

making it home

an action plan on homelessness in Dublin 2004–2006



**HOME
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agency



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First published 2004

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Design by Identikit Design Consultants
Printed by Ryle Group

foreword

Brendan Kenny, Chair, Homeless Agency, Assistant City Manager, Dublin City Council

The picture of homelessness in Dublin in 2004 is a very different one from that three years ago, at the start of the last action plan. Then, homelessness wasn't just a persistent problem; it was a growing one, with increasing numbers of rough sleepers, families and young people. Now, the overall numbers of people homeless has stabilised, with actual reductions in the numbers of young people and in the incidence of rough sleeping. There have also been improvements in the type and quality of services, in the understanding of homelessness and in the development of partnership working to address it.

These achievements are not cause for complacency – planned progress was not achieved on all fronts and we still have a long way to go before attaining our ultimate goal of eliminating homelessness in the capital – but there is cause for confidence in the general approach taken. We can now say that we have a bed for everyone who needs one. However, this is not an end in itself and going forward we must provide more housing, not more beds.

The next three years will be crucial to the achievement of our vision of a capital without homelessness and we are confident that a breakthrough can be made in reversing a problem that many people believed would always be with us. The implementation of this plan will result in a further reduction in homelessness – and as a consequence a reduction in the number of services. The homeless sector is working to put itself out of a job!

This cannot be achieved by homeless services themselves. The significant commitment made to date by Government to tackling homelessness, both in terms of policy development and the allocation of necessary resources must be continued. Without this the targets in this plan may not be met and the positive progress made over the last three years could be undermined.

This new plan marks the end of my term as Chair of the Homeless Agency and I wish to acknowledge the support, assistance and co-operation of the members of the Board and Consultative Forum, both voluntary and statutory, for all their work over the term of the last plan. I would also like to welcome Kathleen Holohan, Director of Housing Services in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, as the incoming Chair. Finally I wish to thank our Director Mary Higgins for her great effort, commitment and patience.



acknowledgements

This document is the result of a lengthy process involving a number of individuals and organisations. The Homeless Agency wishes to acknowledge the generous and invaluable input of voluntary and statutory service providers who participated in consultative seminars, made written submissions and commented on drafts. Thanks are also due to the many organisations, outside of the homeless sector, which made written submissions and brought some new perspectives to the process, to members of the Homeless Agency Board and Consultative Forum and to Camilla Beglin, PricewaterhouseCooper, for their helpful comments and input.

Finally grateful thanks to the members of the working group who oversaw the process, participated in seminars and proposed and commented on drafts. They are: Orla Barry, *Focus Ireland*; Patricia Cleary, *HAIL Housing Association*; Jack Dunphy, *Crosscare*; Brendan Hynes, *South Dublin County Council*, (representing South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils); Dermot Kavanagh, *Merchants Quay Ireland*; Greg Maxwell, *Dublin Simon Community*; Frank Mills, *South Western Area Health Board*; Leonora O'Reilly, *City of Dublin VEC*; Maire Twomey, *Dublin City Council*, Mary Higgins, *Homeless Agency*. The plan was written and edited by Mary Higgins, with help from Simon Brooke, Roger Courtney and Lucy Taylor.



executive summary

Making it Home – An action plan on homelessness in Dublin 2004–2006 has been produced by the Homeless Agency on behalf of the four Dublin local authorities in fulfilment of the requirement of the government strategy Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy – that local authorities produce three year action plans on homelessness, in conjunction with health boards, other relevant statutory bodies and voluntary bodies. This is the second action plan on homelessness in Dublin. The first, *Shaping the Future*, related to the years 2001 to 2003.

Implementation of measures of the first action plan has ensured an adequate supply of temporary accommodation in Dublin city, has increased government funding available for homeless services, developed partnership working and improved the quality and range of services available to people who are homeless. It has also reduced levels of rough sleeping, through the provision of tailored responses to the needs of the most marginal of homeless people.

This plan will consolidate progress to date and will accelerate action in the key areas of prevention and intervention. Preventative measures include the production of a comprehensive and long term strategy and other actions to reduce the numbers of households who become homeless. These include the provision of additional housing for single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and the establishment of a new service to help them sustain tenancies.

The improvement of interventions centres on a shift in service delivery, away from making people fit into the services available towards making the services suitable to the needs of people who are homeless. A critical element of both preventing and responding to homelessness is the development of responses at local community level, where and when need arises. Accurate and timely information is important in informing responses to homelessness and measuring their impact and the plan contains provisions to improve data.

The plan has been based on research, information and consultation with the voluntary and statutory bodies involved in the provision of homeless and related services and has been adopted by the voluntary and statutory members of the Homeless Agency.



introduction

It is a requirement of current government policy that local authorities agree, with relevant voluntary and statutory bodies in their areas, three year action plans on homelessness in order to formulate ‘coherent, comprehensive and effective responses to homelessness’ (*Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy*, 2000).

The first action plan on homelessness in Dublin, *Shaping the Future*, covered the period 2001–2003. It set out a bold vision for the future – that homelessness would be eliminated by 2010. Many improvements have been made in the quality, range and focus of services available to people who are homeless through the implementation of measures in that plan but much more needs to be done before that vision can be realised.

Making it Home aims to build on progress made in the last three years and to bring the elimination of homelessness closer to realisation. It focuses on four main areas: the provision of more housing, not beds; the development of strategies to prevent people from becoming homeless; the improvement of interventions where people do become homeless, when and where need arises; and the improvement of the collection, collation and accuracy of information available on homelessness and the impact of responses to it.

The implementation of the plan will be subject to ongoing monitoring and review, so that adjustments can be made, if necessary, in the light of any changed circumstances. It will also be subject to independent evaluation.

Process

The plan was prepared for the four Dublin local authorities by the Homeless Agency. The Agency was established as part of the government strategy to manage and coordinate services to people who are homeless in Dublin. A partnership structure, the Agency operates under the direction of a Board, comprising representatives from the local authorities, health boards, Eastern Region Health Authority, voluntary bodies, FÁS, Probation and Welfare Services and the City of Dublin VEC.

The Board is advised by a Consultative Forum, which comprises representatives from voluntary and statutory homeless service providers. From mid 2004, its membership will be extended to include representatives from the National Drugs Strategy Team, FÁS, Probation and Welfare Services and the City of Dublin VEC. A list of Board and Forum members is contained in Appendix one.

A working group of representatives from the Board and Consultative Forum had oversight of the preparation of the plan. In keeping with the spirit of the government strategy, a process of consultation has underpinned the development of the plan. Written submissions were invited and received from homeless service providers and from other interested bodies in the voluntary, statutory, trade union and business sectors. A series of consultative seminars were held with front line staff and managers of homeless and other related services, in each of the four local authority areas.

Other information, gathered by the Homeless Agency through informal contact with homeless services, formal research and service evaluations, has also informed the plan. The findings of the independent evaluation of *Shaping the Future* (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2003) and information on policy and other factors likely to impact on homelessness were also taken into account.

The process of consultation has been important in ensuring that the plan is appropriate and relevant and that the people who are responsible for its implementation are committed to it. The plan has been approved by the Consultative Forum and Board of the Homeless Agency and formally adopted by the City and County Councils and the Board of the Eastern Region Health Authority, making it a formal policy for all of these bodies and the organisations represented on them.

Document structure

The remainder of the document is divided into five sections, plus a context and overview. The context and overview – ‘*Homelessness in Dublin*’ – sets the scene for the actions in the plan. It describes the current situation in terms of the people who are homeless, the services available to them, the changes that have occurred over the course of the last three years and describes the challenges remaining to be addressed through the implementation of *Making it Home*.

Section one provides the framework for this plan, reiterating the long term vision announced in *Shaping the Future*, to eliminate homelessness by 2010. It sets out key strategic aims and lists a set of principles and values, which have informed the plan and will influence its evaluation. In addition it lists key performance indicators and a number of key assumptions. These assumptions, on which the plan has been based, relate largely to government commitment and the availability of resources and housing. Changes in any of these will potentially impact on the implementation of the plan.

The core of the plan – the objectives and supporting actions are contained in Sections two, three, four and five. Section two focuses on two critical areas – prevention and intervention. A key element of both preventing and responding to homelessness is the development of responses at local community level, where and when needs arise and there is a separate plan with specific actions for each local authority area in Section three.

There are a number of deficits in the information available on homelessness in Dublin and measures in Section four aim to address these by providing for shared definitions and improvements in the availability and quality of data. Section five sets out the objectives for the Homeless Agency itself, over the course of the term of the plan, in leading, coordinating and measuring its implementation and includes a set of performance indicators. The final section sets out a budget for the continuation of existing services, the development of new ones and other actions in the plan in year one.



Homeless in Dublin: context and overview

Introduction

This section outlines the context to this action plan and provides an overview on homelessness in Dublin. It describes the extent and nature of homelessness, including changes over the three years of the first action plan, services for people who are homeless and issues to be addressed in this action plan. It begins by outlining current government policy in relation to homelessness.

Policy and legislative context

The Housing Act, 1988 is the most significant piece of legislation in relation to homelessness. It provides a definition of homelessness, empowers local authorities to make a range of responses to households who are homeless and requires them to periodically assess the number and type of households who are homeless in each area. Health boards share responsibility for homelessness and two Acts are of importance. The Health Act, 1953 imposes a duty on health boards to provide assistance and shelter to people who are homeless and the Child Care Act, 1991 makes them responsible for homeless young people under 18.

Any government policy or programme relating to housing, health, income maintenance, employment or aimed at tackling disadvantage and social exclusion or enhancing the quality of life of Irish citizens, is of relevance to homelessness and initiatives to address it. In the last few years a number of specific policies have been developed with the aim of developing effective and coordinated responses to homelessness.

This action plan has been prepared in fulfilment of the requirement in one of these policies – *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy* (2000) – that each local authority prepare three year action plans to tackle homelessness, in partnership with relevant statutory and voluntary bodies. The strategy was produced by a cross department team and represents a change in government policy on homelessness – away from the provision of crisis responses – towards the development of an holistic and comprehensive approach to the issue. The cross department team continues to exist, with the brief of monitoring the implementation of local action plans, and reporting on progress the Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion.

Two directly related policies were published in 2001 and 2002. The first of these, the Youth Homelessness Strategy, focuses on eliminating homelessness among people

under the age of eighteen. The other, the Homeless Preventative Strategy aims to prevent homelessness among people leaving state care, including hospital, prison and childcare. Other policies and programmes of particular relevance to homelessness are the National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008; the National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Inclusion (2002); the Health Strategy, and in particular the Primary Care Strategy (2001); RAPID and the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme.

The thrust of government policy in relation to homelessness is to ensure that responses to it are integrated with other policy and legislative agendas. While there have been developments in this direction they have had only limited effect. Policies continue to be formulated without due consideration to their impact on homelessness and new programmes have been developed without clear links with the homeless sector and initiatives to address it. In this context homeless services continue to provide a social safety net, picking up the pieces caused by failures in other policies and services, and to operate separately rather than as an integral part of mainstream services.

The extent of homelessness in Dublin

Information on the extent and nature of homelessness is a pre requisite to understanding and developing responses to it and the last number of years has seen improvements in the quality and range of information available on the issue in Dublin. Apart from periodic research that is an important source of information, there are two methods of measuring homelessness in Dublin. One of these provides a point in time estimate, based on a week long census. The other, Dublin LINK, is an internet based system which records information on all people in contact with services and is now being used by most homeless services in Dublin. When it is fully operational it will provide timely data on numbers and characteristics of people who are homeless and track their pathways through homelessness.

The point in time estimate is a robust methodology, relative to others used in Ireland and abroad, and is used to assess homelessness every three years. Through it information on every person in touch with a homeless service and/or registered as homeless with a local authority, is collected over the course of a week. Its main value is in its repetition over time and the establishment of trends in homelessness, which will help to assess the impact of policies and services and inform their planning. Two assessments have been completed by the Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of the Homeless Agency, in 1999 (Williams and O'Connor) and 2002 (Williams and Gorbey).

The results of these assessments show that the numbers of households fell slightly from 2,690 (2,900 individuals) to 2,560 (2,920 individuals). However, one issue to emerge from these assessments is the unreliability of some administrative data as a measure of homelessness. In each assessment, the majority of people sleeping rough or staying in emergency accommodation was not registered with a local authority. Conversely the majority of those registered as homeless were not found in emergency accommodation or using other services.

Ignoring the households registered as homeless but not using services, the results indicate an increase of homeless households, from 1,290 to 1,470. This increase was comprised entirely of families and couples, although single people continued to be the majority, accounting for 80% of households. There is nothing to indicate why there should have been an increase in families and couples with no matching increase among single people.

Overall, the results of the 2002 assessment were better than expected and seem to indicate a tapering off in the relatively sharp increase in demand for services that was experienced in 2000 and 2001. Current information from service providers indicates a downward trend in the number of couples and families presenting.

The numbers of people sleeping rough also appear to be falling. One night street counts in 2002 and 2003 reported a decrease and services now estimate numbers to be below one hundred. It seems likely that this decrease is due to improved services generally and to the provision of new accommodation over the last three years, specifically targeting rough sleepers.

Understanding Homelessness

Information on the individuals and families who become homeless has steadily improved over the last number of years, and there is now a substantial body of research. It is clear from this research that there are a number of characteristics shared by people who become homeless and these were identified and discussed in *Shaping the Future* (p 8). In summary, homelessness is caused by a combination of structural (i.e. social policy, housing) and personal (i.e. disability, behaviour, family crisis) factors and people are most at risk of homelessness where poverty and personal crisis occurs.

Despite the increase in families and couples in 2002, the majority of homeless people continue to be single people, most of them men and there is a clear link between this and the lack of available housing options for them. The majority of people who become homeless have very few needs, beyond that for assistance with finding and settling into appropriate housing. Many others have disabilities, either mental health, intellectual or drug and/or alcohol dependencies. Services estimate that between 30% and 40% of homeless people have mental ill health, with similar numbers suffering drug or alcohol dependence.

Regardless of their needs, issues and capabilities, people can become institutionalised into homelessness within a matter of weeks, either becoming engaged in chaotic behaviour or becoming dependent and unmotivated to move on. A small number of people can be described as being entrenched homeless. These are often rough sleepers, heavy drinkers, periodically hospitalised or imprisoned, many of whom have experience of institutional child care. The table overleaf, which has been adapted from the *Austin/Travis County Continuum of Care System* demonstrates the various stages of homelessness and appropriate responses.

Services for people who are homeless

Arising from the implementation of the last action plan, a number of improvements have been made to services for people who are homeless in Dublin. The quality of most services has been improved, both in terms of the physical environment and the range of interventions available. The central Homeless Persons Unit, which was notoriously unattractive and problematic for both service users and service providers, has been relocated, into two purpose built centres and services are also provided on an outreach basis. Some responses have been developed in areas outside the city, particularly in Dun Laoghaire.

Special health, education, training and employment initiatives have been developed. Health, education and welfare services are provided on site in a number of hostels and day centres, and a special alcohol detox centre has been opened, all providing ease of access to treatment and other services that previously were unattainable to homeless people. Services for people who sleep rough have been developed: through the expansion of street outreach services and the provision of a night bus; the extension of three day services available 7x12; the availability of 'low threshold' accommodation targeting their needs, in some of which drinking is allowed on site.

At the end of 2003 there were over 80 different projects specifically for homeless people in Dublin, the majority of them in the Dublin city area. Almost 800 people were

PRESSURES TOWARD HOMELESSNESS	LEVEL OF HOMELESSNESS	APPROPRIATE RESPONSES OUT OF HOMELESSNESS
Community pressures ■ Lack of jobs ■ Low wages ■ Lack of affordable housing ■ Violence	At risk of becoming homeless	■ Job skills training ■ Diversified economy ■ Diversified housing stock ■ Safe neighbourhoods policies ■ Outcomes monitoring ■ Substance abuse interventions ■ Early interventions ■ Emergency assistance ■ Legal aid ■ Landlord/tenant mediation
Changes in social situation ■ Eviction ■ Discharge from an institution ■ Loss of job ■ Separation, divorce or domestic violence ■ Removal of welfare supports	Newly homeless	■ Early outreach and engagement ■ Emergency assistance ■ Transition services ■ Job placement services ■ Mental health and family support services ■ Substance abuse interventions
Culture of homelessness, Type I ■ Loss of social ties ■ Dysfunction ■ Victimisation ■ Substance abuse	Vulnerable to remaining in a homeless situation	■ Case and care management ■ Mental health outreach ■ Shelter and supportive housing ■ Health outreach and residential treatment for substance abuse
Culture of homelessness, Type II ■ Street affiliations ■ Substance abuse ■ Disinterest in work ■ Involvement in crime	Outsider or disenfranchised from services; marginalised	■ Peer education approaches for health and safety outreach ■ Treatment for substance abuse ■ Health, mental health, and social outreach ■ Enterprising employment opportunities ■ Alternative shelter and safe haven
Entrenchment ■ Social isolation ■ Dysfunction ■ Substance abuse	Prolonged	■ Health, mental health, and social outreach ■ Treatment for substance abuse ■ Alternative shelter and supportive housing

employed full time in services, with fewer than 40 employed on a part time basis. Scheme workers funded through FÁS account for 45 staff members. This is in contrast to 1997 when fewer than 500 people were employed on a full time basis, almost the same number were volunteers and FÁS accounted for almost 200 (McKeown, Haaze, 1997). There is an obvious change in the profile and experience of workers in the sector, with an increased number of people having relevant qualifications and experience, particularly from outside Ireland.

The increased supply and quality of services reflects the increased resources into the sector. The cost of services in 2003 was approximately €60,000,000. Direct comparisons with previous years are difficult due to differences in budget heads and other information, but an indicator of the increase is available in figures for funding to voluntary bodies, up from €8,000,000 in 2000 to over €24,000,000 in 2003. Responsibility for funding is shared jointly by local authorities and health boards.

Outstanding Challenges

The implementation of the last action plan can be seen to have been effective, particularly in addressing gaps in emergency accommodation, targeting rough sleepers, improving the quality of services generally and in developing more interagency working. However a number of problems remain. Responses are still focused on addressing emergency needs; they are still overly centralised, with limited development of local services; and insufficient attention has been paid to providing for the housing needs of single people who are homeless; to the development of policy and service responses which will prevent people from becoming homeless and to the development of mechanisms to measure their effectiveness. It is these challenges which *Making it Home* is designed to address, through continued partnership working.



section one

Vision and key strategic aims

Introduction

This section sets out the long term vision for homelessness in Dublin – that it will be eliminated by 2010. It also lists a set of values and principles that underpin the plan and are designed to inform the way in which the plan is implemented. These will also be taken into account in evaluating its implementation. Key strategic aims and performance indicators against which the plan will be measured are also included.

Factors contributing to or affecting homelessness are wide ranging and not all within the control of members of the Homeless Agency. To take account of these factors a number of key assumptions are listed, on which the plan has been based. Change in any of these will affect the capacity of relevant agencies to implement the plan.

Vision

By 2010, long term homelessness and the need for people to sleep rough will be eliminated in Dublin. The risk of a person or family becoming homeless will be minimal due to effective preventative policies and services. Where it does occur, homelessness will be short term and all people who are homeless will be assisted into appropriate housing and the realisation of their full potential and rights as citizens.

Values and Principles

As for the previous plan, a number of values and principles have informed the development of this plan and will underpin its implementation:

- homelessness is solvable and preventable
- homelessness is caused by a range of social and economic factors
- the development of policies and services to prevent people from becoming homeless is as important as responses to people once they become homeless
- the key to tackling homelessness is an adequate supply of appropriate housing and social support services
- every person and family is entitled to a place they can call home with support, as necessary, to enable them to maximise their independence and achieve their full potential

- people who are homeless are entitled to services which are seamless, integrated and of the highest quality
- the purpose of services for people who are homeless is to promote independence and provide support and advocacy to help people out of homelessness
- each person is unique and has the right to be involved in decisions that affect them
- the views, experience and expertise of homeless service users and front line providers will be used to inform the planning and development of responses to people who are homeless

Key Assumptions

This action plan has been based on the assumption that the following will hold good through out the course of the implementation of the plan:

- that the government commitment to tackle homelessness will be supported by the necessary changes in its own policy, structure and practice and in the operation of mainstream services
- that government will allocate the funding and other resources necessary to implement changes in this plan
- that sufficient government resources will be available for additional social housing
- that there will be no unforeseen increase in pressure on rented housing or in the numbers of people becoming homeless
- that the bodies responsible for measures in the action plan will implement them in accordance with the time targets, values and principles set out in the plan
- that the Board of the Agency is effective in driving the implementation of the plan

Main Strategic Aims

- reduce the number of households who become homeless
- increase housing options for single people who are homeless
- ensure that services are effective in addressing the needs of people who become homeless
- ensure that each local area develops effective responses to homelessness
- improve information available on homelessness and responses to it
- provide effective leadership and coordination in the implementation of the plan

Key Performance Indicators

- Trends in the number of newly homeless households
- Trends in the number of homeless households
- Trends in the average length of time homeless
- Trends in the number of people settled successfully out of homelessness
- Trends in the number of people sleeping rough
- Trends in the health and well being of people homeless
- Trends in the satisfaction level of people who are homeless with service for them
- Satisfaction level of stakeholders with the leadership and coordination of the Homeless Agency



section two

Prevention and intervention

Introduction

The vision for homelessness in Dublin is that it will be eliminated by 2010. The first action plan laid the ground for the achievement of this goal. This second plan, *Making it Home*, is largely concerned with consolidating progress to date and accelerating action in the key areas of prevention and intervention.

There is clear agreement now within the homeless sector that temporary accommodation does not address homelessness and effort must be concentrated on developing strategies that will prevent people from becoming homeless and improving interventions with anyone who does become homeless, so that services address their needs and focus on assisting them quickly out of homelessness.

Prevention and intervention are intrinsically linked and are dealt with together in this section. Measures to prevent homelessness include changes in policy, mainstream service provision and the provision of housing. Interventions for people once they are homeless aim to address holistically the, often complex, needs of people who are homeless and ensure that they are assisted into appropriate long term housing. The measures in this section are applicable to the whole Dublin region. Section three contains specific measures for each local authority area, which will support the development of community based interventions and preventative strategies.

Strategic Aim

To reduce the number of households becoming homeless

Rationale

Preventing homelessness is a key element of the government strategy on homelessness and a separate Homeless Preventative Strategy was published in 2002. The main focus of this strategy is the prevention of homelessness among people leaving hospital and state care, including places of detention and child care, through the implementation of planned discharge procedures and other measures.

It is clear that the preventative strategy is having little impact and people leaving institutions continue to account for a proportion of new presentations each year. Some institutions have made an effort to embed the strategy and cannot be held entirely responsible for its lack of impact. Homeless accommodation is readily available and accessible – alternative accommodation is not – and until it is, the current strategy cannot be effective.

While discharge from institutions is a contributory cause of homelessness, it is but one small part. To be effective, a strategy to prevent homelessness must address all the factors that cause or contribute to people becoming homeless or remaining homeless. These are now well known and understood, are related to poverty and weak family and other support systems and are evident early in life. It falls to mainstream policies and service providers to make early and effective interventions before a crisis such as homelessness arises.

Providing lasting solutions will require strengthening the capacity of mainstream services to address the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Mainstream services include community care, health, education, housing and social welfare. It will require an adequate supply of housing and a range of interventions, to identify groups at risk and plan to address their needs, on an individual basis, so that they do not become homeless. This demands improved inter agency working and policy change, informed by local experience, where the real issues are best known and understood and a more robust assessment of mainstream interventions, for which homelessness should be regarded as an unacceptable outcome.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 2.1 Prepare comprehensive preventative strategy for Dublin

The strategy will be comprehensive and holistic, addressing the policy and other factors causing or contributing to people becoming homeless or remaining homeless. In particular, the strategy will contain measures to address comprehensively the housing, care, support and other needs of people who are potentially at risk of homelessness.

Risk groups include a range of households, particularly single people, whose housing needs will not be met by the market. These include people who are dependent on social welfare, have few job skills and low income earning capacity, suffer disabilities, including mental illness, intellectual disabilities, and alcohol or drug dependency and people who are living in institutions.

Action 2.1.1 Complete strategy by March 2005

The Homeless Agency, in partnership with relevant central and local government and non government agencies, services and initiatives to complete a five year strategy by March 2005.

The strategy will include plans for specified local areas. These plans will include measures to minimise the risk of homelessness, through the identification of households at risk, and coordinated multi agency early interventions based on a case and care management approach. The strategy will also contain proposals for its implementation and review.

While the strategy will provide a clear framework for preventing homelessness in the long term, a number of more immediate actions will be taken to reduce the number of people becoming homeless and are contained in the remainder of this section.

Objective 2.2 Prevent unplanned discharge from institutions

Action 2.2.1 Implement agreed procedures

Health boards, the Irish Prison Service and the Probation and Welfare Services will ensure that a through care policy is implemented for people in their care so that there is a planned process of preparation and follow up for each person for discharge and that from January 2006, no one is discharged into homelessness or homeless services, except in exceptional circumstances.

Action 2.2.2 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency will monitor the numbers of people becoming homeless from institutions, throughout the course of the plan.

Objective 2.3 Homeless Proof Policies

Action 2.3.1 Work with Office of Social Inclusion

The Homeless Agency will work with the Office of Social Inclusion, throughout the course of the action plan, to ensure that in the further development and application of the poverty proofing of Government policies, specific account will be taken of their impact on homelessness.

Action 2.3.2 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency will monitor the impact of Government policies on homelessness, throughout the course of the plan.

Objective 2.4 Improve awareness and information on homelessness

Action 2.4.1 Devise an information programme for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by March 2005

The Homeless Agency, in partnership with Comhairle¹, to devise a programme of information for people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, on their rights, entitlements and services available to them. The programme will seek to ensure that people take early action and can make informed choices about options available to them.

Action 2.4.2 Implement, review and plan

The information programme to be implemented from September 2005 and reviewed, with recommendations for its future development, by September 2006, by the Homeless Agency.

Action 2.4.3 Devise a communication strategy to improve awareness of homelessness and responses to it by December 2004

Policy makers and the public in general have limited understanding of homelessness, how it is caused and what will solve it. This is exacerbated by

¹ *Comhairle is the national agency responsible for the provision of information, advice and advocacy to members of the public on social and civil services.*

media coverage, which tends to focus on personal stories and problems, rather than analysis or solutions. In this context it is difficult to generate support for the measures necessary to solve and prevent homelessness.

The Homeless Agency will agree a communication strategy by December 2004 for immediate implementation.

Action 2.4.4 Implement, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to implement the communication strategy from March 2005 and complete a review, with recommendations for its future implementation, by September 2006.

Objective 2.5 Build capacity of mainstream services

Action 2.5.1 Devise programme to build capacity of services to address homelessness by March 2005

In consultation with relevant mainstream bodies, training agencies and homeless service providers, the Homeless Agency will devise a programme of information, support and training for mainstream service providers to improve their understanding of homelessness, its causes, solutions and services available.

The programme will aim to enhance the capacity of all services to deal with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, so that early interventions are made. Mainstream service providers include housing, education, social welfare, advice and information services, health and social care services and the Garda Síochána. The programme will focus on the development of modules for inclusion in existing professional training both 'on the job' and in pre employment training, rather than creating a new programme.

Action 2.5.2 Implement, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to ensure the implementation of the programme from September 2005 and complete review, with recommendations for its future development, by September 2006.

Strategic Aim

Increase housing options for single people who are homeless

Rationale

Housing, not beds

Successfully tackling homelessness is dependent on there being an adequate supply of appropriate housing. While the last plan was effective in ensuring an increased supply of temporary accommodation, measures to increase the supply of long term housing were not so successful. As a result, temporary accommodation has continued to be blocked with people who no longer have a need for it, but who cannot secure alternative housing. This situation applies particularly to single people who account for 80% of homeless households.

Social housing is geared to meeting the needs of families, and while they will generally be housed, in time, this is usually not an option for single people who are homeless, due to an insufficient supply. This situation leaves them reliant on the private

rented sector, where they experience difficulty competing, as they are almost always dependent on social welfare. The Access Housing Unit, which sources private tenancies for people who are homeless, was established in 2003 and is proving to be successful in securing housing for families, couples and single people.

Having people long term in temporary accommodation is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: it is inappropriate – residents are excluded from mainstream society; it fosters dependency and institutionalises people, so that they are not motivated to move; and it is very expensive. The current average cost, in monetary terms, of maintaining a person in temporary accommodation is about €20,000 per year. Added to this is the cost of providing special social welfare, health, treatment, food, education, training and other services to people in emergency accommodation. Other less tangible costs include the institutionalisation of people in homelessness and the consequent loss of self-esteem, status, well being and capacity to live independently.

The emphasis on the provision of temporary rather than long term accommodation has been exacerbated by government policy through which funding for support services is available for temporary accommodation, but not for long term housing, thereby encouraging the provision of temporary rather than long term housing.

Social housing through the private sector

Good quality social housing, with support services where necessary, is the solution to homelessness. However, current rates of social housing output by local authorities and housing associations, while increasing, will not be sufficient to cater for the needs of single people who are homeless or directly at risk of homelessness, in the short or medium term. For this reason, the plan provides for both long term and short term measures. In the long term the emphasis is on increasing the provision of social housing. In the short term, the intention is to increase the supply of local authority housing through the purchase or lease, from private owners, of existing self contained accommodation suitable for single person households.

Long term housing is generally made available to people who are homeless only after they have spent a period of time in temporary accommodation but it could be made available *instead* of temporary accommodation and people presenting as homeless could be placed directly into it. This approach would have the advantage of immediately settling people into ordinary housing in ordinary communities. It would prevent the potential of institutionalisation in homelessness, achieve significant social gain for the people involved and would be more cost efficient than temporary accommodation.

Housing supports

While housing is the key to solving homelessness it will not, by itself, prevent or solve it. There are a significant number of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who require ongoing or periodic support to enable them to live independently in the community. Provision is made in the plan for the establishment of a new tenancy sustainment service which will assist people to maintain tenancies and avail of mainstream services.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 2.6 Increase housing options for homeless single people

Single people account of 80% of homeless households and the expansion of housing options for them is crucial to both responding to and preventing homelessness.

Action 2.6.1 Ensure social housing plans reflect needs by September 2004

The four local authorities to ensure that their bids under the rolling Multi-Annual Bidding Programme for social housing output reflect the housing needs of all households in their areas and, in particular, those of single person households.

Action 2.6.2 Complete plan to source accommodation in private sector by December 2004

Local authorities, in conjunction with health boards, the Irish Prison Service, and the Probation and Welfare Service to complete a plan for the procurement of accommodation in the private sector, through leasing, purchasing and other arrangements, to meet the needs of single people who are homeless, leaving state care and places of detention and who are assessed as able to live independently or with limited support, available through tenancy sustainment services.

The plan will include details on the number of units necessary and the location of those units throughout Dublin, to ensure it is appropriate to needs and dispersed to avoid concentrations of particular types of households in any area. It will also detail arrangements for the procurement, management, coordination and allocation of accommodation, for the management of support to tenants and for its integration with local community services. The plan will also contain arrangements for the implementation of this plan and its review.

Action 2.6.3 Implement, review and plan

Proposals to be implemented and reviewed, according to provisions in the plan, with recommendations for its future operation to be completed by September 2006.

Objective 2.7 Provide housing instead of beds

With a sufficient supply of housing, it will be possible to place people who are homeless directly into rented accommodation, rather than making them spend time in temporary accommodation before they can be considered for move on housing. Where people require support, this can be provided on an outreach basis.

Action 2.7.1 Pilot the placement of people presenting as homeless directly into rented housing

Fifty newly homeless people will be selected on a random basis to be placed directly into rented housing, rather than emergency accommodation. This approach has a number of potential benefits, including the immediate integration of those households, and cost savings. Tenancies would be conditional on compliance with a support programme if necessary, provided on an outreach basis. The commencement of this pilot will be dependent on the outcome of action 2.6.2.

Action 2.7.2 Complete review and future plan of this model by December 2006

The pilot will be evaluated through the Homeless Agency, using a comparison of outcomes for people placed directly into rented accommodation, against a control group of a random sample of fifty people placed in temporary accommodation.

Objective 2.8 Improve access to private rented housing

Private rented accommodation is an important housing option for many people who become homeless, and particularly for single people. The Access Housing Unit has been successful in sourcing tenancies for people who are homeless since 2003.

Action 2.8.1 Extend the availability of the Access Housing Unit from September 2004

The Access Housing Unit will be continued and extended so that it is available to the Irish Prison Service, Probation and Welfare Service, hospitals and health boards. In this way tenancies will be available to people on discharge from these institutions, as an alternative to temporary homeless accommodation.

Action 2.8.2 Review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the extension of the Access Housing Unit and to complete a review, with recommendations for its future development, by September 2006.

Objective 2.9 Ensure housing support services available

Action 2.9.1 Devise funding scheme for support services to people in long term housing by September 2004

The Homeless Agency to work in partnership with relevant government departments to devise a scheme of funding for support services to people in long term housing, to be completed by September 2004.

Many people who become homeless or who are at risk of homelessness have support needs. They do not require institutional care but a flexible level of support, either on site or available on an outreach basis. Current government funding is not available for support services to people in long term housing but is available for temporary accommodation for homeless people. This encourages the provision of emergency and transitional accommodation, rather than long term housing. The implementation of this scheme will be decided by the government departments.

Action 2.9.2 Agree proposals for Tenancy Sustainment Service by September 2004

The Homeless Agency agree proposals for a tenancy sustainment service by September 2004 to be implemented immediately. This is a new service, providing support as necessary to any household moving from homelessness, throughout the region on an outreach basis, to enable them to sustain tenancies and avail of community based services.

Action 2.9.3 Implement, monitor and review

Implement Tenancy Sustainment Service in accordance with agreed proposals. The Homeless Agency to monitor implementation and make recommendations on its future by December 2006.

Strategic Aim

Ensure that services are effective in addressing the needs of people who become homeless

Rationale

Service Interventions

Implementation of the last action plan has resulted in many positive changes in the delivery of services to people who are homeless. New services addressing previously unmet needs have been put in place and the quality of services generally has improved. Health, education and training services are available in a number of hostels and day centres and there have been significant improvements in the coordination of services and in interagency working, including the development of a database of service users, facilitating the sharing of information among designated agencies.

Despite these improvements, some problems persist. The homeless sector continues to operate as a set of individual organisations, rather than as a unified system and many people who are homeless have contact with a number of unconnected services. Too few services are active in assisting people to move out of homelessness and the multiple and complex needs of some people who are homeless go unmet because those needs do not fit neatly with the range of services available. Addressing these problems requires a shift in emphasis, away from making people fit into the services available, towards making services appropriate to the needs of their users.

This can be achieved through the further development and implementation of the continuum of care approach to service delivery. This approach, which is detailed in *Shaping the Future* (p17), is based on a case and care management system, which aims to meet needs through holistic assessment and care planning and implementation. In the context of homelessness it is focused particularly on people with multiple and complex needs and on assisting them out of homelessness and into long term housing. Implicit in the model are the application of good practice standards and outcome measures.

Temporary accommodation interventions

It is agreed that there is a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation in the city centre and it is not intended to add to it over the course of this plan, although additional accommodation maybe provided in areas outside the city.

There have been many improvements in the quality of temporary accommodation in the last number of years, in the quality of interventions in that accommodation and in its fit to the needs of people who become homeless. However a small number of people continue to sleep rough either because they do not like the accommodation available or, through their challenging behaviour, are regularly excluded from it. Much more must be done to ensure that accommodation is appropriate to needs and that no one has to sleep rough due to the lack of appropriate accommodation. This will require changes in the type of accommodation provided and changes in the way that staff in accommodation manage and intervene with residents.

Objective 2.10 Improve interventions for people who are homeless

While putting in place interventions which will ultimately prevent people from becoming homeless, it is also necessary to focus on improving interventions once people have become homeless – to reduce the length of time they spend homeless, ensure that their needs are addressed and to assist them quickly into long term housing.

Action 2.10.1 By December 2004 homeless services to adopt proposals for a model of care and case management and its phased implementation across the sector

Given the complex nature of homelessness, interventions can only be effective if they are focused on addressing needs, rather than on expecting people to fit into the services available. The continuum of care model provides such an approach, and was set out in some detail in *Shaping the Future*. This approach requires that services:

- support the person to move speedily to settlement
- be centred on the needs of the person who is homeless
- be holistic: concerned with all the needs of people who are homeless
- be integrated and seamless to the person who is homeless
- be easy to access locally and available at appropriate times
- be based on the development of existing services
- be based on outreach, bringing services to people
- be efficient: avoiding duplication of effort, activities and expertise
- be effective: responding to the complex needs of people who are homeless
- operate to agreed standards and outcomes

While much progress has been made in developing this approach, much more needs to be achieved before it is fully embedded. Action during this plan period will focus on finalising a model of care and case management and on making services locally accessible.

Care management is distinct from case management in that it provides for the sector wide planning and coordination of case management, for its monitoring and evaluation and for ‘troubleshooting’ where there are blocks in the system. Case management by comparison relates to the assessment and care planning for individuals, in the context of a multi disciplinary/agency approach.

Both must be distinguished from ‘key working’ as currently practised within the homeless sector. While key working is a form of case management, it is apparent that a homeless person can have a number of key workers, indicating that this approach organises responses within agencies, rather than providing a sector wide, integrated response.

The case and care management model of intervention is necessary in the case of individuals or families who have complex and multiple needs and it is not envisaged that it will be necessary for all people who are homeless. Implicit in the model are the application of quality standards and the development of mechanisms to assess interventions and outcomes.

Proposals will be prepared by the Homeless Agency in consultation with service providers. The proposals will include arrangements for the implementation and review of the model and the development of a set of outcome measures for the sector.

Objective 2.11 To reduce the number of people sleeping rough to below 50 through the improvement of interventions and coordination

The targeting of rough sleepers and provision of specific accommodation for them in the last action plan resulted in a reduction in numbers. This does not mean that rough sleeping has been dealt with. New people will continue to end up on the street, and services must be there to deal with them.

Action 2.11.1 Improve coordination and early interventions

The Homeless Agency to agree arrangements for improved coordination of responses to people sleeping rough, by September 2004. The aim of the arrangements will be to ensure an adequate supply of appropriate accommodation, to enhance inter agency work between street outreach services and accommodation and other service providers and to improve links with gardai, park keepers and members of the public to identify rough sleepers, and to engage with people who sleep rough to assist them into accommodation, within a matter of days. In areas outside of the city, it is the intention that responses will be made by existing local services with support from specialist homeless services as necessary.

Action 2.11.2 Plan to meet needs of long term rough sleepers

In addition to the new people likely to come on to the streets, there are a number of people who can be described as entrenched homeless, who have spent long periods of time on the street, in care and in prison. The reduction in the overall number of street sleepers presents an opportunity for street teams to engage with these intensively to develop appropriate and innovative responses to their needs, using the case and care management approach.

A pilot project, targeting a number of long term rough sleepers and seeking to develop appropriate and multi agency responses, is underway and an evaluation will be completed by December 2004 which will inform the development of future action.

Action 2.11.3 Complete review of temporary accommodation by December 2004

The Homeless Agency, in conjunction with providers and funding bodies to complete a review of temporary accommodation and to make recommendations on its future by December 2004.

Measures in *Shaping the Future* were successful in increasing the supply of temporary accommodation and there is now more than an adequate supply in the city centre, to the extent that the number of units provided through the private sector has been reduced in the last two years.

This situation affords an opportunity to concentrate on addressing some of the problems in the current operation of temporary accommodation – emergency and transitional – and to ensure that accommodation responses are rational and related to actual needs. Some accommodation projects refuse to accept the most needy or challenging people, and it is these who become or remain as rough sleepers. In going forward, it will be necessary to ensure that all temporary accommodation is low threshold, meeting the needs of people who are homeless. This includes people with alcohol and drug dependencies, chaotic behaviour and mental health problems.

Objective 2.12 Complete a programme of settlement for people who are long term in hostels

There are an estimated 350 or so people who have lived in hostel accommodation for five years or more. Most of this accommodation is not suitable for long term living. Many of these residents are now either elderly, suffering ill health or are institutionalised and it is not expected that they will be able to move to independent housing but will need some form of supported housing or nursing care.

This objective is one which has been carried forward from the last action plan, and a joint approach to addressing the housing and care needs of residents will be undertaken by Dublin City Council, the South Western Area and the Northern Area Health Boards. Given the significance of their health and care needs, a programme of assessment to inform the settlement programme will be led by the relevant health board.

Action 2.12.1 Relevant health boards to complete proposals for assessment of needs by September 2004

The relevant health boards will complete proposals for the assessment of the health and social care needs of people long term in hostels.

Action 2.12.2 Settlement programme to be agreed between health boards and local authorities by March 2005

Based on the health board proposals, agreement to be reached on a settlement programme between the relevant health board and local authority.

Action 2.12.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency will monitor the implementation of the settlement programme and complete proposal for future action by September 2006.

Objective 2.13 Continue, improve and review health and education initiatives for families and individuals who are homeless

Action 2.13.1 Continue health initiatives

A number of special primary care health initiatives have been developed over the last three years, bringing services to homeless people who cannot access mainstream services. These include GP, nurse, chiropody, dental, psychiatric, alcohol detox and multi disciplinary teams aimed at linking people to mainstream services.

It is intended to continue these over the course of the plan and to develop further responses to people with mental health and addiction, families and children and those who are elderly or have chronic health ailments.

Action 2.13.2 Monitor, review and complete plan for future by June 2006

While these initiatives are delivered locally, it is important that they are coordinated and monitored centrally, to ensure sharing of experiences and learning. The ERHA will coordinate and monitor these initiatives, providing quarterly reports on activities and outcomes and proposals for the future.

Action 2.13.3 Continue special education, training and work initiatives

The CDVEC has developed and implemented special programmes for people who are homeless over the last three years, and has supported homeless people into mainstream programmes. FÁS has begun to develop strategies to proactively address the training needs of people who are homeless. Business in the Community has piloted its Ready for Work programme, which has resulted in a number of people completing work-training programmes.

It is intended to continue and expand each of these programmes, to ensure that access to such programmes is available in areas outside the city centre and that barriers to taking up work or training opportunities are addressed.

Action 2.13.4 Monitor, review and complete plan for future by June 2006

These initiatives will be coordinated centrally, through the Homeless Agency, with quarterly monitoring reports from Business in the Community, FÁS and the CDVEC. Each agency will make proposals for the future of these initiatives by June 2006.

Action 2.13.5 Complete plan to provide for the education, health, welfare and developmental needs of children of families in temporary accommodation by September 2005.

The profile of homelessness in the city has changed over the last four or five years, and there are now between two and three hundred children of families who are in temporary accommodation at any one time. There are many concerns about the inadequacy of general health and education services available to those children.

While in the medium to long term the aim is to prevent families from being homeless, in the meantime services must be developed to address needs. A pilot project is underway in one area of Dublin aimed at assessing and meeting the needs of families in temporary accommodation based on a multi agency, case management approach and this will inform the plan. The plan will be completed by the Homeless Agency, in conjunction with health and education services by December 2004.

Objective 2.14 Continue day services and review their role in responding to and preventing homelessness

Action 2.14.1 Continue current range of day and food services

There are 17 day centres in Dublin providing a range of services for people who are homeless and these will be continued, pending the outcome of any planned reviews.

Action 2.14.2 Complete review of extended day centres by September 2004

There has been some extension of the availability of day centres over the last three years, and three services are available on a 12x7 basis. The effectiveness of these services will be reviewed with a view to informing a plan for the future supply of day centres.

Action 2.14.3 Complete review of the role of food centres by March 2005

There are 13 food centres in Dublin city. While most of these provide an important support for people who are homeless, it is likely that they also provide an similar support to people in housing, thereby helping to prevent

homelessness. The Homeless Agency will commission a review of food centres, to be completed by March 2005 and to inform the future organisation, purpose and funding of food centres.

Action 2.14.4 Complete plan for future of food and day centres by September 2006

The Homeless Agency to complete a plan for the future of food and day centres by September 2006.

Objective 2.15 Establish new structure or systems to manage and support the delivery of services throughout Dublin

At the core of this plan is the delivery of services in local areas, where and when need arises and the following section provides for specific action in each local authority area. For these services to be effective and efficient, it will be necessary for a central structure or system to be established or developed, which would provide information, support and coordination and monitor and measure responses. Some of these functions are currently carried out by different bodies including the Homeless Person's Unit, the Eastern Region Health Authority, Dublin City Council and the Homeless Agency.

In developing a support and monitoring structure the intention is to build on existing resources and initiatives where possible, whether in the homeless sector or local communities.

Action 2.15.1 Prepare proposals for agreement by December 2004

In consultation with stakeholders and taking into account existing local services, structures and related initiatives (such as social inclusion, drugs task forces, family support services) the Homeless Agency will prepare proposals for a new structure, by December 2004.

Action 2.15.2 Implement from September 2005

It is intended that the new structure, or operating procedures, would be in place from September 2005 and will oversee and support the development of services and preventative strategies in those areas identified in the following section.



section three

Local area action

Introduction

This section continues the theme of prevention and intervention focusing on specific measures for each local authority area, emphasising the critical importance of community responses. The development of responses in local areas outside of Dublin city was a priority objective in the last plan and some progress was made: new services have been or are in the process of development; local homeless forums are functioning, bringing improvements in interagency working and service planning.

However, further development is necessary to ensure adequate responses are available to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, in their local communities. Measures are intended to develop interventions which will prevent homelessness and which will respond where and when homelessness occurs. They will build on and integrate with existing local services and initiatives and will be provided by mainstream, not specialist homeless services.

While local authorities are the lead agencies in tackling homelessness, responses will be multi agency and will involve health boards and other relevant statutory bodies as well as local community and voluntary bodies, aiming to build on existing services and initiatives rather than creating new ones.

Strategic Aim

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Ensure that each local area develops effective responses to homelessness

Rationale

The development of responses outside of the city centre was a priority for the last action plan and some progress has been made in establishing services in other local authority areas. The last official assessment of homelessness shows a drop of 15% in the number of people homeless in the city centre (Williams and Gorby, 2002). Notwithstanding this improvement, the majority of people who are homeless continue to be in the city area.

It is inevitable that a city centre will have higher levels of homelessness than suburban or rural areas but the situation in Dublin is exacerbated by the organisation of services, which is highly centralised.

Almost all services are in the city centre and anyone homeless, in any part of Dublin, must present personally to the central Homeless Persons Unit to access emergency accommodation and other services. This situation is clearly detrimental to the well being of people who are homeless. It also militates against the development of local responses in areas where the problem is not visible.

The importance of local responses in tackling homelessness cannot be overstated. Evidence clearly indicates that the majority of people who become homeless are from a small number of geographic areas in the region, all areas of high deprivation. At the point where people are imminently at risk of homelessness, local and early interventions are the most effective way of preventing them from becoming homeless.

Accessible, effective information, combined with advice and advocacy services can prevent homelessness by assisting people imminently at risk to be aware of their options, and by mediating with families or landlords. Where these interventions fail, then placement in accommodation in the local area is preferable to referral to city centre services, where people can become quickly institutionalised into a homeless lifestyle. While it will be necessary to have emergency accommodation available in local areas, the emphasis will be on using existing accommodation, in the form of ordinary housing, rather than building facilities such as hostels and other temporary accommodation.



Local area action

Dublin City

Over 80% of people who are homeless in Dublin are in the city council area, as this is where most of the services are located. Of the people who become homeless in any one year, it is estimated that only 47% are from the city area, with the remainder coming from other parts of the county, country and abroad.

Dublin City Council has a dedicated Homeless Services Section, which is responsible for the management of its services to people who are homeless. The council provides a range of services including temporary accommodation, settlement services to people staying in emergency accommodation and a bus, which provides a night time outreach service to people on the street, linking them to available accommodation. In addition, the council sources and manages accommodation in the private sector on behalf of the four local authorities, handling contracts with owners and carrying out regular inspection and monitoring of properties.

Dublin City Council is divided into five functional areas where services are planned and organised locally. Homeless services are organised centrally and over the course of the plan it is intended to reorganise the planning and delivery of homeless services so that they become an integral part of the local area functions. This will make them more rational and will ensure that they become part of local mainstream services, integrated with other initiatives aimed at tackling social exclusion and disadvantage. At the same time, it will be necessary to ensure that they are coordinated and supported centrally, and this is provided for under Objective 2.15.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 3.1 Ensure the establishment and effective operation of homeless forums in each of the five Dublin City Council areas

The homeless forums will comprise relevant statutory and voluntary bodies and will meet regularly in order to improve understanding, information and responses to the needs of people homeless, or at risk of homelessness in each area and to input into the development of policy and other developments in relation to homelessness generally.

Action 3.1.1 Ensure establishment of forums by December 2004

The Homeless Agency will work with City Council Area Managers and other relevant local bodies to ensure that forums are established in each area by December 2004. Forum meetings will be held at least every quarter.

Action 3.1.2 Provide support and information to forums

Information, support and other resources will be provided to the forums by the Homeless Agency over the course of the plan, as necessary. The Agency will also ensure that the forums input into the development of the preventative strategy, model of care and case management, and the development of overall coordination.

Action 3.1.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the effectiveness of the City Council forums, and the satisfaction of their members with the support provided by the Agency, over the course of the plan. The Agency will complete a review of the operation of the forums and their future, in conjunction with members, by September 2006.

Objective 3.2 Dublin City Council to ensure the provision of information, advice, advocacy, referral and placement services in each of the five areas from June 2005

The establishment of these services has been identified as key in both preventing homelessness, by exploring alternatives, and avoiding long term homelessness, by intervening early. These services may be provided by Dublin City Council, or by voluntary or other statutory bodies on behalf of the council but will be based on the extension of existing services, rather than the establishment of new ones.

Action 3.2.1 Finalise plan for new services by December 2004

Dublin City Council will complete a plan for the establishment and implementation of the new services by December 2004. The plan will be drawn up in conjunction with the Homeless Agency and in consultation with other stakeholders and as part of the plan for new structures for the effective delivery of homeless services provided for under Objective 2.15.

Action 3.2.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency will monitor the implementation of the new services and complete a review of their operation and future role by September 2006.

Objective 3.3 Continue to prioritise the housing of homeless households

Dublin City Council has a policy of allocating one in three of its vacancies to a homeless household, and one in five one bedroom lettings to homeless single people. This practice will be continued throughout the course of the action plan and is expected to house an estimated 900 homeless households over the course of the plan.

Action 3.3.1 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency will monitor the allocation of tenancies to homeless households on a quarterly basis, against the target.

Objective 3.4 Address health and welfare needs of people homeless

The Northern Area and South Western Area Health Boards to develop community care area based multi disciplinary committees to ensure responsive services to homeless people in local areas. A special multi disciplinary, psychiatric outreach team, led by a consultant, will also be established to ensure follow up support and links with appropriate services for people following discharge from hospital.

Action 3.4.1 Health boards to complete plans for area committees by December 2004

The two health boards to complete plans for these services by December 2004, in conjunction with the Homeless Agency and other relevant bodies.

Action 3.4.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of these services through quarterly reports from the health boards, and to complete a review of them, together with a plan for the future delivery of services, by September 2006.

Local area action

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown

Over the course of the last action plan, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council developed a range of responses to the needs of homeless people in their area. A Homeless Coordinator was appointed in June 2001 and a Homeless Forum was established shortly afterwards. The Coordinator is responsible for the development and implementation of responses to people who are homeless in the area, including leading the Forum. The Forum meets on a regular basis, bringing together representatives of relevant statutory and voluntary bodies to improve communication, information and coordination and to develop responses to homelessness.

A night shelter with 22 beds was opened in December 2000, targeting a group of men and women sleeping rough in the town. Funded jointly by the council and the East Coast Area Health Board and managed by Crosscare, the shelter has been successful in

bringing people in off the streets and in supporting a number of them to move on into long term housing. An outreach worker and settlement worker, employed by the council, operate in conjunction with staff in the shelter to link residents to appropriate accommodation and other services.

For reasons beyond the control of the council, the shelter can only open at night time. In order to provide a place for residents during the day and to complement interventions in the shelter, a day centre was opened in November 2003. Operating in conjunction with CARE, a voluntary body, which has provided food in the area for some time, the centre provides meals and snacks. In addition, a GP clinic operates from the centre, and an art class, organised by the local VEC is available each week.

Linked to these services, the East Coast Area Health Board has developed a special assertive mental health team service, in conjunction with Cluan Mhuire. Through this service, assessment, treatment and detox is available to residents of the shelter, on an inpatient and outreach basis, in the shelter and day centre.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 3.5 Ensure continued and effective operation of the Homeless Forum

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council will continue to lead and facilitate the local Homeless Forum. The forum has been in existence since 2001 and meets regularly with a view to improving understanding, information and responses to the needs of people homeless in the Dun Laoghaire area.

The forum will directly inform the development of the preventative strategy, the development and implementation of the model of care and case management in the area and the development of a coordinating structure.

Action 3.5.1 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to hold quarterly forum meetings

The council to organise forum meetings, at least every quarter, to continue the general activities of the forum and ensure its input into the development of new structures and policies in the region.

Action 3.5.2 Provide support and information to Forum

The Homeless Agency will provide ongoing support, information and other resources to the forum over the course of the action plan to facilitate its effective operation.

Action 3.5.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the effectiveness of the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Forum, and its satisfaction with the support provided by the Agency, over the course of the plan. The Agency will complete a review of the operation of the Forum and its future, in conjunction with members, by September 2006.

Objective 3.6 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to ensure the provision of information, advice, advocacy, referral and placement services from June 2005

The establishment of these services has been identified as key in both preventing homelessness, by exploring other alternatives and by intervening early, thus avoiding long term homelessness. These services may be provided by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, or by voluntary or other statutory bodies on behalf of the council but will be based on the extension of existing services, rather than the establishment of new ones.

Action 3.6.1 Finalise plan for services by December 2004

A plan for the establishment and implementation of these services will be completed by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council by December 2004. The plan will be drawn up in conjunction with the Homeless Agency, in consultation with other stakeholders, and as part of the new structures for the effective delivery of homeless services provided for under Objective 2.15.

Action 3.6.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of the services and to complete a review of their operation and future role by September 2006.

Objective 3.7 Ensure housing list and allocation reflects the profile of homeless households in the area

Action 3.7.1 Continually review list

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to continually review its housing list to ensure that it reflects the needs of people who are homeless in and from the area.

Action 3.7.2 Ring fence lettings

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council to ensure that 10% of all lettings are made to households who are homeless. Lettings will reflect the geographic spread of vacancies, to avoid undue segregation.

Action 3.7.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency will monitor the allocation of tenancies to homeless households on a quarterly basis, against the target.

Objective 3.8 Continue and enhance current direct council services

Action 3.8.1 Continue current services

The county council to continue the provision of its shelter, day centre, outreach and settlement services.

Action 3.8.2 Monitor, review and plan

The council will continually review the operation of its direct services to ensure they address the needs of people homeless in the area effectively and efficiently and the Homeless Agency will complete an evaluation of each service by December 2006.

Objective 3.9 Continue and enhance special health service

Action 3.9.1 Continue and enhance services

The East Coast Area Health Board to ensure the continuation and development of its health services for people homeless.

Action 3.9.2 Monitor, review and plan

The health board will continually review the operation of its services to ensure they address the needs of people homeless in the area effectively and efficiently and the Homeless Agency will complete an evaluation of each service by December 2006.

Local area action

Fingal

Fingal County Council appointed a Homeless Coordinator in 2001, following which a Homeless Forum for the area was established. The Forum comprises representatives of relevant voluntary and statutory bodies which meets periodically.

The focus of council activities in relation to addressing the needs of households who are homeless has been on the development of an innovative model of transitional housing, in partnership with Sophia Housing Association. Under this model, the council provides housing, which is allocated to families who are homeless and who require transitional support. Sophia provides the support, on an outreach basis and when the support programme is satisfactorily completed, the family become full tenants of the council.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 3.10 Ensure effective operation of the Homeless Forum

Fingal County Council will continue to lead and facilitate the local Homeless Forum. The forum has been in existence since 2001 and comprises relevant statutory providers, including health, housing, drugs, gardai and voluntary bodies active in the area in the provision of homeless and related services. The forum meets regularly with a view to improving understanding, information and responses to the needs of people homeless in the Fingal area.

The forum will directly inform the development of the preventative strategy, the development and implementation of the model of care and case management in the area and the development of a new coordinating structure.

Action 3.10.1 Fingal County Council to hold regular forum meetings

The council to hold forum meetings at least every quarter to ensure continued improvement in coordination and input of the forum into the development of new structures, policies and the model of service delivery in the region.

Action 3.10.2 Provide support and information to forum

The Homeless Agency will provide ongoing support, information and other resources to the forum over the course of the action plan to facilitate the effective operation of the forum.

Action 3.10.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the effectiveness of the Fingal Forum, and its satisfaction with the support provided by the Agency, over the course of the plan. The Agency will complete a review of the operation of the forum and its future, in conjunction with members, by September 2006.

Objective 3.11 Provide information, advice, advocacy, referral and placement services in Blanchardstown from July 2005

The establishment of such a service has been identified as key in both preventing homelessness, by exploring alternatives, and avoiding long term homelessness through the provision of early interventions. Fingal County Council will provide this service.

Action 3.11.1 Finalise plan for services by December 2004

A plan for the establishment and implementation of these services will be completed by Fingal County Council by December 2004. The plan will be drawn up in conjunction with the Homeless Agency, in consultation with other stakeholders and as part of the new structures for the effective delivery of homeless services provided for under Objective 2.15.

Action 3.11.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of the services and to complete a review of their operation and future role by September 2006.

Objective 3.12 Provide 46 additional units of accommodation for homeless households by December 2006

Action 3.12.1 Complete women's refuge

Refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence to be provided by Sonas Housing Association on behalf of Fingal County Council and providing 8 units of accommodation.

Action 3.12.2 Provide 20 transitional housing units

These will be made available to Sophia Housing Association to families requiring a programme of transitional support, and will become long term tenancies following completion of the programme.

Action 3.12.3 Provide 18 units for people with mental health needs

Long term housing with support, to be provided by HAIL Housing Association.

Action 3.12.4 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency to monitor the provision of housing, against the targets.

Objective 3.13 Ensure housing list reflects the needs of people homeless

Action 3.13.1 Review housing list

Fingal County Council to continually review its housing list to ensure that it reflects the needs of people who are homeless in and from the area.

Action 3.13.2 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency to monitor the Fingal County Council list and allocations to homeless households.

Objective 3.14 Address health and welfare needs

The Northern Area Health Board to develop community care area based multi disciplinary area committees to ensure responsive services to homeless people in local areas.

Action 3.14.1 Complete plans for area committees by December 2004

The Northern Area Health Board to complete plans for these services by December 2004, in conjunction with the Homeless Agency and other relevant bodies.

Action 3.14.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of these services and to complete a review of them by September 2006.

Local area action

South Dublin

South Dublin County Council appointed a Homeless Coordinator in 2001. The Coordinator is responsible for the development of responses to homelessness in the area, including the facilitation of the local forum on homelessness, which was established in April 2002. The Forum brings together providers of housing, health and other relevant services from both the voluntary and statutory sector.

Over the course of the last action plan, South Dublin County Council delivered on a number of objectives including the provision of two transitional housing projects in Clondalkin, in partnership with voluntary housing associations. It also allocated 54 council tenancies to homeless households during this time.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 3.15 Ensure effective operation of the Homeless Forum

South Dublin County Council will continue to lead and facilitate the local homeless forum. The forum meets regularly with a view to improving understanding, information and responses to the needs of people homeless in the area.

The forum will directly inform the development of the preventative strategy provided for under Objective 2.1, and the development and implementation of the model of care and case management in the area.

Action 3.15.1 South Dublin County Council to hold regular forum meetings

The council to organise forum meetings, at least every quarter, to ensure continued improvement in coordination and input of the forum into the development of new structures and the model of service delivery.

Action 3.15.2 Provide support and information to forum

The Homeless Agency will provide ongoing support, information and other resources to the forum over the course of the action plan to facilitate the effective operation of the Forum.

Action 3.15.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the effectiveness of the South Dublin Forum, and its satisfaction with the support provided by the Agency, over the course of the plan. The Agency will complete a review of the operation of the Forum and its future, in conjunction with members, by September 2006.

Objective 3.16 Provide information, advice, advocacy, referral and placement services in Tallaght and Clondalkin from June 2005

The establishment of these services has been identified as key in both preventing homelessness and avoiding long term homelessness, by exploring alternatives and through the provision of early interventions. These services may be provided by the council or by voluntary or other statutory bodies on behalf of the local authority and should be based on the extension of existing services, rather than the establishment of new ones.

Action 3.16.1 Finalise plan for services by December 2004

A plan for the establishment and implementation of these services will be completed by South Dublin County Council by December 2004. The plan will be drawn up in conjunction with the Homeless Agency, in consultation with other stakeholders and as part of the new structures for the effective delivery of homeless services provided for under Objective 2.15.

Action 3.16.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of the services and to complete a review of their operation and future role by September 2006.

Objective 3.17 Provide and plan for additional units of accommodation for homeless households by December 2006

Action 3.17.1 Complete women's refuge

Refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence to be completed providing 6 units of accommodation.

Action 3.17.2 Provide 17 transitional housing units

These will be provided by voluntary housing associations.

Action 3.17.3 Provide emergency accommodation for rough sleepers

Appropriate accommodation will be provided for families and single people in the area

Action 3.17.4 Monitor and review

The Homeless Agency to monitor the provision of these units of accommodation, against the targets.

Objective 3.18 Ensure housing list and allocation reflects the profile of homeless households in the area

Action 3.18.1 Continually review list

South Dublin County Council to continually review its housing list to ensure that it reflects the needs of people who are homeless in and from the area.

Action 3.18.2 Ring fence lettings

South Dublin County Council to ensure that up to 10% of all lettings are made to households who are homeless. Lettings will reflect the geographic spread of vacancies, to avoid undue segregation.

Action 3.18.3 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency will monitor the allocation of tenancies to homeless households on a quarterly basis, against the targets.

Objective 3.19 Address health and welfare needs

The South Western Area health board to ensure the health and welfare needs of people homeless in South Dublin are met through mainstream services as far as possible, and through the development of special services where necessary.

Action 3.19.1 Complete plans for area by December 2004

The South Western Area Health Board to complete plans for how mainstream and special services will address the needs of homeless people in the area by December 2004, in conjunction with the Homeless Agency and other relevant bodies.

Action 3.19.2 Monitor, review and plan

The Homeless Agency to monitor the implementation of the planned services on an ongoing basis and to complete a review of them by September 2006.



section four

Addressing data deficits

Introduction

Accurate and timely information on the extent and nature of homelessness is crucial to understanding and developing effective responses to it. Data is also important to measure the impact of policy changes, service developments, and other factors on the scale and complexion of homelessness. While there have been improvements in the information available on homelessness in the last number of years, the experience has also pointed to a number of problems and deficits.

The periodic assessments of homelessness carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute on behalf of the Homeless Agency found inaccuracies in some of the data. The Homeless Agency developed a Balanced Scorecard in 2001, as a means of evaluating its progress and impact but experienced unanticipated difficulties in obtaining necessary information to complete it. These deficits in the accuracy and type of information available on homelessness were also identified by the external evaluation of *Shaping the Future* (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2003) as a critical area for attention in the future.

Over the course of the plan it is intended to improve the quality and availability of the data on homelessness, and to develop and apply a system of outcome measurement for homeless services as part of the model of care and case management to be developed under action 2.8.1. In addition, it is planned to improve working with other services, sectors and policy makers and to ensure that the homeless sector data systems are compatible.

Strategic Aim

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Address deficits in data on homelessness and to improve the quality, collection and analysis of information available

Rationale

There have been improvements in the quality and range of information available on homelessness in Dublin over the last three years, both through formal and informal means. The contact between services has elicited information on service use and service

users. Reports submitted in the context of the funding scheme managed by the Homeless Agency has provided a more complete picture of the activities of services and the cost of them. The development of Dublin LINK has provided timely information on the numbers of people in contact with services. Service evaluations have provided valuable information on what does and does not work in responding to needs and surveys of service users have provided useful insights into their perspectives. Other research has provided information on the extent of homelessness, the causes of homelessness and the particular needs of people who are homeless.

Despite this, a number of problems with both the accuracy and availability of information generally, have emerged. Information held by statutory bodies is poor, and official statistics on homelessness have been shown to be inaccurate. The assessments of homelessness carried out 1999 and 2002 found that three quarters of the people registered with local authorities as staying in emergency accommodation were not actually staying there. Conversely, only one quarter of the people who were in emergency accommodation or sleeping rough were registered with a local authority. The issue of deficiencies and weakness in public service administrative data is not new, and the National Statistics Board has argued for improvements and developments in this area.

Furthermore, there is a wide range of agencies collecting information on homelessness, other than those in the homeless sector. These include drug services, family support services, health services, youth and education services, prison and probation and welfare services. Different agencies use different definitions of homelessness and collect different information in different ways. This makes it impossible to collate information, to make comparisons across services or sectors or to assess the impact of interventions.

A similar situation applies in the area of research. Homelessness – and the people who are homeless – is constantly being researched by different agencies, with no central planning or coordination, collation of findings or quality control.

Objectives and Actions

Objective 4.1 Address deficits in data

Action 4.1.1 Ensure that all services for people who are homeless are using Dublin LINK by December 2004

Dublin LINK is an Internet database of homeless people in contact with services designed to support the delivery of case management. Managed by the Homeless Agency, it records demographic and other information on those people, on the interventions made by different services and allows this information to be shared within and between specified services.

All emergency and settlement services are currently using the system and remaining services are in the process of being added to it. When this is completed, the system will provide an overview of the people who are homeless at any one point in time, as well as charting their flow through the system.

Action 4.1.2 Publish regular reports from Dublin LINK

The Homeless Agency to publish quarterly reports, based on information available from Dublin LINK.

Action 4.1.3 Design a system to collect and analyse relevant information by March 2005

The Homeless Agency to design a system for the collection and analysis of information from homeless services and other relevant sources to monitor trends in homelessness and to measure the impact of the action plan, to be completed by March 2005 for immediate implementation. Some of this information will be available on Dublin LINK, some from local authorities, health boards and other members of the Agency and some from external bodies. Every effort will be made to use existing data and systems and integrate with them.

Action 4.1.4 Collect, analyse and disseminate information

The Homeless Agency will collect and analyse the information and use it to assess the impact of the action plan, any trends or issues emerging in relation to homelessness and to inform reviews of the action plan, policy positions and service development.

Information will be disseminated through regular reports to members of the Homeless Agency, the Cross Department Team, the Cabinet Sub Committee on Social Inclusion and through other publications.

Objective 4.2 Improve the quality of information available on homelessness

Action 4.2.1 Establish Research Advisory Group by September 2004

The Homeless Agency to establish a group of experts and service providers to oversee the Agency research programme and to develop a quality framework for research and information on homelessness.

Action 4.2.2 Complete review of current methodology for periodic assessment of homelessness by December 2004

The review will concentrate on ways of improving the information and analysis of information collected in the course of the assessments carried out by the Homeless Agency on behalf of the local authorities. The review will be carried out in consultation with homeless service providers, local authorities, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and independent experts.

Action 4.2.3 Implement improvements in March 2005

Official assessments of homelessness are carried out every three years, and the next one is due to take place in March 2005.

Action 4.2.4 Agree a methodology and schedule for assessing the extent of rough sleeping by September 2004

The issue of estimating the numbers of people who sleep rough has proven to be contentious within the homeless sector in Dublin and it is intended to find an agreed way forward on this issue.

Action 4.2.5 Ensure standard and consistent use of terms by December 2004

The Homeless Agency to ensure that a standard definition of homelessness and other relevant terms are agreed and adopted by all relevant agencies by June 2005.

Action 4.2.6 Monitor use of definitions

The Homeless Agency will monitor the implementation of the agreed terms through reviews of research and data.

Objective 4.3 Improve the availability and quality of information available on responses to homelessness

Action 4.3.1 Design a rolling programme of evaluation for homeless services to ensure that all services have been evaluated by December 2006

Evaluation is an intrinsic element of the service agreements with service providers. New services are evaluated in the first eighteen months of operation and a programme for other services will be agreed by December 2004, to be completed by the end of 2006.

Action 4.3.2 Complete programme and disseminate findings

The evaluations of services will be used by the Homeless Agency to inform the future provision and funding of services. In keeping with Agency policy, key findings will be published and disseminated.

Action 4.3.3 Implement research programme

The Homeless Agency will continue to carry out research into the nature and extent of homelessness, why people become homeless and best practice in responding to and preventing homelessness. The research programme for 2005 and 2006 will be agreed by December 2004. All research publications will be disseminated.

Action 4.3.4 Review and plan new programme by September 2006

The research programme to be reviewed by September 2006, with a view to informing the research programme for the next action plan.



section five

Leading, coordinating and measuring implementation

Introduction

This section outlines the objectives to be achieved by the Homeless Agency, itself, in leading and coordinating homeless and other services in the implementation of *Making it Home* and measuring its impact.

The Homeless Agency was established as part of the Government strategy on homelessness to be responsible for the planning, coordination and management of services to people who are homeless in Dublin and for leading those services in the implementation of agreed action plans.

The Agency is a partnership structure, operating under the direction of a Board, which comprises representatives from local authorities, health boards, ERHA, FÁS, Probation and Welfare Services, City of Dublin VEC and voluntary agencies. The Board is responsible for strategic oversight of the Agency and is advised by a Consultative Forum made up of representatives from voluntary and statutory agencies.

The functions of the Agency are: promoting partnership working among services; providing training, information and other supports to services; managing funding to services and monitoring and evaluating those services; collecting and analysing information on homelessness; undertaking research; developing and advising on public policy on homelessness and in particular on its prevention and elimination. These functions are carried out by staff of the Homeless Agency, reporting the Board.

Strategic Aim

Provide effective leadership and coordination in the implementation of the action plan

Objectives and Actions

Objective 5.1 Lead agencies in the implementation of the plan and promote partnership working

The needs of people who are homeless cannot be addressed by one agency and the development of partnership and inter agency working, in the planning and delivery of services, is a core principle informing the work of the Agency.

In the stakeholder analysis undertaken as part of the independent evaluation of *Shaping the Future*, the development and enhancement of partnership was cited as one of the successes of the Agency. Work in this area will continue over the course of this action plan, with a focus on reviewing the nature of partnership.

One of the significant challenges facing the homeless sector is how it manages success. If the numbers of homeless people falls, if the length of time people are homeless is reduced, then the demand for the extent and range of services necessary to meet needs will also be reduced. Preparing for this situation will be an important element of the leadership work of the Homeless Agency over the coming years.

Action 5.1.1 Lead process to plan future of sector from October 2004

The Homeless Agency, in consultation with stakeholders and independent experts will lead a process to ensure that the homeless sector is prepared for the future, and in particular for the changes which will result from the success of action on homelessness, including the reduction of the number of people who are homeless.

Action 5.1.2 Support partnership

The Homeless Agency comprises a number of different elements including the Board, Consultative Forum, worker networks, advisory groups and working groups. The aim of these is to ensure the involvement of people involved in the sector in the planning, review and development of services. The Agency will continue to support these, over the course of the plan.

Action 5.1.3 Complete review of the effectiveness of networks and working groups by December 2004

The structure and composition of the Board and Forum were reviewed in late 2003, and some changes made as a result. Other changes may be made following agreement on new structures to manage the development of local area responses under objective 2.15. This review will assess the effectiveness of networks and working groups.

Action 5.1.4 Implement improvements in the operation of Board and Forum

Following the evaluation of *Shaping the Future* a review of the Agency structures was carried out. As a result of this, a number of operational changes have been agreed for the Board and Consultative Forum. These include agreed work plans, partnership reviews, improved joint working and communication between the two bodies. These changes will be implemented throughout the course of the plan and kept under review by the Board and Forum.

Objective 5.2 Continue and improve existing supports to services

The Homeless Agency provides a range of supports to homeless services, which are aimed at building the capacity of managers and front line workers to deliver effective services, in a changing environment. The homeless sector is relatively small and these supports are provided informally, by regular contact with service providers, and more formally through the provision of training, information and other structured opportunities for engagement and learning, such as seminars.

Action 5.2.1 Complete training programme for 2005 by November 2004

In each of the last three years the Homeless Agency has provided a training programme for staff and volunteers in homeless services. An evaluation of the 2004 training programme and an analysis of training needs will be completed by October 2004 and will inform the development of the 2005 programme, which will be implemented over 2005 and reviewed in 2006.

Action 5.2.2 Publish Directory of Services 2004/5

A comprehensive paper directory of specialist and mainstream services relevant to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is published by the Homeless Agency each year. The 2004/5 Directory will be published in July 2004.

Action 5.2.3 Complete a review of the Directory by March 2005

The review will assess the content and format of the directory and explore the potential for the information to be made available in different media. In addition the evaluation will examine the possibility of the Homelessness Directory being absorbed into mainstream service provision, such as that provided by Comhairle.

Action 5.2.4 Maintain, review and develop website, Dublin LINK and Hostels Online

Dublin LINK and Hostels Online are two internet databases, the first facilitating the collection and sharing of information on service users, the other providing information on vacancies in temporary accommodation. Over the course of the plan, the Agency will continue to support services in their use of these systems.

The website is a resource for the public generally, but it also facilitates the advertisement of job vacancies and events by homeless services. This facility will be maintained and developed over the course of the plan and formally reviewed in March 2005.

Hostels Online and Dublin LINK will be maintained, with a review of Hostels Online to be completed in October 2004. Dublin LINK will be reviewed in March 2005.

Action 5.2.5 Publish Update and Cornerstone

Update is a monthly bulletin circulated to homeless service providers with information on new services, changes in services, policy developments and other issues of interest.

Cornerstone is a quarterly magazine with a circulation of 3,000, provided free of charge to homeless services, other service providers, policy makers, politicians and individuals. It is aimed at providing information on homelessness, housing and related issues and to stimulate debate in these areas. It will continue to be published over the course of the plan, with an evaluation to be completed in September 2006.

Objective 5.3 Develop supports for new initiatives

Existing supports are designed around the needs of the sector as it currently operating. Measures in this plan will alter the shape and focus of the sector, moving it away from centre city and crisis based responses towards the provision of services, which are more organised and systematic, in local community areas. Supporting these new developments will have resource implications for the Agency.

Action 5.3.1 Complete plan for revised supports to meet new needs by September 2004

The new support needs, of both homeless service providers and local communities are for: the implementation of the model of care and case management; the enhancement of local area forums; the delivery of services in local areas; the coordination of improved responses to rough sleepers.

Other actions, such as the implementation of a media strategy, provision of training for mainstream service providers and an information programme are contained in other sections of *Making it Home*.

Objective 5.4 Develop and Influence Policy

The Homeless Agency has an important role to play in influencing policy. One element of this will be achieved through work with the Office of Social Inclusion provided for under Objective 2.3. Other actions will also involve the Agency in the development of proposals for policy change.

In addition to measures provided for in the plan, the Homeless Agency will continue to comment on Government policy, monitor its impact on homelessness and make proposals for policy change, through out the course of the plan, and when need and opportunity arises.

Objective 5.5 Continue funding, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of services

As provided for under the terms of *Shaping the Future* new arrangements have been developed for the joint assessment and allocation of funding by local authorities and health boards to homeless services.

Under these arrangements, the Homeless Agency is responsible for managing the application, assessment and allocation process. In addition it is responsible for service agreements, the monitoring of these agreements, and for the evaluation of services.

Action 5.5.1 Complete service agreements by December 2004

While service agreements are a core element of the new arrangements, it has taken some time to complete agreements for all services. It is intended that all funded services will operate on the basis of service agreements from January 2005.

Action 5.5.2 Carry out monitoring in accordance with service agreements

The Homeless Agency will monitor financial and service activity in accordance with the terms of the service agreements.

Action 5.5.3 Complete programme of service evaluation by December 2006

The Homeless Agency will ensure the completion of the evaluations, provided for under Action 4.3.1.

Action 5.5.4 Lobby for multi annual fund

The new arrangements make provision for services to be funded on a multi annual, rather than annual basis. However decisions at Government level continue to be made on an annual basis. This is inefficient and undermines the security of the sector. The Homeless Agency will continue to advocate for a multi annual fund in its negotiations with the relevant Government Departments.

Action 5.5.5 Submit budgets to Government in August 2004

The budget requirement for 2005 and 2006 will be submitted to the relevant Government departments in August 2004.

Action 5.5.6 Complete unit costing for homeless services by March 2005

There is no objective benchmark for the cost of homeless services, although the Department of Health and Children has commenced an exercise that will establish unit costs in respect of care. The Homeless Agency will build on this to provide a reference point for the allocation of funds in the future. Included in this exercise will be provision for allowable headquarter or administration costs, which are essential to the delivery of services.

Action 5.5.7 Review terms of scheme by June 2005

A Clearer Future is the document setting out the terms of the funding arrangements, agreed in 2001. Following a review in 2003 some amendments were made to the scheme. This further review will assess the continued relevance of the scheme, the satisfaction of services with its operation and make recommendations for the future.

Objective 5.6 Monitor and measure implementation and impact of the plan

The implementation of the action plan will be monitored through the regular collection and analysis of information and an independent evaluation.

Action 5.6.1 Commission independent evaluation of action plan and Homeless Agency by September 2004

The evaluation will measure the impact of the action plan, will include stakeholder analysis, and a mid term review with recommendations for any adjustments in the plan or approaches which need to be made.

Action 5.6.2 Provide regular progress reports on the implementation of the plan

Progress reports will be provided bi monthly to Board and Forum meetings, on progress in implementing the plan. Reviews of impact, against performance indicators and the Balanced Scorecard will be held twice yearly by the Board and Forum.

Action 5.6.3 Collect and analyse information to measure performance

The Homeless Agency will collect information on a regular basis throughout the course of the action plan to measure performance against targets. This information will form the basis of reports to Agency stakeholders and will be based on the performance indicators which follow. Other performance indicators will be developed as necessary as new services and initiatives provided for under the plan come on stream.

Performance Indicators

Strategic Aim

Reduce the number of households who become homeless

- Number of households newly homeless, by household type and last address
- Number of people homeless on admission to state care and hospitals, by last address
- Number of people homeless on discharge or discharged into homeless accommodation from state care and hospitals, by institution
- Trends in public awareness

Strategic Aim

Increase housing options for single people who are homeless

- Number and % of homeless households settled, by household type, by landlord (i.e. private/local authority/voluntary housing association)
- The number, type and location of housing units provided through leasing/purchase in private sector and number of households housed in these units, by household type and previous status (i.e. rough sleeping, emergency/transitional/other accommodation)
- Number of households by household type and previous accommodation successfully housed through the Access Housing Unit, by location
- Trend in rate of provision of long term housing with supports following introduction of funding scheme
- Number of households engaged with tenancy sustainment service, by location

Strategic Aim

Ensure services are effective in addressing the needs of people who become homeless

- Number of households with completed assessments and care plans by case manager, by service
- Number of rough sleepers and length of time rough sleeping, by area and last address
- Number of households in temporary accommodation by household type, accommodation type and provider (i.e. emergency/transitional; private/public/voluntary) and average length of stay
- Number of households in temporary accommodation assessed as ready to move on, by household type and service
- Numbers of households refused temporary and long term accommodation by household type, provider and reason
- Number of units of temporary accommodation available, by type and location
- Occupancy levels of temporary accommodation, by type
- Number and % of people availing of all homeless services, by service, and their satisfaction with those services

- Number and % of people availing of special health and education/training initiatives and their satisfaction with them
- Number and % of people engaged in work placement and employment and their satisfaction with services
- Number and % of homeless households dependant on Supplementary Welfare Allowance as main income

Strategic Aim

Ensure each local area develops effective responses to homelessness

- Number of homeless households assisted by local advice, information and advocacy services, by household type, last address and response
- Satisfaction of homeless forum members with leadership and support provided by relevant local authority and Homeless Agency
- Number and % of tenancies allocated by local authorities
- Number of households in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping on council homeless/housing waiting lists and average length of time, by local authority and last address

Strategic Aim

Improve information on homelessness and responses to it

- Number of services which have adopted shared definition of homelessness
- Number of research and other documents published using shared definition
- Number of reports issued from information on Dublin LINK
- Number of government policies in keeping with/at variance with Homeless Agency policy

Strategic Aim

Provide effective leadership and coordination in the implementation of the plan

- Satisfaction of stakeholders with performance of Homeless Agency in leading the implementation of the plan and supporting partnership
- Satisfaction of Board and Forum with information on implementation of plan
- Satisfaction of service providers with training, information and other resources provided by the Homeless Agency
- Number and trends in visits to website
- Number and trends in visits to Hostels Online
- Number of services actively using Dublin LINK (by service)
- Satisfaction level of service users with support available to them in using Dublin LINK and Hostels Online
- Number and % of actions completed on time

section six

Budget 2004

The following is a summary of the budget for 2004 for the provision of direct services to people who are homeless in the Dublin area, provided by voluntary, public and private providers. It also includes the cost of the Homeless Agency. The budget is approved by the relevant local authorities and health boards and their parent government departments.

Budget 2004	
Service	Cost €
Emergency accommodation	
Voluntary	9,332,487
Public	550,000
Private	16,654,460
Total	28,536,947
Transitional housing	8,382,066
Long term supported	3,195,347
Settlement services	1,121,212
Day services/Food centres	4,126,570
Outreach services	971,336
Advice/Information and referral services	271,688
Tenancy Support Services	200,000
Access Housing Unit	264,077
Direct health services	4,050,000
Homeless Persons Unit	2,600,000
Homeless Agency	1,270,000
TOTAL	52,989,243



appendix one

Members of the Homeless Agency

Board

Chair

Kathleen Holohan, Director of Housing,
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Brendan Kenny, Assistant City Manager,
Dublin City Council

Alan Carty, Director of Housing, *Fingal County Council*

Philomena Poole, Director of Housing, *South Dublin County Council*

Alice O'Flynn, Director of Homelessness,
Eastern Region Health Authority

Martin Rogan, Assistant Chief Executive,
South Western Area Health Board

Michael Walsh, Assistant Chief Executive Officer,
Northern Area Health Board

Leonie O'Neill, Director of Social Inclusion,
East Coast Area Health Board

Vivian Geiran, Assistant Principal Officer, *Probation and Welfare Service*

John Harkin, Manager, Community Services Unit, *FÁS*

Leonora O'Reilly, Adult Education Organiser, *CDVEC*

Donal McManus, Executive Director, *Irish Council for Social Housing*

Pat Doherty, Voluntary Network (*DePaul Trust*)

Dermot Kavanagh, Voluntary Network (*Merchants Quay Ireland*)

Greg Maxwell, Voluntary Network (*Dublin Simon Community*)

Sinead Hanly, Independent, Chair of Consultative Forum

Maureen Lynott, Independent

Consultative Forum

Chair

Sinead Hanly, Independent

Maire Twomey, Senior Executive Officer, *Dublin City Council*

Anne Helferty, Senior Housing Welfare Officer, *Dublin City Council*

Charlie Lowe, Senior Executive Manager, *Dublin City Council*

Liz Clifford, Senior Administrative Officer,
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Joe Murphy, Senior Administrative Officer, *Fingal County Council*

Pat Jennings, Senior Probation and Welfare Officer,
Probation and Welfare Services

Patricia O'Connor, Director, *National Drugs Strategy Team*

Declan O'Donoghue, Senior Employment Services Officer, *FÁS*

Clare Schofield, Education Coordinator, *CDVEC*

Gerry Duffy, Superintendent Community Welfare Officer,
East Coast Area Health Board

Eddie Matthews, Director of Social Inclusion,
Northern Area Health Board

Frank Mills, Director of Social Inclusion,
South West Area Health Board

Orla Barry, Head of Services, *Focus Ireland*

Sr. Angela Burke, Director, *Vincentian Partnership, Rendu Apartments*

Patricia Cleary, Director, *HAIL Housing Association*

Don Comiskey, Director, *The Aids Fund*

Lisa Cuthbert, Director, *PACE*

Teresa Dolan, Assistant Director, *Capuchin Day Centre*

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appendix two

Summary of progress 2001–2003

At the time of preparing the first action plan, *Shaping the Future*, homelessness was increasing in Dublin, with more young people and families and higher levels of rough sleeping. Services were fragmented and largely aimed at meeting the needs of older men. People with high support needs, who had drug or alcohol problems or exhibited challenging behaviour were excluded from most services and forced to sleep rough. There was an absolute shortage of emergency accommodation with very little available for women, families, couples and younger people.

The quality of services was generally poor and focused only on meeting emergency needs for accommodation and food. Most emergency accommodation closed during the day time, and 57% of people had nothing to do but walk the streets all day. The supply of day services was limited, concerned with the provision of food only and closed at weekends. Services to make contact with people on the street and link them to accommodation were limited and settlement services, which would help people to move out of homelessness and into sustainable tenancies, were undeveloped/non existent.

Homeless people experienced high levels of mental and physical ill health and difficulty in accessing treatment. They also experienced serious obstacles to accessing social welfare, education and work opportunities. They tended to go around the homeless system, rather than through it, spending long periods in emergency accommodation or on the streets. Housing options for single people, who comprised 80% of the homeless population were severely limited.

There were no services outside of the city centre. The central Homeless Persons Unit was located in an unsuitable building and every transaction had to be conducted in person, leading to pressure on both service providers and users. Funding for services was inadequate and *ad hoc* with an emphasis on capital rather than revenue costs.

Shaping the Future aimed to address these problems, and identified the following aims:

- Reduce rough sleeping by two thirds (from 275)
- Address gaps in temporary accommodation
- Provide an additional 1,500 units of housing for single people
- Improve quality and range of services
- Develop continuum of care model of service delivery
- Develop responses in local areas
- Develop preventative strategies
- Provide services on outreach basis (health, education, welfare)
- Develop partnership working
- Improve information, funding and other supports to services

Progress has been made in almost of all of these areas including:

- Reducing rough sleeping to less than 100, by improving contact and engagement by street outreach teams, through their expansion, and the provision of special accommodation projects to address particular needs
- Exceeding targets for temporary accommodation, including 900 additional emergency beds and 200 transitional units. It is now agreed there is an adequate supply of temporary accommodation in the city centre
- The quality and range of services has improved, and this was regarded as a key success by stakeholders in the independent evaluation by PricewaterhouseCooper, as was the improvement in partnership working
- Funding to services was significantly increased, and the mechanism for funding improved, so that there is one point of application, assessment and allocation, jointly by health boards and local authorities
- Education, training, health and welfare services are available on an outreach basis in a number of day services and accommodation projects, improving access to these services. A dedicated multi disciplinary health outreach team has been established, as has a dedicated dental and psychiatric service
- The development of care and case management, including a management information system to support the delivery of integrated services

Problems remain:

- The plan was not successful in achieving the full development of planned local area responses, or preventative strategies. Development of responses has occurred outside of the city, notably in Dun Laoghaire where the council has provided a shelter, day service, outreach and settlement services, in conjunction with Crosscare and the East Coast Area Health Board.
- The focus of attention continued to be on the provision of emergency accommodation, rather than housing. Although 1,400 households were housed by local authorities and voluntary housing bodies, these were mainly families, rather than the single people intended to be targeted.
- Preventative strategies were not developed, although there is agreement to go forward in this direction and there is now a better and shared understanding that prevention is the ultimate solution to homelessness.
- Information was improved over the course of the last plan, but further gaps and deficiencies were identified.



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