

Mid West Homeless Forum

Homeless Framework Plan

MORE THAN JUST A ROOF



May 2010 - May 2013



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I. Introduction

The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government has provided Local Authorities with a broad guideline Framework for implementing the National Homeless Strategy 2009 – 2013. All key aspects of this National Homeless Strategy have been placed on a statutory footing since February 1st 2010 following the commencement of Part 2, Chapter 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. These new provisions will help to make homelessness a more central element of the housing authority functions, promote a more planned approach to homeless services throughout the country and help housing authorities to ensure that decisions on services are based on criteria of evidenced need, value for money and achieving the best outcomes for homeless people.

The Management Group for the Mid West is Chaired by Mr. Kieran Lehane, Limerick City Council (Lead Authority), Mr. Rob Lowth, Limerick City Council, Mr. Seamus O'Connor, Limerick County Council and Mr. Maurice Hoare, HSE West.

This Homeless Framework Plan which the Mid West Management Group of the Mid West Homeless Forum is recommending for adoption by the Local Authorities of Limerick City and County, and the Counties of North Tipperary and Clare. When this plan has been adopted by each Authority the Framework can then be used as a blueprint for a comprehensive review of services and development of specific Regional & Local Homeless Action Plans.

This Mid West Homeless Framework Plan provides an ideal opportunity for both the statutory sector and voluntary groups to work together to develop best practice guidelines for homeless services throughout the region. The title of this document is “more than just a roof”, the four Local Authorities and the HSE can at times just provide a roof, this document will provide the grounding for the other key supports that homeless persons require on a daily basis and help eliminate long term homelessness in the Mid West Region.

2. Vision and Strategic Aims

This section outlines the long term vision for homelessness in the Mid West Region which this plan will lay the ground for achieving. This section also outlines the mission or purpose of the plan and the values and principles which underpin it. Overall the plan reflects *The Way Home*, the National Strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland from 2008 – 2013 and is also guided by national policy on mental health and the National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2013.

Vision

The Way Home states that from 2010 long term homelessness¹ and the need to sleep rough will be eliminated throughout Ireland. The risk of a person becoming homeless will be minimised and where homelessness does occur the experience will be short term and the aim will be to move the person in as short a time as possible into appropriate long term accommodation providing the person has the life skills to live with or without supports.

The Mid West Homeless Forum's vision is of a region without homelessness where the appropriate preventative policies and long term accommodation services are available to support this vision. The needs of people who are homeless will be met in a co-ordinated and planned manner throughout the region and will offer a range of appropriate, affordable and supportive services aimed at the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

Mission

The purpose of the Mid West Homelessness Forum is, in accordance with Section 38 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, to provide information, views, advice or reports in relation to homelessness and in relation to the provisions of the first Mid West draft homelessness framework plan and the operation and implementation of the plan. The Forum will emphasis on strengthening preventative policies, procedures, working relationships and services to reduce levels of repeat homeless, thus reducing the overall level of homelessness within the region. In particular the Mid West Homeless Forum aims to address the needs of the long term homeless currently resident in emergency facilities by identifying the gaps preventing their resettlement.

¹*Towards 2016 requires the elimination of long term occupation of emergency accommodation by 2010, meaning that from that time no one should be in emergency accommodation for more than six months.*

Values and Principles

A number of values and principles have informed the development of this plan, and will underpin its implementation.

- Homelessness is solvable and preventable.
- Homelessness can only be addressed by relevant bodies working in partnership to agreed objectives.
- Homelessness has as much to do with appropriate support services as with bricks and mortar. Housing by itself will not solve homelessness in every case. There is also a need for interventions to assist people to move out of homelessness and support services to help them to maintain independent living.
- The co-operation of all relevant parties in providing co-ordinated service provision and integrated care planning is essential to eliminating long term homeless and rough sleeping.
- Services and funding made available to tackle homeless in the Mid West Region must be used in the most efficient and effective way possible.
- Services should provide continuing encouragement to people to be as independent as possible and to move out of homelessness removing service user over dependency.
- The views and experience of homeless service users and front line providers will be used to inform the planning of regional and local policy and service responses to homelessness.

Strategic Aims

This Mid West Homeless Framework Plan mirrors the six strategic aims as outlined in The Way Home:

1. To reduce the number of households who become homeless through the further development and enhancement of preventative measures – preventing homelessness.
2. To eliminate the need for people to sleep rough.
3. To eliminate long term homelessness and to reduce the length of time people spend homeless.
4. To meet the long term housing needs through an increase in housing options.
5. To ensure effective services for homeless people.
6. To ensure better co-ordinated funding arrangements and re-orientate spending on homeless services, away from emergency responses to the provision of long term housing and support services.

Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators will be developed to monitor the implementation of the Mid West Homeless Framework Plan in line with the six strategic aims outlined above:

- Aim One:** Progress will be measured by collecting accurate data on the number of new homeless individuals presenting in the region and monitoring the primary reason for their presentation.
- Aim Two:** Progress will be measured by collecting accurate data on the numbers of people sleeping rough and monitoring the patterns of rough sleeping. The trend in numbers sleeping rough relative to available accommodation is the main indicator of need to sleep rough.
- Aim Three:** Progress will be measured by collecting accurate data on the number of people in emergency accommodation, duration of stay in emergency accommodation and the number of homeless people who have a Homeless Person Centre/Unit approved Personal Action Plan in place. The trend in numbers longer than 6 months in emergency accommodation is the main indicator of reduction in long term homelessness.
- Aim Four:** Progress will be measured by collecting accurate data on the number of assessed as suitable to be moved into appropriate long term accommodation, with intensive, medium or short term supports. The trend in numbers moved to suitable long-term mainstream housing (with transitional visiting supports, where necessary) is the main indicator of progress in meeting long-term housing need.
- Aim Five:** Progress will be measured by the number of services with Service Level Agreements in place with both the relevant Local Authority and the HSE. Progress will be measured by collecting accurate data on the number of homeless people who have a Homeless Person Centre/Unit approved Personal Action Plan in place.
- Aim Six:** Progress will be measured by the number of services with Service Level Agreements in place with both the relevant Local Authority and the HSE, jointly if applicable.

3. Definition of Homelessness

For the purposes of this Homeless Framework Plan the definition of homelessness is that as has been defined in the Housing Act of 1988 as:

A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purpose of this Act if....

a. there is no accommodation available which in the opinion of the authority he together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of;

or

b. he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter, or other institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a).

c. he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.

4. National Policy Framework

In drawing up this Homeless Framework Plan the Management Group of the Mid West Homeless Forum took particular consideration of homeless and housing policies published over the past two decades. The policy framework incorporates the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government National Housing Strategy Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities, the 2008 National Homeless Strategy The Way Home and the subsequent 2009 National Implementation Plan, the 2002 Homeless Preventative Strategy, the 2001 Youth Homeless Preventative Strategy and the 2000 National Homeless Strategy.

The planning and delivery of Homeless Services is directed by the provisions of Part 2, Chapter 6, of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and the Housing Act 1988 and is underpinned by National Partnership agreement, the National Development Plan and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

This section identifies significant developments in responses to the problem of homelessness over the past two decades. Overall it is evident from policy that homelessness has moved from the direct provision of accommodation, to a more co-ordinated approach that enables homeless people to access long term accommodation and prevents homelessness from occurring and re-occurring. The key policies and legislation affecting the delivery of this strategy are outlined below;

Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides a comprehensive statutory framework for the operation of statutory Homelessness Consultative Fora and Management Groups and the making and adoption of homelessness action plans within specified time periods, publication and circulation of the adopted plans and procedures for undertaking a review of a plan or preparing a new plan are outlined. These new provisions will help to make homelessness a more central element of the housing authority functions, promote a more planned approach to homeless services throughout the country and help housing authorities to ensure that decisions on services are based on criteria of evidenced need, value for money and achieving the best outcomes for homeless people.

2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan

Implementation of the Homeless Strategy will be carried out primarily through the local homeless action plan process, which has been put on a statutory basis through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. The 2009 National Implementation Plan provides a framework to guide the action required at national level to promote and support effective implementation locally. It sets out a sequence of strategic aims, key approaches, priority actions, constituent/supporting measures necessary for implementation of the overall Homeless Strategy. The implementation plan indicates appropriate lead roles, timelines, key performance indicators and linkages to relevant local action. The plan also brings to bear on the implementation process important considerations such as efficiency, value for money, organisational and financial streamlining and the roles of various agencies, particularly in the context of the changed economic climate.

Priority areas highlighted for attention, particularly those focused on the elimination of long-term dependence on emergency homeless services, include the following:

- Action to provide effective long-term solutions for people leaving homelessness, including development of a new scheme of supports and homes through leasing or equivalent accommodation supply arrangements.
- Re-orientation of investment to support a significant increase in suitable accommodation and support for people leaving homelessness.
- New arrangements and procedures for funding of homeless services based on needs, priorities and maximising efficiency, quality and value for money.
- Urgent follow up to the reports published by the Homeless Agency in December 2008 on homeless services in Dublin.
- Engagement between the relevant Departments and the HSE to identify ways of enhancing effectiveness and best value nationally from resources in relation to homelessness.
- Co-ordination of guidance to local authorities, homeless fora and health services, particularly in the context of formulation of homeless action plans.

2008 – 2013 The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland

The Way Home was launched in 2008 and is informed by the findings and recommendations of the 2006 Fitzpatrick report. The emphasis of the new strategy is to prevent people from becoming homeless or if they should become homeless this would be short term. The ultimate intention is that persons who have accessed homeless services will be assisted out of homelessness and into long term housing in as short a time as possible.

The strategy sets out six strategic aims around three core objectives:-

- Eliminating long term occupation of emergency homeless facilities.
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough.
- Preventing the occurrence of homelessness as far as possible.

Homeless Action Plan, Limerick City 2009 - 2013

This Action Plan was commissioned by the Limerick City Homeless Forum which comprises of local and regional Voluntary Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Limerick City Council. It was undertaken by Tanya Lalor of TSA Consultancy Ltd. The Action Plan provides a fundamental view assessing the extent and type of homelessness, identified gaps in service provision and monitor / review and report on progress of the plan.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, County Clare 2008 - 2010

Murtagh & Partners, Social & Economic Consultants, were commissioned to assist the County Clare Homeless Forum which comprises of local and regional Voluntary Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Clare County Council in the development of a Homeless Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2010. The Strategy and Plan provided a fundamental view homelessness in County Clare in October 2006, it highlighted the current provision and outlined the needs of future homeless provision.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, County Limerick 2007 - 2009

This Strategy & Action Plan was completed in November 2007 having been commissioned by the Limerick County Homeless Forum. The Forum was extremely pleased with the level of consultation achieved during the development of the plan which comprised of local and Voluntary Housing Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Limerick County Council.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, North Tipperary County Council 2007 - 2009

The North The North Tipperary Homeless Strategy & Action Plan was developed in conjunction between the HSE West, North Tipperary County Council and the County Homeless Forum. Central to the preparation of the Plan is the undertaking of specific research on the extent and nature of homelessness and the adequacy of current service provision in meeting this need. The information was used to plan and implement homelessness services, for both accommodation and care/support over the period 2007 – 2009.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016

The NAPS I sets out a comprehensive programme of actions and goals to address poverty and social exclusion. It places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery and offers a framework for implementing a streamlined, cross cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The NDP incorporates measures agreed in “Towards 2016” and the social inclusion priority is of most relevance to homelessness. This priority outlines measures to address barriers to social inclusion by improving access to health care, education, training and employment and high quality housing. The main objective is to provide a coherent approach to social inclusion by improving co-ordination across central and local government, better monitoring and evaluation of interventions and consultation with stakeholders.

2007 Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities

The 2007 National Housing Strategy Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities places emphasis on the interagency approach to combating homelessness. It also places emphasis on the use of a case management approach in meeting the needs of homeless households. The strategy prioritises actions aimed at the inclusion of special needs groups within services that are focused around homelessness.

Towards 2016

Towards 2016 is part of a series of national social partnership agreements. It makes particular reference to homelessness and makes proposals in relation to improved coordination of service provision and joint approaches at local level. The aim of this national agreement is to facilitate a holistic response to the needs of homeless persons through the further development of a case management approach based on needs assessment and access to multiple services by all the key stakeholders. Other features include the elimination of long term occupation of emergency accommodation by 2010. By 2010 it is expected that no individual should remain in emergency accommodation for longer than six months.

An Independent Review of Homeless Strategies (2006)

Undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates, and commissioned by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the review focused on Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy (2000) and the Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002). It also carried out a review of local action plans. The review made 21 recommendations around 7 key themes. The Government has accepted the broad thrust of the recommendations including, a more concentrated focus on development of long term accommodation options, an improvement of co-ordination of funding, the development of a case management approach to addressing the needs of homeless people based on key workers and the development of preventative strategies, appropriate local services and supports, and better data on the extent, nature and causes of Homelessness.

The Youth Homeless Strategy (2001)

The 2001 strategy was published by the Department of Health and Children. It aimed to eliminate homelessness amongst young people under the age of eighteen years. A key element of this strategy is the prevention of homelessness among young people leaving care through the implementation of education, training, information, awareness, care and aftercare supports. The Mid Western Health Board established a Regional Youth Homelessness Forum in 2001. This forum has responsibility for implementing the HSE West Youth Homelessness Strategy, this Forum did not meet in 2009 but is to be re established shortly in line with the new HSE Integrated Services Area structures.

The Housing Act 1988

The 1988 Act defined homelessness for the first time in legislation and expanded the role of Local Authorities in addressing Homelessness. It resulted in improvements in funding available to voluntary bodies for accommodation for homeless persons. It also resulted in greater awareness of homelessness as an issue and in development of additional responses to it.

Health & Drug Strategies

There are a number of strategies relevant to the development of homeless services as health needs and addiction issues are often a contributory factor to a person becoming homeless.

The National Health Strategy Quality and Fairness A Health System for You (2001) has a specific aim of improving the health and well-being of homeless people and an overall aim to improve the operation and quality of health services generally.

The HSE Transformation Programme 2007- 2010 is an ambitious change programme to develop integrated services across all stages of the care journey which involves the configuration of Primary, Community and Continuing Care services and will see the development of Primary Care Teams and Networks to ensure maximum access to health services for all.

The 2006 Vision for Change report by the Mental Health Expert group recognises that homeless people with mental health problems have more difficulty meeting their accommodation needs. The report makes seven recommendations relating to data collection, the role of housing authorities in meeting the accommodation needs of people with mental health problems, the need for affordable and suitable housing options and the identification of a Community Mental Health Team in each catchment area.

The National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2016 focuses on the needs of specific groups in accessing services. The strategy recognises the complex needs of homeless people and prioritises further engagement with homeless people and the provision of drug treatment and prevention measures at national, regional and local level.

County/City Development Plans 2007-2013

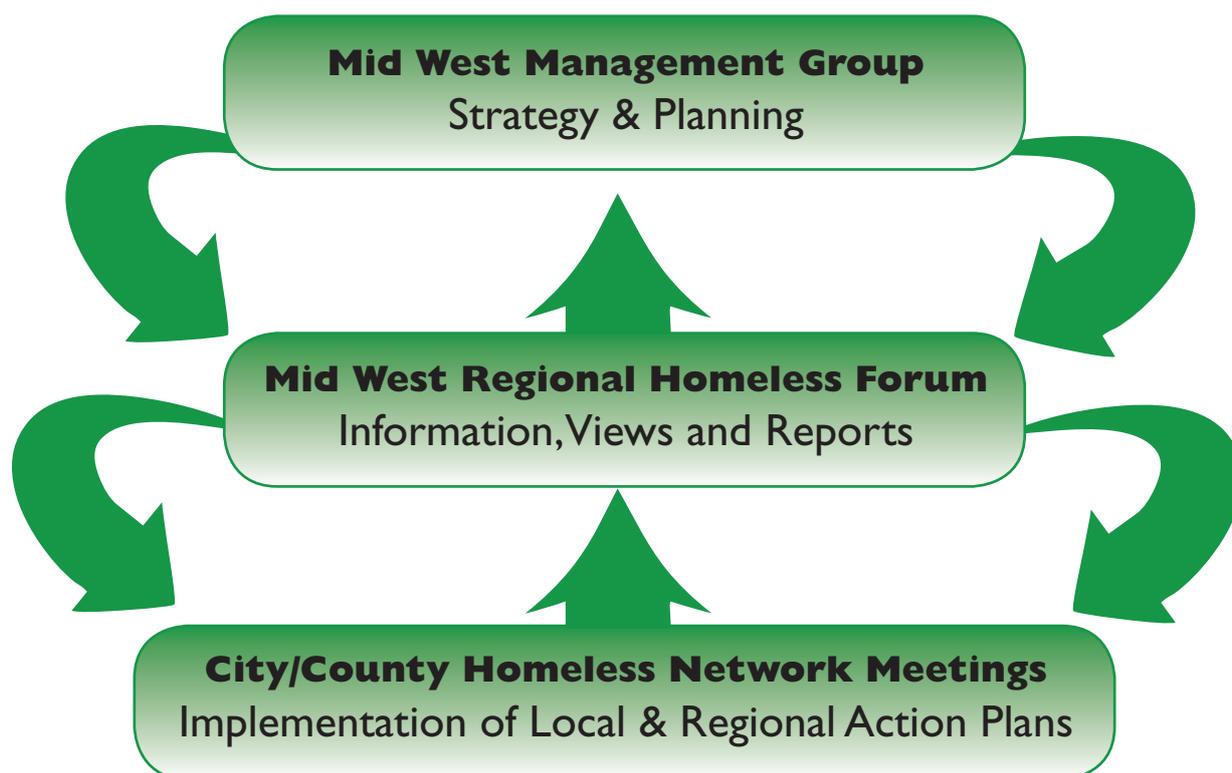
Each Local Authority has a County/City Development Plan which seeks to develop and improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the county/city. The purpose of the plan is to inform the public, statutory authorities and service providers, developers and other interested parties, of the policy framework that will guide development decisions within the county/city over the plan period.

Each County/City Development Plan includes a **Housing Strategy** which seeks:

- to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for residential use and made available to meet the requirements of all sectors of the population.
- to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income, particularly those in need of social housing.
- to ensure a mixture of house type is developed to match requirements of different categories of households, particularly vulnerable households.
- to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different backgrounds.

Arising from the Housing Act 2009, a **Housing Services Plan** will be developed by each Local Authority which will outline the provision of housing services of each LA having regard to the requirements of the housing strategy. The Housing Services Plan will outline the demand for affordable housing, and will include the Traveller Accommodation programme, the Homeless Framework Plan, the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and the Sustainable Neighbourhood Strategy of each LA.

5. Regional Implementation Structures



Mid West Management Group – Mid West Homeless Forum

A Management Group of the Mid West Homeless Forum was established in accordance with legislation with the primary responsibility for the preparation of this statutory Mid West Homeless Framework Plan and to make recommendations to relevant statutory bodies in relation to the services required to address homelessness in the region, on funding for such services and on the ongoing operation of this Homeless Framework Plan and subsequent blueprint for Homeless Services.

Mid West Homeless Forum

The Mid West Homeless Forum was established in April 2010 arising from Ministerial directions issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in Circular HU 1/2010 in accordance with the provisions of sections 38, 39 and 41 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. The role of the Mid West Homeless Forum is to provide a consultative mechanism in relation to homelessness in the context of the preparation of this statutory Mid West Homeless Framework Plan 2010 - 2013.

Membership of the Mid West Homeless Forum

The 22 members of the Mid West Homeless Forum are drawn from the sectors as outlined in Circular HU 1/2010 and will work together over the next five years. The membership is drawn from the following sectors:

Sector	Agency	No.
Mid West Local Authorities	Limerick City Council - Responsible Authority	2
	Limerick County Council	1
	North Tipperary County Council	1
	Clare County Council	1
Statutory Representation	HSE West	2
	Probation Service	1
	Irish Prison Service	1
	FÁS	1
	Department of Social Protection	1
	Vocational Education Committees	1
	Other Representation	Regional Drugs Task Force
Voluntary Bodies	Member of Limerick City Council	1
	Saint Vincent DePaul	1
	Novas Initiatives	1
	Thomond House	1
	Cuan Mhuire	1
	Focus Ireland	1
	Clare Haven	1
	North Tipperary Community & Social Services	1
	Mid West Simon Community	1
Total Mid West Homeless Forum		22

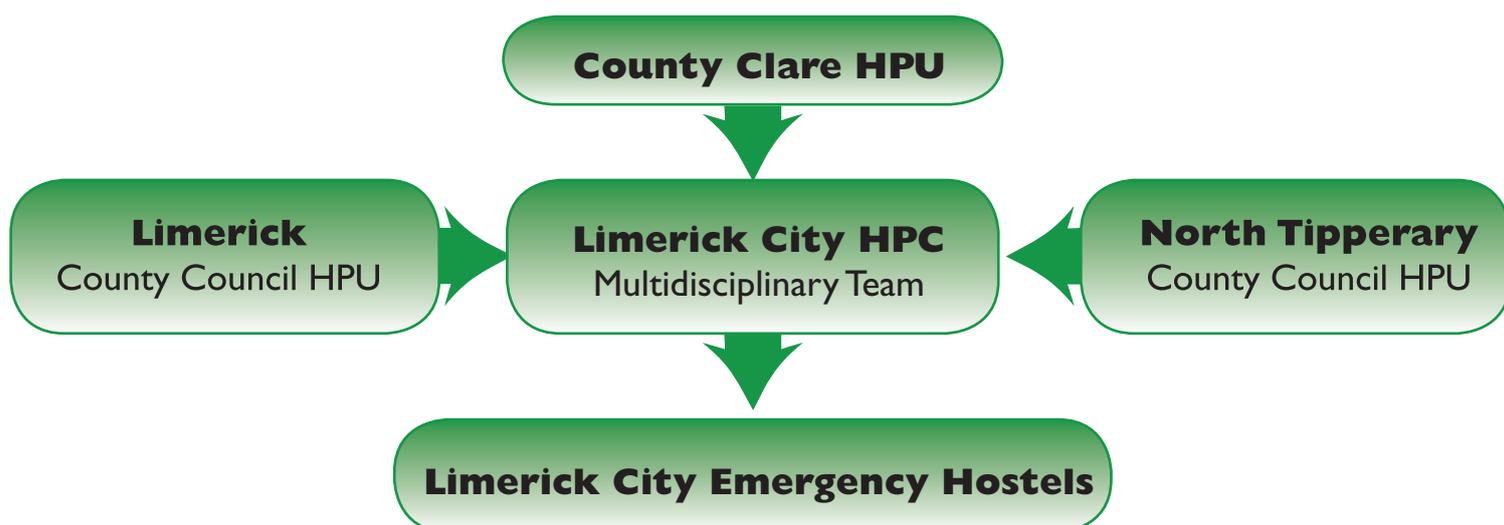
Case Management Structure

Development of Regional Homeless Action Teams, This model of Case Management within the region will be managed by the Homeless Persons Centre / HPU's to link persons placed in the authorities emergency accommodation who can eventually be returned to their area of origin. The RHAT will operate in across each of the Local Authority areas and will be comprised of Local Authority officials, HSE healthcare and community welfare staff and representatives from voluntary service providers. Each Homeless Action Team meets to co-ordinate an inter agency response to the support needs and case management of homeless people and individuals at risk of becoming homeless. Regional HAT's not only work together on coordinating support for individuals but also in identifying gaps in services which the team can then address.

Local Homeless Networks

City / County Homeless Networks are to replace the original County / City Homeless Forums; this will allow a continuum of local focus on homeless services focusing on local information sharing and will allow a flow of regional information to and from the Regional Homeless Forum Meetings. The Local Homeless Network meetings will equally be an open arena in terms of show casing services between authority areas as it educates staff from various services.

Regional Emergency Hostel Provision



Partnership Operational Model



HPC / HPU Partnership

A protocol to enhance the working relationship between each of the Local Authorities HPU's and HPC (all jointly staff with HSE & LA's) will be developed in order to explore the various areas of cross over within the region. Areas which must be covered include Referral Process, Out of Hours Service, Enhanced Community Welfare Service, Tenancy Support and Service Level Agreements (SLA). This protocol will be considered a work in progress and additional areas can be added when identified as necessary following quarterly monitoring reviews .

6. Regional Trends & Gaps

Homeless Presentations to each individual area in the region.

Area	2008	2009	% Change
Limerick City	816	940	+ 15.2%
Limerick County	368	424	+ 15.2%
North Tipperary	154	163	+ 5.2%
Clare	482	565	+ 17.22%
Total	1,820	2,092	+ 14.8%

These figures have been recorded by each Local Authority with the assistance of the HSE West. The Figures represent households which in many cases include children, especially in Domestic Violence services in Limerick City and County Clare. The increase in numbers is consistent across the region with presentations up in almost all services. Every effort has been made to ensure duplication has been avoided across the region and within services.

No of Homeless presentations in Limerick City²

Limerick City Homeless Presentations	2008	2009	% Change
St Patrick's Hostel	138	188	+ 36%
Suaimhneas ³	30	21	- 30%
Brother Russell	35	56	+ 60%
Mc Garry House ⁴	90	86	- 5%
Thomond House	79	94	+ 19%
Limerick City Community Welfare Officers	86	55	- 36.05%
Homeless Person Centre(HPC) ⁵	134	210	+57%
Adapt	224	230	+ 3%
Total	816	940	+ 15.2%

²This table includes all homeless presentations in Limerick City including those who go to hostel accommodation and those who do not go to any homeless service (usually dealt with by the HPC e.g. Staying with friends or refuse hostel). It does not include those presentations from other Local Authority areas who are referred back to their county of origin.

³It is noted that the Suaimhneas number of families accommodated has reduced, this is due to the fact that the average length of stay has increased due to service users .

⁴McGarry House turn over of service users has reduced as a result of increased intravenous drug use and related addictions.

⁵These figures only include those that presented as homeless to and did not go on to any form of emergency accommodation.

While locally the services based in each of the 4 Local Authority areas operate independently of each other and they only occasionally meet to discuss one off service user issues. The main linkage in the region is currently the HSE Social Inclusion Office as they provide the most input from a services overview providing funding for the entire region. However, while Local Authorities operate independently, the needs of service users and those persons who find themselves homeless remain extremely consistent across the region.

Young Adult Homeless

A greater number of Young People (17-25) are presenting to homeless services across the region. Many have one or more substance issue, based on the treatment drug and alcohol figures as set out below.

While the causes of homelessness for this group of service users is varied three primary areas are:-

1. Young people leaving the Care System
2. Family Dispute
3. Reduction in Social Welfare Payments.

1. The options available to the many young people leaving the care system on an annual basis are very limited with Private Rented and Supported Lodgings being the most readily available. This lack of proactive solution leads to the inevitable pathway to emergency homeless services which in turn often leads to a number of other issues including a gateway to drug usage. A return to the Regional Youth Homeless Forum is essential as an urgent requirement to deal with the accommodation issues for this group.

2. Mediation by Youth Support Workers, Supporting Mothers and the Youth Aftercare Team try and provide a middle ground solution to children (some 18-20) and parents experiencing extreme difficulties. While every effort is made to reach a solution many young people end up in emergency accommodation or sofa surfing with friends.

3. For many young people who avail of beds in hostels or the many who remain sofa surfing with friends, it has become increasingly difficult to resettle these service users as the minimal payment makes it difficult to sustain independent living. While the incentive to return to education is extremely positive motivation with the financial incentive, the general experience has been that the waiting list time has actually become a cause for returning young people to homeless services.

Progress has been made on a service that focuses on young people who may be either 1. homeless, 2. have a learning disability or 3. been in the care system in the past (sometimes all 3). This service while small, has

proven very effective in dealing with a very specific group of young people focusing on their general life skills and ensuring they are occupied during the day. Outreach (In form of Sustainment) is also offered to former service users ensuring a support model that is familiar to them will continue for as long is deemed required. Developing this service in a larger setting should be explored as this model has proven extremely effective in keeping young people out of emergency hostels.

Non-National Homeless

The number Non-Nationals presenting to emergency homeless services while not significant has steadily increased over the past 4 to 5 years. This increase has grown in momentum as a result of the national economic down turn with many non-nationals previously employed in the building and service industry. This group are currently unable to source employment and have no intention of returning home. Regionally the statutory agencies have very little flexibility in terms of being in a position to fund persons outside of the Habitual Residence Conditions (HRC).

This is when the good will of Voluntary Agencies has been to the fore in supporting such cases. This has added serious financial strain on Voluntary Agencies considering service users rent contribution often covers 20% of the emergency hostels budget. It is envisaged that this issue is going to be a significant concern into the future and one which will place Voluntary Housing Agencies in financial difficulty.

County of Origin

The issue in relation to a persons County of Origin has been an agenda item for some time between Local Authorities in the Mid West. This concern will be addressed with the formulation of an effective system of a Regional Homeless Action Team (RHAT). It is anticipated that resettlement for persons wishing to return to their county of origin will become more coordinated and managed.

Long Term Housing

Homeless persons accessing long term mainstream housing is a priority for each HPC / HPU when working with a service user who is ready for independent living with or without supports. However, former homeless service users tenancies are prone to fail for a number of reason regardless of them being settled in Local Authority housing, private rented accommodation or with a Voluntary Housing Body. The main causes of tenancy failure for former homeless service users are:-

1. Poor Life Skills
2. Type/Location of Accommodation
3. Private Rented Accommodation

1. Poor Life Skills is a difficult area for emergency hostels to address with service users in terms of assisting them prepare for living alone. Tenancy Support staff provide a vital role in helping address and educate service users as to what is required of them while living in their own accommodation. A Tenancy Program such as the one developed in Limerick City by Focus Ireland has operated successfully for 3 years graduating former emergency hostel service users every 4 months and assisting them source long term accommodation.

2. The type and location of long term accommodation available to homeless service users is extremely important, many have often sourced poor quality and poorly located housing in a reaction to getting out of emergency hostels. Solutions aimed at solving this concern in the past focused on the development of CAS properties by voluntary bodies and new developments by Local Authorities. CAS developments are by far the preferred method of solving long term homeless housing in cluster developments where supports are at hand on site and the Mid West Regional Homeless Forum endorse this as the preference of delivery of units. This does not disregard the introduction of the Leasing and SLI Schemes by the DOE&LG and methods to progress both of these in conjunction with CAS must be explored to deal with Long Term Homelessness.

3. Homeless persons throughout the region access private rented accommodation on a daily basis and many maintain these tenancies without any difficulty. However, as a source of long term housing it is not acceptable as service users are not obliged to any formal agreement when HPC/HPU's engage tenancy support to help sustain the tenancy.

In terms of progressing long term housing solutions in the mid west, the Regional Homeless Forum generally agreed that the new solutions available must be explored further and schemes such as RAS and CAS projects should continue to be sourced.

GP Services

Emergency Homeless Hostels within Limerick City have recently experienced some **Out of Hours GP** difficulties for non elderly homeless service users where Shannon Doc does not provide out of hours cover. While a full time dedicated Homeless GP service for the Region would be very much the ideal scenario, however in the current financial climate is unlikely to be a viable option in the future.

Domestic Violence

There are two Women's Refuges in the Mid West Region i.e. ADAPT Services, Limerick and Clare Haven Services, Ennis. These two refuges provide a total of 19 family units for women and children fleeing domestic abuse (6 units Clare Haven – 13 ADAPT). In 2009, 150 women and 287 children were admitted to Clare Haven Refuge, Ennis and 230 women and 475 children to ADAPT Services Refuge, Limerick. A further 154 families presented to these two refuges, but could not be accommodated as they were at capacity. A stay in either of these domestic violence services can range from a few days to a few weeks and often longer depending on any one individual families circumstances.

Research and evidence in the area of domestic violence highlights that the time of attempting to leave the family home and accessing the legal system is the most dangerous time of escalated physical violence and homicide for women. Study after study also demonstrates the failure of the civil and criminal justice systems to provide immediate and effective protection for victims of domestic violence. Women may be engaged in civil and criminal legal proceedings for up to two years struggling with protective orders, breaches of orders and legal separation without any form of stable safe home for themselves and their children. If they are forced to live in unsuitable emergency accommodation in instances when refuges are full, or stay with family and friends (which may result in overcrowding or being accessible to the perpetrator) the chances for many women of being able to escape are minimal.

Traveller women dealing with domestic violence face the additional discrimination of racism in trying to negotiate their rights and access options. If their abuser is a member of their own community, they face isolation from their community if they seek to get away from or take legal action against their abuser. For some traveller women living with, or in close proximity to the abuser's family coupled with the lack of housing options available to them, their only safe option may be repeated use of refuge accommodation (if available).

A recent report commissioned by the Immigrant Council of Ireland highlighted the particular experience of immigrant women in relation to domestic abuse. A number of factors including not being able to work, economic dependence, isolation from support systems of family and community and her legal status being dependent on the abuser were identified as increasing immigrant women's vulnerability to abuse and entrapment in the violent situation. The report recommends that a woman who experiences domestic violence and who enters the country as a dependent spouse should not be deported and once in Ireland should have her status recognised independently of the spouse.

When this Framework Plan is adopted, all homeless services in the region will be reviewed with the positive aim of providing a more comprehensive range of homeless services to the region. The review of domestic violence facilities will be treated with the respect, sensitivity and empathy that will be afforded to all vulnerable person services in the region.

Head Shops

The emergence of Head Shops has added to the already difficult role of service providers managing emergency hostels. This addition to the substance catalogue is currently being tackled by legislation at a national level. However, the supply of these type of substances continues to be developed and rebranded to evade laws. This issue is a growing concern amongst service providers. It is recommended that further investigation be carried out to quantify usage and effects and to inform the development of policy to address the trend.

Rural Homelessness

Rural Homelessness is extremely hard to quantify in terms of the exact figures of those who may be homeless in any part of the region. Presentations to county HPU's are generally from the larger town's and villages in each authority, these presentations can often be dealt with in terms of a local solution to meet the accommodation and support needs of those presenting. Some persons at risk of homelessness may be dispersed in small villages in the sparsely populated remote hinterland of County Limerick, Clare or North Tipperary. The necessary interventions and responses will be triggered in these instances by Community Welfare Officers, Public Health Nurse, GPs, Housing Authorities, Social Services etc. An audit of such cases should be examined as part of the review process, and in particular by the relevant housing authorities during the preparation of their local homeless actions.

Drugs and Alcohol

It is widely acknowledged that a negative perception exists in the general population that all homeless people have substance abuse issues and beg on the streets because they have no means of income and prefer to live out. The reality is very different. Each presentation must be assessed on its own individual merits and without prejudice as individual circumstances vary from person to person.

The management of the Limerick City emergency hostels undertook a basic review of persons they considered to have some form of Alcohol or Drug dependency at May 14th 2010. This review revealed that 65% of the entire emergency homeless population suffered from some form of alcohol or drug dependency.

This figure is relatively high even for an urban setting and while treatment options within the region are available (and utilised by homeless persons as per tables 6.1 & 6.2), there are gaps in the continuum of care in relation to both provision of services and blockages in relation to access of services for homeless drug and alcohol users. This would include access to day treatment services; harm reduction services, mental health services and detox (see NACD Report Drug Use Among the Homeless Population in Ireland 2005). It is expected that the Mid West Regional Homeless Forum will consultant with the specialist treatment services in the region including the Mid West Regional Drugs Task Force to ensure that; i) drug and alcohol services are accessible to homeless people, ii) provide services that are grounded in best practise and the evidence-base in relation to working with this particular cohort of drug/alcohol misusers and iii) services are developed with the needs of homeless people in mind; and to pursue this as a priority action item for the period 2010 - 2013.

Type of Accommodation												
	Stable Acc		Institution (Prison, clinic)		Homeless		Other unstable accommodation		Not known		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Clare	54	51	-	5	-	3	-	-	-	-	65	61
Limerick City	167	177	41	52	19	16	6	-	6	-	239	254
Limerick County	46	56	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	61	63
Tipperary North	39	55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	63
Total	306	339	49	63	34	24	11	8	8	7	408	441

Table 6.1 Area of residence by type of accommodation for cases with a drug as a main problem and treated.

Type of Accommodation												
	Stable Acc		Institution (Prison, clinic)		Homeless		Other unstable accommodation		Not known		Total	
	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
Clare	114	94	14	-	5	7	-	-	-	-	136	104
Limerick City	129	126	19	24	27	17	6	5	-	5	185	177
Limerick County	141	139	6	-	17	10	-	-	-	-	164	158
Tipperary North	90	147	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	99	156
Total	474	506	40	32	56	36	10	8	4	13	584	595

Table 6.2 Area of residence by type of accommodation for cases with alcohol as a main problem and treated.

Limerick Prison

Formal Discharge Protocols from Limerick Prison must be developed in order to strengthen the linkages already established with the Irish Prison Service. It has been well documented that Limerick Prison has difficulty in dealing with the high volume of offenders being sentenced in the courts throughout the region. This increase has led to many offenders being granted Temporary Release (TR) from prison much sooner than expected and also in an unplanned manner with no regard for the provision of unconfirmed addresses provided by the prisoner in an effort for them to secure TR. Many prisoners present as being homeless while on Temporary Release as they cannot stay at the address provided by them, this issue exacerbates the already high number of persons in emergency accommodation.

Discharge from Hospital

Discharge from Hospital protocols have been in place with the Mid West Regional Hospital and homeless services and have worked reasonably well. However there is an need for much better coordination in implementing the new Hospitals Integrated Discharge Policy. The linkages with Mental Health services have also greatly improved over the past number of years with the employment of a dedicated Community Mental Health Nurse as part of the multi disciplinary team attached to the HPC in Limerick city. However, discharge from hospital and other care settings is still an issue for some parts of the region and needs to be addressed.

7. Homeless Services Framework

This element of the Framework Plan, the Homeless Services Framework, seeks to outline a comprehensive model, at a generic level, of the various components of homeless services and arrangements required. This will constitute an overall policy framework for homeless services at local/regional level, providing a comprehensive model for effective homeless services and arrangements designed to achieve the aims of the Government's Homeless Strategy in the area/region.

Following compilation and analysis of more detailed data and completion of a rigorous review of homeless service requirements, the Action Plan will be supplemented by a detailed Implementation Blueprint of homeless services, which will provide the necessary detail to give effect to the framework model, with more specific identification of the nature and extent of homeless services, facilities and arrangements required during the life of the plan and necessary details such as location, quantification, operational arrangements, service provider involvement, etc.

General principles relating to homeless services

Key principles which will be applied in decisions relating to homeless services include:

The overall objective in planning and delivery of homeless services is to achieve the best outcome for homeless households by matching services to needs. It is essential to maximise effectiveness and value for money in homeless services and make the best possible use of available resources to pursue the core objectives of the Homeless Strategy, particularly ending long-term homelessness⁶

Homeless services in certain areas may need to be configured to promote the objectives of the Homeless Strategy and National Implementation Plan, having regard to needs and priorities in the area and available resources. The scope for greater rationalisation and improved organisation of all aspects of homeless services (especially in centres of greater concentration of homeless persons e.g. Limerick City) will be examined with a view to avoiding or eliminating any duplication, maximising effectiveness and efficiency and ensuring that scarce resources are only used for services which make a significant contribution to addressing homelessness. As well as examining the match between supply of and need for different categories of accommodation, this will include critical examination of elements (where relevant) such as the operation of any placement services, outreach services, information services, other possible daytime services and various types of support services. All existing support type services and resources, however termed (e.g. housing support, tenancy support, social work, tenancy sustainment, settlement, re-settlement, housing welfare, etc) will be identified and taken into account in determining service requirements.

⁶Note: Specific issues in this regard are dealt with under Strategic Aim 5 of the National Implementation Plan for the Homeless Strategy, while related matters regarding appraisal and funding of services are dealt with under Strategic Aim 6. These could be referenced, as appropriate.

Decisions relating to the configuration of services will be based on rigorous analysis of relevant, comprehensive, accurate, and up to date information, particularly in relation to needs and existing homeless services, including aspects such as unit cost analysis, cost variations between services, usage of services, duration of homelessness and outcomes for service users.

In considering any new proposals in relation to homeless services, account must be taken of likely constraints on availability of capital and the likelihood that, for the foreseeable future, a significant proportion of any projects that may be warranted will need to be pursued through revenue based “leasing” type arrangements.

Main elements of homeless services

Homeless Services will be configured and operated to support the successful implementation at local/regional level of the Government’s Homeless Strategy and the National Implementation Plan for the Strategy, which contain the following main objectives:

- Prevention of homelessness
- Eliminating need to sleep rough
- Eliminating long term homelessness and meeting long-term housing need
- Ensuring that homeless services are effective and of adequate standard.

The following is an outline of the main elements of homeless services to support achievement of these objectives:

Homelessness prevention/intervention

Arrangements to ensure identification of and contact with and by, people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including possible outreach services as warranted.

- Measures to help prevent homelessness due to loss of accommodation or to identify a route away from entering homelessness (e.g. provision or retention of housing, securing necessary income support to retain tenancy, etc).
- Effective arrangements for provision of clear information and advice on housing options, homeless services and other relevant services to prevent or address homelessness.
- Arrangements for early intervention in cases of risk of homelessness due to other factors, including securing relevant in-reach services e.g. to prisons, hospitals, or other relevant institutions.

- Prompt initial assessment to determine homelessness, applying appropriate and consistent operational criteria.⁷
- Arrangements to ensure prompt access to or contact by the Community Welfare Service for people at risk of homelessness or actually homeless, both in relation to general social welfare entitlements and rent supplements and deposits.
- Liaison with HSE and Prison/Probation Services through the Forum in relation relevant matters, including in-reach services, discharge protocols and arrangements for accommodation and other relevant services (e.g. health/addiction services) for persons approaching discharge.
- Arrangements for identification and preventative action, through relevant agencies, in respect of particular risk groups and risk factors such as rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, family breakdown, offenders (including sex offenders and ex-offenders, domestic violence (including possible removal of perpetrator).
- Liaison with HSE to address the potential risk of youth homelessness to act as a route to adult homelessness.

Rough sleepers

- Rough sleeper counts in areas where warranted.
- Consideration of possible “street outreach” requirements, where warranted, and compilation of information and implementation of arrangements to eliminate any need to sleep rough
- Arrangements for access to, and appropriate admissions policies to, emergency homeless facilities.
- Arrangements for access by rough sleepers to drug, alcohol and health services, including adequate awareness by rough sleepers of available services.
- Availability of appropriate contingency arrangements for deployment to assist habitual rough sleepers in the event of severe weather or significant emergency.

Temporary Homeless Accommodation

- Provision of adequate supply of appropriate temporary accommodation where necessary,
- Implementation of effective “bed management” arrangements for operation of accommodation and placement of people.
- Minimise use of relatively expensive B&B accommodation and promote and plan for movement to mainstream housing as soon as possible.
- Arrangements to ensure adequate standards of accommodation.

⁷Initial material in this regard has been produced in the context of the Dublin re-configuration and further guidance will be issued in that regard.

Assessment, health/care, case management/planning, service availability/quality

- Prompt and effective follow up and support in relation to persons entering temporary accommodation, with a view to minimising duration of homelessness (target maximum duration of 6 months but less as far as possible) and the risk of recurrence of homelessness, including:
- Proactive arrangements to ensure all eligible persons are “registered” for social housing.
- Ongoing liaison with HSE, which is responsible for health/care aspects and related personal, social or community supports, including ensuring availability of any relevant specialist services, e.g. in relation to mental ill health, other disabilities, psychological, addiction or behavioural issues, ex-offenders, young people leaving care, etc.
- Arrangements to ensure that people in homeless facilities have access to or are referred to relevant mainstream services e.g. in the health, welfare, education, employment and training sectors and have access to information and advice on such services.
- Arrangements for adequate in-reach services to people in temporary accommodation e.g. by education, training, employment or other agencies with functions relevant to helping people to progress out of homelessness.
- Full assessment (with involvement of relevant agencies) to determine housing, health/care and other needs (including complex and multiple needs) and determine most appropriate options: 1. housing and housing support needs. 2. health and care and related support needs. 3. other possible non-housing support needs; Needs relating to the foregoing to be specified in an accommodation/support plan
- Arrangements for case planning and care and case management and ongoing case assessment, as appropriate, and action to implement an accommodation and support plan. A case management approach is considered beneficial in the delivery of homeless services.⁸ In particular, decisions to provide housing supports and the extent and duration of any such supports, must be based on rigorous assessment resulting in an accurate housing support plan for each individual.
- Measures to ensure the quality and effectiveness of homeless services and that best practice and health and safety requirements are fully implemented.
- Arrangements to ensure adequate availability and appropriate localisation of homeless services.
- Implementation of arrangements to plan and deliver appropriate accommodation for households, ranging from homeless facilities to long term accommodation, including reconfiguration/adaptation of existing facilities for use as long-term accommodation.

⁸Information in that regard is available in various publications by the Homeless Agency, including *Pathway to Home*, published in June 2009 (available at www.homelessagency.ie).

Long-term homeless accommodation

- Action to ensure availability of an adequate supply of suitable long-term supported residential accommodation for homeless people who do not have capacity to progress to mainstream housing, having due regard to whether the needs of such persons are primarily of a health/care nature.
- The potential to provide long-term accommodation, as necessary, by adapting existing emergency or transitional facilities will be exploited.
- Implementation of licence or tenancy agreements, as appropriate, in respect of long term residence in homeless facilities or independent accommodation (in which case the households concerned will no longer be counted as homeless).
- Audit/survey of existing premises (private, local authority or voluntary) used to accommodate homeless households to be undertaken to assess its potential suitability for use as long-term accommodation, in line with overall service re-configuration requirements, instead of emergency or transitional use, with adaptations where necessary, with emphasis on providing self contained mainstream accommodation units. Decisions to this effect would have regard to relevant factors such as the nature, size, capacity, condition, facilities, etc, of the existing accommodation, the requirements for use as long-term accommodation and the extent and cost of any adaptations required.
- Possible conversion of existing arrangements with private accommodation owners, where relevant, to leasing or RAS type arrangements.

Care and supports and inter-agency protocols

Consideration of need for tenancy support services (visiting support - see SLI scheme circular and details) of appropriate duration and intensity for homeless households who move to mainstream accommodation.

- Co-ordination with HSE and other relevant agencies to ensure availability of necessary health/care and other services and personal, social or community supports through HSE for people who move from homeless facilities to mainstream housing.
- Appropriate protocols between the housing authorities and the HSE or other relevant agencies, in relation to the provision of the foregoing services and supports⁹ and other matters relevant to homelessness such as children leaving care, older people with care needs who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, discharge of people at risk of homelessness from health or other institutions.

⁹Housing authorities are responsible for tenancy supports, while the provision and funding of personal and social supports is the responsibility of the HSE, in addition to health/care services. A draft protocol in relation to support services in the context of the SLI initiative in Dublin is being developed.

Data and information

- Production of comprehensive and accurate data and information in relation to homelessness (including numbers, flows, duration and other relevant characteristics) and homeless services (including capacity, adequacy, usage, staffing, cost, revenue and other relevant operational and other information).
- Specific arrangements to obtain relevant data on homelessness, including maximum participation in new national client database (PASS) which is to be rolled out on a nationwide basis, undertaking homeless counts/surveys as appropriate and ensuring adequate reports and information from service providers.
- Accessing relevant data available through other agencies such as CSO, hospitals, prisons, as appropriate, to underpin the effectiveness of policy and action to address homelessness.
- Provision of directories of homeless services, as warranted.
- Appropriate arrangements for sharing of data/information subject to ensuring compliance with data protection requirements.

Organisational/resource aspects

- Appropriate staffing, training, staff information, procedures and organisational arrangements to facilitate effective action to address homelessness.
- Adequate prioritisation of action to address homelessness relative to the incidence of homelessness.
- Accurate costing of the various elements of homeless services and accessing of all available sources of funding to prevent/address homelessness.
- The decisions on configuration of services will need to have regard to likely trends in funding allocations as well as ensuring that services are organised and operated on the principles of cost effectiveness, value for money and adequate standards, underpinned by appropriate arrangements for procurement and oversight.
- Appropriate balance between in resources for accommodation and health/care functions. It is essential to ensure that the effectiveness of health/care and related services is not in any way diminished in the context of any possible reconfiguration of services and that adequate HSE funding for health/care elements, including personal, social and community elements of support services, will be available. It will, accordingly, be important to ensure that relevant savings arising to the HSE in any possible reconfiguration process are not lost to homeless services.

Ending long-term homelessness and providing long-term housing

In accordance with the Government's Homeless Strategy, a core objective of the Action Plan is the ending long-term homelessness and providing adequate long-term accommodation, as necessary, to achieve this and help homeless households to independent living. Homeless services will be organised and operated so as to promote this objective. This will involve appropriate arrangements to provide adequate supply of suitable housing, housing supports, where necessary, and policies and procedures to enable homeless house-

holds to move to mainstream housing as quickly as possible. This is likely to involve largely phasing out the use of transitional housing, which experience internationally has found to be relatively ineffective from a cost/benefit perspective, confining the supply of emergency accommodation to a level appropriate to meet short-term needs and decommissioning any accommodation that may not be fit for purpose. In this context the reference to transitional facilities relates to housing rather than any possible health/care facilities which might be warranted e.g. to provide for a step down approach to persons recovering from addiction, mental health issues etc which are the responsibility of the HSE.

Action to end long term homelessness will be underpinned by arrangements to provide mainstream accommodation for people progressing from homelessness using the full range of relevant housing interventions, particularly the following:

private rented accommodation, if people are assessed as not needing tenancy support and have prospects of being able to meet their own housing costs in due course.

social housing (including RAS, which is considered appropriate for households assessed as having low or no housing support needs); housing authorities' allocations policies to support the objective of ending long-term homelessness;

use of additional sources of accommodation for the purposes of the SLI scheme.

SLI involves the provision of accommodation (utilising unsold affordable houses available to local authorities or units procured through any of the mechanisms available under the social housing leasing initiative), for people who can progress to independent living in mainstream housing with low to moderate visiting supports, where necessary, procured through open competitive tendering, with supports tapering off as a person progresses to independent living (expected to be generally within 6 months). Some key features of SLI are summarised for reference in Appendix C.

The provision of long-term accommodation of homeless households has now been further underpinned by a new Enhanced Programme¹⁰ which involves a combination of existing schemes and current and capital funding, largely through the social housing leasing initiative, but with a number of improved conditions to address the particular issues arising in sourcing accommodation for homeless people and streamlined processing arrangements, including detailed briefing and information for AHBs e.g. regarding type and location of units needed, sustainable communities issues, etc. People housed under the programme will be long-term homeless and consequential savings on the operation of homeless facilities must be identified.

¹⁰Some broad features of the programme include: procurement of accommodation by Approved Housing Bodies; leveraging of maximum units through leasing or purchase using private or HFA funding, with capital funding being contingent on a multiple of current funded units being procured or representing a proportion of total current funding (generally in a ratio of 4:1 current to capital); protection for housing bodies against letting voids; enhanced repair and replacement allowance per tenancy; increased flexibility in availability payments for apartments;

A detailed programme for provision of long-term accommodation for homeless households will be drawn up in the context of the Implementation Blueprint, including:

- Identifying numbers of households requiring different types of long term provision – mainstream housing without support; mainstream housing with visiting support; accommodation in facilities with on-site support; other (e.g. nursing home).
- Setting specific targets, having regard to the profile of homeless households, for providing long term accommodation for homeless households, with particular emphasis on 2010, whether social housing (local authority and voluntary), private rented, RAS, or additional accommodation procured through social housing leasing.
- ensuring, through the HSE or other relevant agencies, availability of adequate health and social services to address health/care, personal and other non-housing needs.

Role of relevant organisations and co-ordination of activities

The overall system or model of homeless services to be provided for in the Implementation Blueprint will incorporate appropriate arrangements relating to the role of the various relevant agencies and service providers and co-ordination of their activities and functions, including the following matters:

Housing authorities (responsible for accommodation aspects) must operate in partnership with HSE (responsible for health/care aspects) in planning, funding, delivery, monitoring and review of homeless services. Active involvement is needed on the part of all relevant public authorities, mainstream services/specialist services and any other relevant agencies, with effective inter-agency co-ordination and collaboration, including the implementation of relevant protocols, as appropriate. The Homelessness Consultative Forum will provide a vehicle for ensuring effective inter-agency arrangements and protocols to determine responsibilities, liaison, etc, between agencies and also co-ordination with adjacent/constituent local authorities. The DEHLG shares responsibility with the HSE for policy, legislation and funding to address adult homelessness, with housing authorities being responsible for accommodation and related services, including tenancy supports, as necessary, while the HSE has responsibility for health/care issues, including personal, social, or community supports, as necessary. The HSE has full responsibility in relation to child/youth homelessness. There is, however, clearly a need for adequate coordination in relation to people leaving child/youth services.

An inter-agency approach is particularly important to ensure effective measures for prevention of homelessness, with emphasis on maximising active participation locally of all relevant agencies (Strategic Aim 1 of the Homeless Strategy Implementation Plan).

Housing authorities will not take responsibility for services that are appropriate to other agencies (e.g. of a specialist nature) or which involve duplication of services, as funding will not be available to them for any services that do not accord with these requirements, for example, “Section 10” funding will not be recoupable for any costs that may arise in contravention of that principle. All potential sources of funding relevant to addressing homelessness should be accessed as far as possible.

An appropriate assignment of responsibilities among relevant agencies needs to be maintained, with particular regard for the shared responsibilities of the housing authorities and the HSE as the lead agencies in addressing homelessness, but also taking account of other agencies that may have an important input to make. Equally where new types of services are being developed it is important to set appropriate boundaries. This is not detrimental to inter-agency action, which is critical to addressing homelessness. On the contrary, lack of clarity in relation to roles can militate against an effective and collaborative inter-agency approach. This is very important in the context of the provision of support services to homeless persons.

All service providers will be required (subject to an appropriate lead-in period, where necessary), as a condition of funding, to enter service level agreements and to participate in a new shared client database (PASS) which is currently being developed and will be rolled out nationally, as appropriate (Priority Actions 8.4.4 and 8.4.5 of the Homeless Strategy Implementation Plan).

Appropriate procurement arrangements for the provision of services (e.g. visiting tenancy support), involving competitive tendering as far as possible/appropriate, will be operated in accordance with Government requirements/guidelines.

Engagement and operation of services will be subject to contract or service level agreement, as appropriate, setting out relevant requirements, responsibilities, etc, including performance requirements, targets, data provision, reporting, accountability, financial conditions, etc.

The Homelessness Forum Management Group, utilising the statutory and voluntary membership of the Forum, will promote cross cutting engagement with appropriate statutory, voluntary and community partners generally to address identified and emerging need.

8. Implementation Blueprint of Homeless Services

An Implementation Blueprint will be formulated in accordance with the Framework provisions in chapter 7 by [30 September 2010] setting out the specific measures and detailed services and arrangements required to give effect to the Action Plan in accordance with the framework in chapter 7. This will, in effect, constitute a supplement to this Plan.

The Blueprint will, in particular:

- Determine the appropriate configuration of homeless services and any need for re-configuration of existing services.
- Provide a decision template for any proposals relating to homeless services.
- Inform decisions in relation to funding allocations for homeless services.

The Implementation Blueprint will provide the basis for decisions relating to services and investment in that regard. All proposals relating to homeless services will be rigorously assessed by the Homeless Forum Management Group and the housing authorities by reference to the blueprint (with particular focus on the core objective of promoting availability of long-term accommodation) and decisions will be made on the basis of their compatibility with the blueprint and the criteria of efficiency and value for money, as set out in Priority Actions 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 of the Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan.

Estimated costs of services will be identified as accurately as possible in developing the Implementation Blueprint. As in all areas of public expenditure currently, the total level of resources available for the operation of homeless services will, inevitably, be constrained during the lifetime of the Action Plan. Accordingly, any new services or expansion of existing services that may be needed can only be funded from savings which arise from the reorientation of services in accordance with the Implementation Blueprint. Cost reductions in the economy generally should also be reflected in homeless services.

The Implementation Blueprint will also facilitate implementation of Strategic Aim 6 of the Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan, which signalled an intention to introduce a more devolved system of funding allocations for homeless services, based on rigorous costings and assessment of needs and priorities. For this purpose, the Implementation Blueprint will establish accurate costings and robust budgets for each housing authority's homeless services. In the context of proposed devolved global allocations for homeless services, decisions in relation to funding of particular services will primarily be made at local level, based on needs and priorities in accordance with the foregoing principles. Decisions to provide new services would only be made where it is established that sufficient operational funding will be available, for accommodation elements for HSE health/care elements, or from any other relevant sources. Appendix B indicates a range of data requirements to inform the blueprint which may vary depending on local or Regional circumstances.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Progress Reports

In developing this Homeless Framework Plan the Management Group of the Mid West Homeless Forum is aware of the importance of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the actions outlined in the plan and the subsequent blueprint for homeless services. The ultimate responsibility for the monitoring and review of the Homeless Framework Plan lies with the Management Group in consultation with the Mid West Homeless Forum.

However the Management Group recognises the need in work in partnership with the voluntary service providers to develop a systematic process which will provide an accurate picture of the trends, issues, challenges and opportunities which may emerge in the implementation of the plan and ongoing monitoring and assessment of performance relative to targets, reporting and assessment of outcomes for service users and assessment of barriers to performance. The Management Group will also work to ensure that service provision maximizes effectiveness, efficiency, quality, value for money and cost minimization and is meeting evidenced need in the most effective way. Appropriate performance management and unit costing arrangements will be operated for this purpose.

This will be achieved through the following monitoring and evaluation processes:

- An **annual county/city progress** report will be provided by each housing authority to the Management Group outlining the information relating to homeless services provided at a local level, an analysis of users of homeless services and funding received. The format of the data collection process will be agreed as part of the development of the blueprint for homeless services.
- In accordance with Priority Action 8.2 of the National Implementation Plan, regular (e.g. quarterly) reports will be submitted by service providers to the Homelessness Consultative Forum. The Forum will provide information, views, advice and reports in relation to homelessness and the operation and implementation of the Action Plan¹¹. Having regard to these, the Management Group will provide reports and recommendations to the housing authorities, the HSE and where appropriate, other bodies specified in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, in relation to the operation of the Action Plan. The housing authorities will, in turn, provide progress reports in relation to the Action Plan to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on a quarterly basis.
- In accordance with Priority Actions 6.3 and 8.4 of the National Implementation Plan for the Homeless Strategy, housing authorities will ensure adequate information and evaluation in relation to service providers and their services, plans, finances and other inputs, structures, cost composition and perfor-

¹¹[Note: See section 38(2) and 39(4)(b) of the 2009 Act]

mance, including requirements of accountability, transparency and controls, particularly with regard to utilisation of public funding.

- **Lead Agencies** will be assigned to ensure actions are implemented and annual reports will be submitted to the Management Group on progress achieved. The measurement of progress on performance indicators will be a key feature of the progress report.
- An **annual review and planning meeting** of the Mid West Homeless Forum will focus on the reports submitted and inform the Regional Homeless Framework Planning process.
- **Local implementation structures** will need to be agreed locally to ensure participation and consultation with voluntary service providers and key local statutory staff implementing homeless services.

10. References List

Earlier homeless strategies and other relevant policy documents

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016

The NAPS I sets out a comprehensive programme of actions and goals to address poverty and social exclusion. It places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery and offers a framework for implementing a streamlined, cross cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The National Development Plan 2007-2013

The NDP incorporates measures agreed in “Towards 2016” and the social inclusion priority is of most relevance to homelessness. This priority outlines measures to address barriers to social inclusion by improving access to health care, education, training and employment and high quality housing. The main objective is to provide a coherent approach to social inclusion by improving co-ordination across central and local government, better monitoring and evaluation of interventions and consultation with stakeholders.

2007 Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities

The 2007 National Housing Strategy Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities places emphasis on the interagency approach to combating homelessness. It also places emphasis on the use of a case management approach in meeting the needs of homeless households. The strategy prioritises actions aimed at the inclusion of special needs groups within services that are focused around homelessness.

Towards 2016

Towards 2016 is part of a series of national social partnership agreements. It makes particular reference to homelessness and makes proposals in relation to improved coordination of service provision and joint approaches at local level. The aim of this national agreement is to facilitate a holistic response to the needs of homeless persons through the further development of a case management approach based on needs assessment and access to multiple services by all the key stakeholders. Other features include the elimination of long term occupation of emergency accommodation by 2010. By 2010 it is expected that no individual should remain in emergency accommodation for longer than six months.

An Independent Review of Homeless Strategies (2006)

Undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates, and commissioned by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the review focused on Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy (2000) and the Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002). It also carried out a review of local action plans. The review made 21 recommendations around 7 key themes. The Government has accepted the broad thrust of the recommendations including, a more concentrated focus on development of long term accommodation options, an improvement of co-ordination of funding, the development of a case management approach to addressing the needs of homeless people based on key workers and the development of preventative strategies, appropriate local services and supports, and better data on the extent, nature and causes of Homelessness.

The Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)

The 2002 strategy focused on ensuring that no one is discharged or released from state institutional care without the appropriate measures in place to ensure they have a suitable place to live. The aim of the strategy is to target adult and young offenders, people leaving mental health residential facilities, people leaving hospitals and young people leaving care. It highlighted that an effective preventative strategy would help break the cycle of homelessness.

Homelessness- An Integrated Strategy (2000)

The 2000 strategy set out a new policy approach to homelessness. It involved a whole Government approach to ensure that homelessness is addressed and prevented. It recognized that homelessness would not be solved by housing or shelter alone. It focused on the need for a holistic approach involving health, care, welfare, education, training and support to enable people who experience homelessness to re-integrate into society and prevent it from happening. It made Local Authorities and Health Services jointly responsible for homelessness, with Local Authorities charged with a lead role to prepare three year action plans on Homelessness. It led to the establishment of Local Homeless Fora.

Homeless Action Plan, Limerick City 2009 - 2013

This Action Plan was commissioned by the Limerick City Homeless Forum which comprises of local and regional Voluntary Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Limerick City Council. It was undertaken by Tanya Lalor of TSA Consultancy Ltd. The Action Plan provides a fundamental view assessing the extent and type of homelessness, identified gaps in service provision and monitor / review and report on progress of the plan.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, County Clare 2008 - 2010

Murtagh & Partners, Social & Economic Consultants, were commissioned to assist the County Clare Homeless Forum which comprises of local and regional Voluntary Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Clare County Council in the development of a Homeless Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2010. The Strategy and Plan provided a fundamental view homelessness in County Clare in October 2006, it highlighted the current provision and outlined the needs of future homeless provision.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, County Limerick 2007 - 2009

This Strategy & Action Plan was completed in November 2007 having been commissioned by the Limerick County Homeless Forum. The Forum was extremely pleased with the level of consultation achieved during the development of the plan which comprised of local and Voluntary Housing Bodies, the Health Service Executive and Limerick County Council.

Homeless Strategy & Action Plan, North Tipperary County Council 2007 - 2009

The North Tipperary Homeless Strategy & Action Plan was developed in conjunction between the HSE West, North Tipperary County Council and the County Homeless Forum. Central to the preparation of the Plan is the undertaking of specific research on the extent and nature of homelessness and the adequacy of current service provision in meeting this need. The information was used to plan and implement homelessness services, for both accommodation and care/support over the period 2007 – 2009.

Mid West Regional Homeless Framework Plan Prepared by...

Social Inclusion Unit – Department of Environment & Local Government

Mr. Rob Lowth – Housing Department – Limerick City Council

**...On Behalf of the Regional Homeless Management Group and In Consultation with the
Mid West Regional Homeless Forum**