

Presentation to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee on Homeless.
Monday the 26th January 2015.

Homelessness: (Focus Ireland) “Homelessness is the most extreme form of social exclusion and is a strong indicator of social injustice in any society”.

“People who are homeless often have to make choices out of very limited options. Everyday things that we all take for granted can become much more difficult for people sleeping rough, living in private emergency accommodation, transitional accommodation.”

- Homeless is a temporary condition that people fall into when they cannot afford to pay for a place to live, or when their current home is unsafe or unstable.
- Other factors, such as job loss, physical and mental disability, various hardships – including personal, and drug addiction can accelerate people's slide into poverty, and for some, eventual homelessness, especially in the absence of proper social services.
- Homelessness is also a state of vulnerability – to health risks, violence, and harassment by police, heightened exposure to the elements, and the absence of privacy.
- Homelessness is an inherent quality of trait and it is not linked with any particular identity, nor does it define the people experiencing it.
- Homeless people are also not a “population” of their own, they are individuals who have every right to the access afforded to people in society.

Extract from presentation to the Galway City Homeless Forum dated 17th November 2014 – Mr. E. Cummins, CEO of Monaghan County Council.

HOMELESSNESS: POLICIES AND TRENDS.

In February 2013, the Minister for Housing and Planning published the Government's Homeless Policy Statement in which the aim to end long-term homelessness by the end of 2016 was outlined.

The Minister also established the Homeless Oversight Group. The purpose of the group was to observe progress towards the objectives set out by the Minister in her policy statement in February 2013. This policy statement acknowledged the difficulties in addressing this complex issue with an objective to bring an end to long term homelessness in Ireland and advocates the following:

- A housing led approach – accessing permanent housing as the primary response to all forms of homelessness.
- Moving away from expensive emergency or shelter type accommodation and making better use of resources.

Target:

- To end long term homelessness by end of 2016.
- Oversight group established to review the approach.

The First Report of the Homeless Oversight group was provided to the Minister for Housing and Planning in December 2013 (copy attached).

Key findings:

- The goals of ending long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough can be achieved by 2016.
- Objectives can be achieved within the existing resources available.
- Progress will require a more efficient and complete use of these resources.

On the 25th February 2014, the Government approved the establishment of a Homeless Policy Implementation Team and Central Implementation Unit with the responsibility for developing a structural plan to implement the recommendations of the Groups first Report, "The implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness" This Plan by approved by the Government and published in May 2014 (copy attached). This plan covers the period to end of December 2016 and outlines the following:

- The States response to homelessness to achieve the national objective of ending involuntary long-term homelessness by 2016.
- Framework to secure a ring-fenced supply of accommodation over the next 3 years.
- A practical and focused plan – 80 actions that are direct, immediate and solutions based and which will contribute to the delivery of a ring-fenced supply of 2,700 units of accommodation between 2014 and the end of 2016.
- Plan in line with the Homeless Policy Statement which emphasises a housing led approach accessing permanent housing as the primary response to all forms of homelessness.
- Dublin City Council, the lead authority for the Dublin region, is actioning a number of immediate steps to quickly bring the problem under control and begin the process of finding permanent solutions for those affected. The actions are set out in the Dublin Action Plan.

On the 17th November 2014 Galway City Homeless Forum held a workshop the purpose of which was to devise a Local Homeless Action Plan for Galway City.

The purpose of the workshop was to devise SMART actions for inclusion in the Homeless Action Plan for Galway City for the period to the end of 2016 in the context of the National Implementation Plan. These areas focused on the areas of:-

- Preventing homeless.
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough.
- Eliminate long term homelessness.
- Meeting long term housing needs.
- Ensuring effective services for homeless people.

These actions are currently being examined for inclusion in the Local Homeless Plan which is currently being prioritised for completion.

HOMELESS SERVICES – WESTERN HOMELESS REGION.

Galway City Council is the lead authority for the Western Homeless Region in the administration of accommodation services for Homeless people. The Western Homeless Region consists of Galway City, Galway County, Mayo and Roscommon. In 2014 the West Region had an overall spend of €1,734,581 with an approved Section 10 allocation of €1,528,951 from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government with the shortfall made up by the Region.

The City Council have a detailed process in dealing with all persons presenting for homeless services at City Hall.

The City Council are also responsible for the National PASS Homeless database where all homeless presentations for the Region are captured and report back on same on a monthly and quarterly basis to the Department.

The funding is categorised as follows:

- Homeless Prevention, Tenancy Sustainment and Resettlement Supports.
- Emergency Accommodation.
- Long Term Supported Accommodation.
- Day Services.
- Domestic Violence Refuges.
- Housing Authority Homeless Services Provision including Administration.

Funding for 2015 for domestic violence refuges is being removed from Section 10 funding and has been transferred to Tulsa.

Breakdown of funding for 2014:

Cope:	€861,210
Galway Simon:	€484,518
St. V. DePaul:	€ 43,480
Cuan Mhuire:	€ 50,060
Roscommon Co. Council:	€ 6,289
Galway County Council:	€104,107
Galway City Council:	€ 79,698
Mayo County Council	€ 76,000
Threshold Grant:	€ 25,000

Current Emergency Provision in Galway City.

- Fairgreen Hostel:
This facility is managed by Cope Galway and is for homeless men only.
- 23 full time beds with provision for 3 crash rooms.
- Cold Weather response runs annually – December to March with additional provision for up to 9 men.
- Osterly Lodge:
This facility is for women and children. It is a 13 bed unit (up to four of which can be used by families with up to 4 children depending on age).
- Hostels, Tourist Apartments, Hotels and B. & B.s
In 2014 use of placements in these emergency facilities have increased considerably due to insufficient capacity of main stream emergency services being unable to meet the need.
- Transitional Family Units:
Galway City Council have entered into Service Level Agreements with Cope Galway and provided 2 additional social housing properties from our existing stock with support to be used for homeless families. This reflects the presenting needs of families for numerous reasons ie. Receiving Notice to quit from landlords due to rent increases, RAS tenancies not being renewed.

- Threshold: Galway City Council give a grant annually of 25,0000 to Threshold who provide a Housing Advice and advocacy service to tenants and works to prevent homelessness. In 2013 Threshold supported 1,800 people affected by housing problems. A proposal by Threshold for the establishment of a Tenancy Protection Service has been submitted to the City Council and is currently being examined.

HOMELESS STATISTICS FOR GALWAY CITY COUNCIL.

- From September to December 2014, 156 presentations were made to the City Council's Housing Department for homeless services. This figure can be further broken down to 107 unique individuals of which 17 were families. All 107 persons would not have been eligible for emergency homeless services for a variety of reasons, such as permission to reside, non habitual residency, living with family etc.
- While adequate Emergency Accommodation was available, on the 11th November 2014 a rough sleepers count was carried out by COPE, and Cope recorded a total of 14 persons rough sleeping (13 men and 1 woman) 5, rough sleeping on the streets, one was in a disused boat, one in a tent and one slept in a car.

Attached are the following:

- Implementation Plan on the States's response to Homelessness, May 2014 to December 2016.
- Homeless Oversight Group – First Report – 19th December 2013.
- Briefing Document – Cross Department Team and National Homeless Consultative Committee – Actions being taken in the Dublin Region in response to the National Homeless Implementation Plan.

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