. We need to build more homes, and this Government is committed to delivering an extra 20,000 affordable homes during this Assembly term, but we must also tackle the pressure on our current social housing stock. This Bill will seek to protect that stock from further reductions. The analogy I've used before is that it's like trying to fill the bath up with the plug out.<sup>33</sup>

The *Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill* was introduced on 13 March 2017 and is now progressing through the Assembly. According to the [Explanatory Memorandum](#) accompanying the Bill, its purpose and intended effect is to end all variations of the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire. The Bill will:

- abolish the right of eligible secure tenants to buy their home at a discount under Part 5 of the Housing Act 1985 (Right to Buy);
- abolish the preserved right of eligible former secure tenants to buy their home at a discount under section 171A of the Housing Act 1985 (Preserved Right to Buy);
- abolish the right of eligible assured or secure tenants of a registered social landlord or private registered provider to acquire their home at a discount under section 16 of the Housing Act 1996 (Right to Acquire);
- encourage social landlords to build or acquire new homes for rent, the Right to Buy, Preserved Right to Buy and Right

<sup>32</sup> Welsh Government, [Written Statement - Consultation Report on the Future of Right to Buy and Right to Acquire](#), 3 June 2015

<sup>33</sup> National Assembly for Wales, [Legislative Programme for 2016-17](#), 28 June 2016

to Acquire will not be exercisable by tenants who move into new social housing stock more than two months after the Bill receives Royal Assent, subject to certain exceptions;

- provide for at least one year after the Bill receives Royal Assent before the abolition of the Right to Buy, Preserved Right to Buy and Right to Acquire for existing social housing stock comes into force.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2 Policies to restrict the Right to Buy

In Wales, the Right to Buy currently has a maximum discount of £16,000, which is the lowest discount for those nations still offering it. The policy was restricted in 2003 when the maximum discount in Wales was cut from £24,000 to £16,000.<sup>35</sup>

Local authorities can apply for a suspension of the Right to Buy for a period of up to five years in areas where there is high pressure on housing, local authorities can apply to extend this period. Suspensions were introduced by the [Housing \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#). A suspension of the Right to Buy can be applied for in areas of “housing pressure”:

The housing pressure condition is that the demand for social housing substantially exceeds its supply or is likely to do so, and that imbalance between supply and demand is likely to increase as a result of the exercise of the right to buy and related rights.<sup>36</sup>

The “housing pressure condition” may be met in relation to all social housing in a local authority area, to all social housing in a certain part or parts of an area, or in relation to a certain type or types of social housing.<sup>37</sup> In 2015, Carmarthenshire Council was the first local authority to successfully apply for a suspension due to a particularly acute housing shortage.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> [Welsh Assembly Bill page on the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights \(Wales\) Bill](#). [accessed on 5 June 2017]

<sup>35</sup> Welsh Assembly, [A financial evaluation of the right to buy](#) [last accessed 13 July 2016]

<sup>36</sup> Housing (Wales) Measure 2011, [Explanatory notes, Section 1 - Power to apply for direction suspending the right to buy and related rights](#).

<sup>37</sup> Housing (Wales) Measure 2011, [Explanatory notes, Section 1 - Power to apply for direction suspending the right to buy and related rights](#).

<sup>38</sup> *The Guardian*, [Welsh Labour party intends to abolish the right-to-buy scheme](#), 22 January 2015

## 4. Right to Buy in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a Right to Buy scheme in place for both Housing Executive (the largest social housing provider) and housing association tenants. It is called the House Sales Scheme.

Eligible tenants must have been a tenant for five years to qualify. Tenants without the requisite five years qualifying tenancy may still be eligible to apply if they succeeded to, or were assigned, their tenancy from a spouse or parent.<sup>39</sup>

The amount of discount increases with the length of time the tenant has lived at the property, up to a maximum of £24,000. The discount starts at 20% of the market value after 5 years of tenancy, plus an increase of 2% for each additional year's tenancy, up to a maximum discount of 60% of the valuation or £24,000.<sup>40</sup>

Tenants also have the option to buy a share in the property and pay rent on the remaining portion owned by the landlord.<sup>41</sup>

Certain types of properties are excluded from the scheme, including sheltered dwellings and a single-storey or ground floor dwellings (other than a flat) with no more than two bedrooms.<sup>42</sup>

Further information is available in the Northern Ireland Assembly's briefing on [The re-purchase of ex-social housing by Social Landlords](#) (2013)

A survey of housing associations in Northern Ireland, conducted by *Inside Housing* magazine in 2015, found that a majority of associations would like the House Sales scheme to be "reformed or scrapped":

Out of the 18 housing association members that responded, more than half want the policy to be scrapped outright. Thirty-three per cent favour a review of the scheme, and just 11% want to keep the status quo.<sup>43</sup>

Although the Northern Ireland Executive has not indicated any planned changes to the Right to Buy, the Stormont Agreement, [A Fresh Start](#) (November 2015) includes the following:

The Executive is also committed to progressing significant structural reform of social housing provision. This will be focused on reducing the Departmental Expenditure Limit subsidy pressures.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Executive, [House Sales: Incorporating Equity Sharing - A Tenant's Guide](#) [last accessed 6 May 2015]

<sup>40</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Executive, [Buying your Housing Executive Home: Assessing the property price](#) [last accessed 6 May 2015]

<sup>41</sup> Northern Ireland Housing Executive, [Buying your Housing Executive home: Equity Sharing – discount available](#) [last accessed 6 May 2015]

<sup>42</sup> NI Direct Government services, [House sales scheme](#)

<sup>43</sup> *Inside Housing*, "A lesson in Right to Buy", 26 November 2015

<sup>44</sup> [A Fresh Start – the Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan, November 2015](#), para 1.11

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

Disclaimer - This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).