



**Retailers call for the reintroduction of a Living Over the Shop Scheme
Imperative to offset housing problems which is impacting retailers ability to hire and
retain staff**

Retail Excellence, Ireland's largest retail representative body, have today called on the Government to reintroduce the Living Over the Shop Scheme which ceased in 2006, in order to help with the issue of staff retention and acquisition in high rent areas.

Deputy CEO of the organization, Lorraine Higgins speaking at the Peter McVerry Trust "Businesses for Homes" event in Dublin today made this call in the face of difficulties being experienced in hiring and retaining staff in the industry.

Higgins said "We feel it is imperative that a Living Over the Shop Scheme be introduced to help offset the recruitment challenge facing retailers. Until 2006, there was such a scheme, which encouraged property owners to improve and use the space over their commercial properties for residential purposes".

"There are a plethora of vacant units throughout the country and owners are not being sufficiently incentivized to improve these spaces for residential purposes. We need to be innovative in order to get them rental ready in order to help offset the worst of our housing crisis and just as critically to be able to offer affordable accommodation to staff".

"Furthermore, if there are planning issues around these potential residential uses in that a planning application needs to be made to a local authority for a change of use let's introduce a fast track planning process or better still allow a special dispensation to owners of properties in such circumstances".

"At a time of an acute housing crisis which is proving challenging to retailers to hire and retain staff it is imperative such action is taken in the upcoming Budget".

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About Retail Excellence

Established in 1995, Retail Excellence is owned by the members, for the members. We are an organisation which invests in innovative and exciting learning, market intelligence, human resources services, Government representation and member networking initiatives. Retail Excellence has over 1,750 leading retail companies in Ireland. Our members are the most progressive and innovative retailers. Retail Excellence is by far the largest retail industry body in Ireland.