

The Lord Mayor's Homeless Task Force began in September 2020 with the ambition to help with the current emergency of homelessness. The group consisted of the Lord Mayor Cllr Hazel Chu, the Chair of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee Cllr Alison Gilliland, a member of each party group in Dublin City Council, Cllr Daithi Doolan (SF), Cllr Catherine Stocker (SD), Cllr James Geoghegan (FG), Cllr Janet Horner (GP), Cllr Deirdre Conroy (FF), Cllr Kevin Donoghue (Lab) and Cllr Anthony Flynn (Ind), a representative of the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE) Director Eileen Gleeson and subsequently Deputy Chief Executive of DCC Brendan Kenny and secretarial support Fanchea Gibson, Office of the Lord Mayor.

Our objective was to provide practical steps to be implemented in the short to medium term which would have a direct impact on the issue of homelessness. Our method was to gather information from service users and service provider's perspectives to identify what are the gaps and bottlenecks in the current system. Over thirteen weekly sessions we spoke to experts in Dublin Simon, Alice Leahy Trust, The Mendicity Institution, Ana Liffey Drug Project, Threshold, Focus Ireland Youth Housing First Waterford, HSE, Tusla and service users. The formation of the asks below are formed on the research and data they provided. These solutions, if implemented, would have a immediate effect on improving homeless service and protect the most vulnerable.

An increase in the overall supply of public housing is critical to addressing homelessness in the longer- term and is crucial in both preventing people from entering homelessness and ensuring they can exit emergency accommodation. The delivery of single person public housing over the coming years is also essential in terms of addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and for the expansion of the Housing First Programme.

## **Five Key Asks**

- 1. Seek additional funding to further enhance the DRHE Street Outreach (Dublin Simon) and Housing Intake Team (Housing First - Mc Verry Trust).**
- 2. Greater level of investment for the provision of Health Support to Homeless persons.**

3. **Seek funding towards implementation of the DRHE Report on day and evening services for Homeless persons.**
4. **Adopt a Youth homelessness strategy.**
5. **Notice to Quits must be more accountable and transparent.**

## **Seek additional funding to further enhance the DRHE Street Outreach (Dublin Simon) and Housing Intake Team (Housing First - Mc Verry Trust).**

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- The causes and consequences of homelessness are varied and often complex. Solutions to homelessness can be equally difficult and a one size does not fit all as many individuals and families who find themselves homeless require customised and specialist care and support.
- We seek to amalgamate the current housing support officer role into the current key worker role so each individual or family has a single point of contact and support. This enhanced key work role would advise and provide support across accommodation, health and other needs so as to develop a wrap-around service.
- This service would not only ensure that accommodation needs are met but would also ensure that necessary physical health, mental health issues and addiction issues are fully addressed. It would also provide, where necessary, assistance with childcare, assistance with education/training courses and support in gaining employment. Such enhanced support goes beyond the current Protection pillar of the DRHE Homeless Action Plan Framework but would enable

and empower individuals and families to progress into sustainable tenancies and productive livelihoods and reduce their likelihood of returning to homelessness into the future.

- A model that has all relevant agencies and services focused on the homeless individual/family is best placed to work towards identifying solutions and providing support to clients.
- Enhancing general DRHE staffing to include multidisciplinary expertise. Noting the complexity of the personal circumstances and situations that individuals and families present with homelessness services, DRHE seeks to recruit staff so as to allow for the inclusion of a multi-disciplinary expertise, particularly in the areas mental health and addiction. Cooperation and collaboration with the HSE aside, such recruitment would include psychiatrists, addiction specialists and mental health experts.
- Having such expertise on the DRHE team would allow key workers to have direct internal access to such expertise. It would also allow for a more effective approach within DRHE outreach teams particularly their work with certain rough sleepers who because of the complexity of their needs are hardest to reach and encourage to avail of supports and services.
- Seek a greater level of recoupment for DRHE/DCC towards the overall cost of Homeless Services in Dublin- at present we generally get 90% recoupment but the 10% balance is now creeping up to near €20 Million to be carried in the DCC annual Revenue Budget.
- Family outreach support team available after 4pm.

## **Greater level of investment for the provision of Health Support to Homeless persons.**

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- This will require bringing services around Mental Health and addictions directly to persons who are on the streets and unwilling to engage.
- Transitioning to a wrap-around support service based on a trauma informed care case management model.
- A 'Care Case Management Model' provides a framework to develop a wraparound service. A case management working model requires a common assessment process, minimum standards and action plans to be overseen by a trained and continuous key worker. Currently key workers are assigned to homeless families and, where resources allow, some homeless individuals. All homeless individuals and families should have a key worker identified to them from the moment they interact with the DRHE. The key worker coordinates the agencies and services to ensure the needs of the individual or family are met so not as to not fall through the various cracks in the system that prevent joined up, interdisciplinary, flexible support.
- In this model, the key worker is responsible for maintaining a case file pertaining to the individual/family, holding the facilitating regular case meetings with services, agencies and the individuals/families. The agencies and services may change depending on the individuals/families' needs but the key worker remains the same to ensure continuity of personnel.
- This enhanced model provides Protection and Progression support as the individual/family moves through the services and remains in place even when they are housed for as long as necessary until a final assessment deems them to be fully sustainable in terms of accommodation, health, and employment. Putting this model into action will require the recruitment of additional key workers.
- A trauma informed approach to care case management model
- In addition to the enhancement of the role of the key worker into a care case management model it is also imperative to recognise that many individuals and families falling into homelessness have suffered adverse childhood experiences or ACEs. ACEs arise from physical, emotional and social abuse, physical and emotional neglect as well as household dysfunction including experiences of violence, addiction/substance misuse and poverty in the home, parental

incarceration, parental separation and indeed experiences of childhood homelessness. These experiences also tend to be intergenerational. Similarly, adults may also experience trauma later on in life as a result of violence or abuse mitigated upon them.

- Therefore drawing on learning from 2017 research by Cork Simon Community, 'Moving towards trauma informed care' and bearing in mind the information provided by Ana Liffey, HSE among other organisations we invited to speak at the Task Force, DHRE seeks to train all staff and in particular all key workers in understanding and supporting individuals and families who may have suffered trauma as a result of ACEs or adult experienced trauma so as to better support such individuals in an appropriate and informed way.
- Recommendation that additional outreach staff trained in the area of mental health and drugs counselling.

## **Seek funding towards implementation of the DRHE Report on day and evening services for Homeless persons.**

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- We have made good progress on the reduction of families in emergency accommodation. The situation in relation to single persons is more complex and there are now just over 3,000 single residing in hostel type accommodation in Dublin. We have put most of our focus in recent years on the accommodation issue and rightly so, but there is there is certainly a need for enhanced support services during the day and evening. This would include a suitable support centre (1 North side and 1 South side) and much greater co-ordination of existing services that are out there at present. The DRHE recently completed a comprehensive review/study of the issue and this should strongly inform any new proposal.

## **Adopt a Youth homelessness strategy**

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A youth homelessness prevention and intervention strategy should be developed involving Dublin City Council, the HSE and Tusla based on the Housing First for Youth in Waterford. The programme should support young people coming out of the care system as well as provide support for other young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The strategy should:

- Make provision for centrally located housing and support i.e. one stop solutions.
- Ensure that choice, self-determination, flexibility and positive development are central to the strategy.
- Ensure access to housing is coupled with adequate follow-on care, mentoring, community and social integration.
- Ensure that adequate supports are in place to facilitate access to employment or education.

## **Notice to Quits must be more accountable and transparent.**

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- Notices to quit must not just be submitted to the tenant and the RTB, but for certain 'at risk tenants' also be sent to a body that can provide independent advice and support for a tenant. This could be a charity like Threshold who already provide this service, or the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, or both.

- Introduce new legislation strengthening protections for ‘at risk tenants’ served with a notice of termination so that they can be immediately connected with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and can avail of adequate advice from appropriate charities and agencies such as Threshold.
- Currently, landlords are required to send notices of termination to the Residential Tenancies Board (“RTB”) and there is a timeframe, 28 days, set out on law for tenants to challenge a notice.
- The RTB, however, as an impartial body with quasi-judicial function does not give advice but instead can only give information. Threshold are the primary agency or charity that does provide such advice and practically the Dublin Regional Homelessness Executive could also give advice.
- If those tenants who are most at risk either do not know what rights they have, or how they can be assisted, they are at increased risk of either immediately being forced into unstable accommodation or possibly rough sleeping.
- Similar to a bank managing a customer who is in mortgage arrears who is obliged by the Central Bank to inform their customer of agencies such as MABS to advise them, a landlord who has a tenant that is at risk of homelessness should be obliged to ensure that their tenant knows their rights and where they can obtain independent advice and support.

**Additional immediate legislative amendments that would alleviate homelessness.**

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- Implementation of the Focus Ireland ‘Anti-homelessness amendment” which would prevent landlord who had bought a property with a buy-to-let mortgage, or availed of section
  - Reinstatement of moratorium on eviction by banks for those in mortgage arrears upheld through all Covid19 restriction. From talking to various service providers

during the task force, this was a common theme from Threshold, Mendicity Institute and others.

- Remove the habitual connection policy regarding local connection nationwide as this policy is discriminatory. There is a need to update the Homeless Act 1988 and the Guidelines that came out of that Act to reflect the newer dynamics of Homelessness.
- Amend Part IV PDA Act 2000 to a grade system in order to regenerate derelict accommodation in Dublin City for social needs and homelessness. To use vacant built heritage premises throughout the city and suburbs to upgrade property affordably for residential use. The recommended amendment of the legislation is to ensure that Conservation Officers are not demanding that owners restore 4-storey historic houses to original high quality, into duplex accommodation, but that they can be 4 apartments if viable. Regeneration is not 'bedsits' but some property could have viable studio apartments for single homeless, and also appropriate layout and design for lone parents with children.

## Other Essential Asks:

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- More access to accommodation for couples.
- More access to accommodation for same sex couples.
- Service for older people who are rough sleeping, immediate/priority, eligibility for senior citizens accommodation.
- Additional rehabilitation facilities implemented to homeless facilities.
- Access to "dry hostels".
- Six month exit plan for all who are in homeless services.
- Own door private room accommodation for everyone.



- Proper implementation of housing first, an aggressive housing first program.
- Every person who enters system to be immediately Registered for housing and a review of how many are currently accessing services and not on out housing waiting list.
- Seek Government support for a more regional approach to the provision of Homeless Hostels particularly for single persons – region to include Meath, Louth, Kildare etc
- Seek funding for Prevention, Protection and Progression.
- Government need to have a clear policy for publicly funded homeless services and put in place the necessary funds to achieve this
- Government needs to promote a human rights centred approach to standards in homeless services and provide resources to more regularly assess standards according to the NQSF
- Government to mandate HIQA to inspect standards in homeless services
- Change the City Development Plan to facilitate the construction of more studio and one bed apartments to cater for the large number of single households in need of housing
- Apply to change use of student accommodation to hostel accommodation for youths and single persons with a support system in place.
- Hostels would therefore need to be refurbished into more appropriate emergency or long-term accommodation or indeed into residential drug rehabilitation—basically convert them into related productive use. So, an ask here would be a 3 year funding commitment to allow us realise this. We would probably have to increase emergency accommodation to balance out the loss of beds in shared rooms in hostels – student accommodation would seem like a ready built alternative. There could be a shift of funding from that used on emergency accommodation.

- We need to have a clear commitment to expanding publicly funded homeless services rather than private institutions
- We need a city wide approach to providing homeless accommodation to ensure that there isn't an overconcentration in certain areas
- There needs to be a massive increase in the supply of council housing as well as cost rental and affordable to buy over the near future. This will require a massive home building programme, which in turn needs to be funded by the Government and European Investment Bank. To ensure any housing plans proceed as quickly as possible the public procurement process must be streamlined and reformed.
- To ensure the housing need for Dublin City is met and we end homelessness Dublin City Council need to take the lead in developing council land. Because council land is in short supply DCC will need to buy land on the private market and to develop housing on these sites. The type of housing and tenure of housing must meet the needs of the City. The focus should be firmly on delivery not on who actually does it or lead it. The important thing is that DCC makes the allocations.