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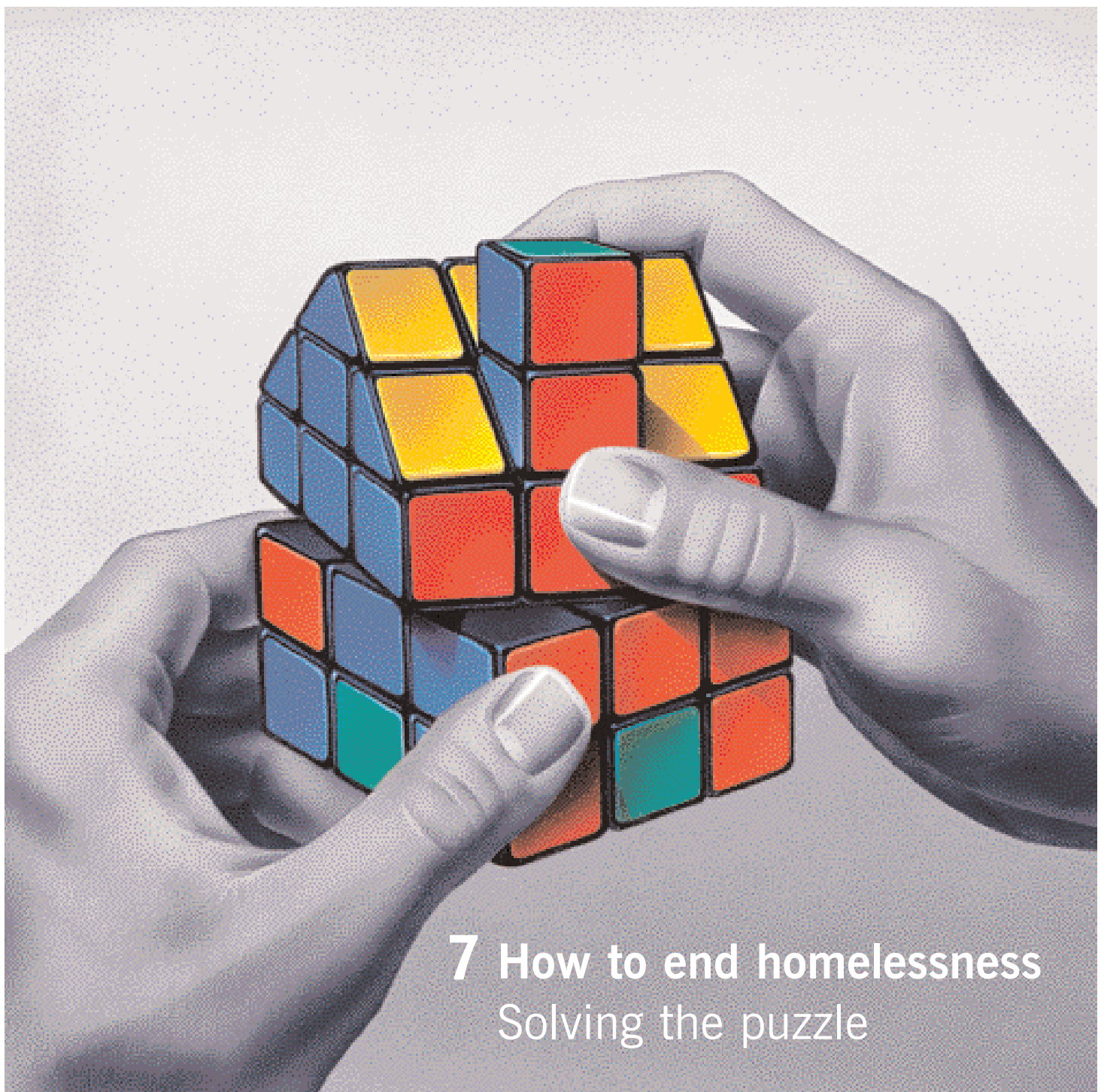
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CornerStone

The magazine of the Homeless Agency

ISSUE 32
OCTOBER 2007



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note from the editor



In the last issue of CornerStone we highlighted figures in the 2006 census that overestimated the number of housing association tenants by more than 250%. Our suggested explanation for this was that the census questions were badly worded so about 30,000 households quite understandably said they 'rented from a Voluntary Body' when they were actually private renters. Since the last issue

was published, the full census housing statistics have been published and the new data strongly supports this theory.

The DoEHLG takes this and other problems raised seriously, and you can read Des Dowling's response, on behalf of the department, on page 12.

Unfortunately the new figures bring with them new problems (see news item on page 6). The local authority rent figures in the census are about 40% higher than the same figures provided by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government!

So at least one of them must be wrong. My guess is that the fault lies with the census, which relies on people's self-assessment, rather than with the statistics gathered by the DoEHLG which are based on records held by local authorities. So if local authority tenants aren't sure how much rent they pay, how do we know that private rented tenants are any better?

The truth is, you cannot rely on any of the census data on rents, or housing associations, or the private rented sector. And, as Des Dowling reports, the census consistently underestimates the number of local authority homes. If we know the census is wrong in all these areas, how can we have confidence in any of the other areas it reports on?

The census is held up by the Central Statistics Office as generating results that are 'essential tools for effective policy, planning and decision making purposes'. The trouble is, if the figures are wrong, it's not much use is it?

Simon Brooke

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The Homeless Agency is a governmental body launched in May 2001 which is responsible for the planning, co-ordination and delivery of quality services to people who are homeless in the Dublin area. The staff team is advised by a consultative forum, and reports to a board of management comprising representatives from the statutory and voluntary sector. The agency brings together a range of voluntary and statutory agencies that are working in partnership to implement agreed plans on the delivery of services to

people who are homeless, assisting them to move rapidly to appropriate long term housing and independence. A major task is the implementation of the third action plan *A Key to the Door* covering the period 2007–2010. The Homeless Agency co-ordinates all homeless services in the Dublin area; delivers some direct services; provides training and other supports; monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of services; carries out research; and administers funding to homeless services.

CornerStone

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**HOME
LESS
agency**



feature article

How to end homelessness Solving the puzzle

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BT2 help Focus Ireland put homelessness in the picture

BT2 linked up with online art gallery *Art to Order* to launch the ArtDublin '07 Initiative, which saw the fashion store sell specially commissioned art pieces to help raise funds for the housing and homeless charity Focus Ireland.

Profits of the sale of the art pieces went towards Focus Ireland's Extension and Outreach Centre, a service for young people who are experiencing homelessness in Dublin. This service provides vital support and practical facilities for young people aged between 16 and 25 years to help them address their problems and find a route out of homelessness.

The project encouraged people to talk about the concept of 'home' by exploring this through art with the added aim of driving awareness and better understanding of the issues that are vital to preventing and addressing homelessness in Ireland.

The ArtDublin '07 initiative shows how a business can link with a charity to help raise funds and public awareness and understanding around key issues such as homelessness. During the 10 day 'Home Exhibition' people had the chance to buy an original piece of artwork for just €350, knowing that they were also contributing to the work of Focus Ireland.

BT2 and Art to Order commissioned sixty up and coming artists to create works for the exhibition, which were showcased at BT2 on Grafton Street. The artworks varied in style and medium, with participating artists using photography, textiles, glass and ceramics. ■

Pictured at the launch of the ArtDublin '07 launch is Jason O'Connell, who described on the night his experience of being homeless, on behalf of Focus Ireland's services.



Dublin Simon hosts 'Partnership in Prevention'

Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment Service hosted a review day in the Mansion House on Friday June 2007 in the Mansion House entitled 'Partnership in Prevention – an overview of the first year of the Tenancy Sustainment service'.

Speakers at the review included Lord Mayor Councillor Vincent Jackson, Sandra Fox, manager Dublin City

Pictured at the review day were service user Evelyn Gaynor, Lord Mayor Councillor Vincent Jackson, and Sandra Fox, manager of Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment Service.



Tenancy Sustainment Service, Dáithí Downey, deputy director and head of service delivery in the Homeless Agency and user of the Tenancy Sustainment service Evelyn Gaynor.

In December 2006 Dublin Simon were awarded the contract by the Homeless Agency to manage a new service aimed at preventing homelessness in Dublin. The Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment Service

(DCTS) is a Homeless Agency partnership initiative to deliver a dedicated service to tenants at risk of homelessness that works to ensure that their tenancies are sustained and homelessness is prevented. The service is contracted from and delivered by Dublin Simon.

The service works proactively with tenants in their own homes to ensure they break the cycle of homelessness. A team

of 12 professionals work with both those moving from a homeless situation into a new home and those in existing tenancies that may be at risk. The service offers housing support with specialist interventions by co-ordinating with local community services and professionals. Early intervention and a multi-agency approach have proven vital to sustaining those at risk in their own home. ■

Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team

The Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team hosted an information event in the Mansion House on June 21st 2007 to acknowledge the rebranding of the team from Dublin Simon Outreach to Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team and also to generate awareness about the work of the team with people who are homeless in Dublin.

The Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team provides information and referrals to emergency accommodation, addiction treatment options and specialist homeless persons health services, a link to mainstream and social welfare services, a link to food and clothing services, advocacy and keyworking.

The team meet people who are sleeping rough in Dublin through daily

daytime and evening street work, self referrals, referrals from voluntary and statutory agencies and members of the public.

The Dublin Simon Rough Sleeper Team can be contacted on 01 6778114 from 8am to 12.00 midnight Monday to Friday, 3.00pm to 12.00 midnight Saturday and 4.00pm to midnight Sunday. ■

Focus Ireland and Citizens Information Service teamed up to tackle and prevent homelessness

Focus Ireland and the Citizens Information Centres in Dublin 2, 4 and 6 have announced a partnership agreement to help provide information to people who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.

The agreement will see staff at Citizens Information Centres in Rathmines and in Aungier Street direct people to Focus Ireland for information services if they are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Carmelite Citizen's Information Centre in Dublin 2 and the Rathmines Citizens Information Centre in Dublin 6 will refer people seeking advice on homeless services and housing options to contact staff at Focus Ireland's Housing Advice Centre and Coffee Shop at 15 Eustace Street in Temple Bar in the Dublin 2 area.

The Focus Ireland centre – widely known as the 'coffee shop' – provides healthy meals at an affordable price along with quality advice, information and support from staff.

The partnership between Focus Ireland and the Citizens Information Service will enhance the skills of the staff in each service and allow them to work together to ensure that people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness have ready access to the appropriate advice and information of services/ supports and accommodation options available. ■

Pictured announcing the partnership outside Focus Ireland's Housing Advice Centre and Coffee Shop are Liz Carroll, Citizens Information Service and Roisin McDonnell, Focus Ireland.



Homeless World Cup 2007



This year the Homeless World Cup took place in Copenhagen from July 28th to August 1st 2007.

Scotland was victorious, competing with 48 other teams who represented their countries with great courage and skill. The tournament gave the Irish team the memorable experience of meeting new cultures as all teams stayed at the same location and many friendships were forged over the two-week period. One of the highlights of the tournament was a coaching session with Eric Cantona, who is a patron of the World Cup.

It was a year of hard work and dedication but it was all worthwhile for the team of eight who put on their green shirts

and represented Ireland in the 2007 Homeless World Cup. The team earned their place in the championship dedicating themselves to the fitness level required for this unique event, whilst overcoming challenges and adversity in their own lives.

Ireland's Issues Magazine organise and run the Street Leagues and Ireland's Homeless World Cup team. They are supported by Dublin City Council, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and commercial sponsor Start Mortgages. Thanks to the continued support of these organisations the League programme will be continued and it will be soon possible to appoint a development officer, who will oversee the expansion of the Street League

Pictured above are David Doyle (Clondalkin) James Higgins (Cork) with Eric Cantona.

so that more people will reap the benefits of rebuilding and changing their lives through the medium of sport.

The players representing Ireland this year were; David Doyle, Ian Fitzgerald, Gary Quigley, Jason Cosgrove, Roy Marshall, James Higgins, Trevor Curtis and Bernard McEvoy.

The support team included Anthony Hill and Chris Fitzpatrick (Social Coaches), Mick Pender (Chief Coach) and Sean Kavanagh (Organiser/Manager). ■

Census erroneous update...

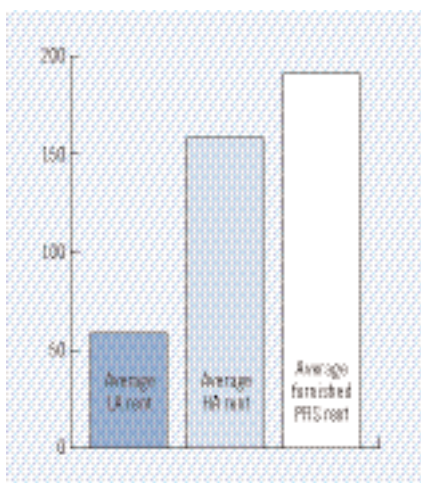
Census 2006 Volume 6 – Housing is at www.cso.ie/census/Census2006_Volume6.htm

In the last issue of CornerStone we reported that the census had overestimated housing association tenancies by a factor of more than 2½. According to the census, 50,480 households were living in housing association tenancies; but we said that the true figure was about 19,000. (See page 12 for the DoEHLG's response to this.)

In the meantime, the full 2006 census report on housing has been published and this contains lots of interesting stuff (and, frankly, a fair bit of data that is of little or no value to anyone) some of which throws more light on the problem.

We thought that the extra 30,000 odd housing association tenants were actually private rented tenants and the new census volume appears to support this.

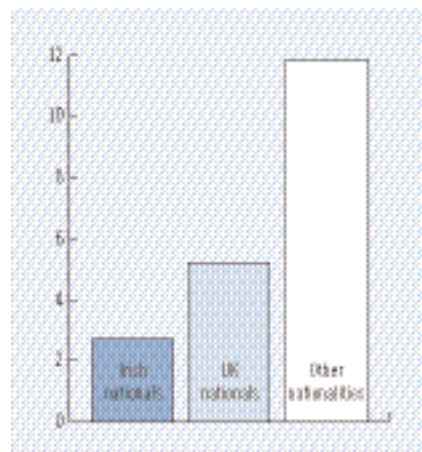
Firstly, it contains data about rent levels. Housing association tenants pay rent on the same basis as local authority tenants, that is, their rent is based exclusively on their income (the differential rent system). You would therefore expect that average housing association rents would be similar to average local authority rents – not exactly the same, but similar. But as the chart here shows, this is far from the truth.



Average weekly rents in different tenures

As you can see, average housing association rents are much nearer average private rented rents. In fact pretty well just what you would expect if a majority of people who said they were housing association tenants were actually private rented tenants.

CornerStone suggested that this had arisen because the census questions about housing tenure were badly worded (the expression 'private rented' does not appear on the list!) and lots of people had simply got it wrong. If this were the case then you'd expect that non-Irish people would be more likely to get it wrong than locals.



Percentage of households who said they were housing association tenants

And as you can see in the chart above, non-Irish people were far more likely to say they were housing association tenants than Irish people, when the truth is that they are actually less likely to be housing association tenants.

None of this is in the slightest bit surprising, and it suggests that the CSO has a job of work to do if the census is to be genuinely comprehensible to as many people as possible.

So the latest census data tends to support CornerStone's claim that the extra housing association tenants were actually private rented tenants, and the reason they said they were housing association tenants rather than private rented tenants is that the question was badly worded. ■

...and more census woes

According to the 2002 census, the average local authority weekly rent in that year was €42.46. Four years later, in 2006, the census reported that this had increased to €58.84.

But hang on a minute! According to the Housing Statistics Bulletin, average local authority rents in 2002 were only €29.62 and in 2006, €42.14. So the census rents are about 40% higher than

the DoEHLG's figures! At least one of these must be wrong. Yet again, figures from one official body are in conflict with figures from another. (See *Note from the editor* for more on this.) ■

Apartments, inspections and ethnic minorities

You will find the 2006 Housing Statistics Bulletin at www.envron.ie/en/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,14648,en.pdf

Apartments

The trend towards building apartments instead of houses is growing apace.

According to the census, 10% of all households now live in apartments. Not surprisingly there is a huge difference between rural and urban areas – only 2% of rural housing is in apartments compared with 15% of urban areas. The highest percentage is in Dublin where apartments account for 20% of all housing.

But all this will change. In 2006, an incredible 80% of all housing completed in the Dublin City Council area was apartments, and this level of apartment building is set to continue. Apartment living is here to stay, and it will not only be young singles and couples waiting to trade up to a house with a garden. More and more families will opt for apartments rather than spending up to four hours a day somewhere in the vicinity of the Red Cow roundabout.

Private rented inspections

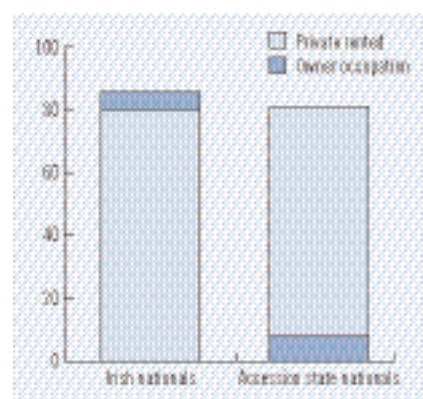
Local authorities have responsibility for policing standards in the private rented

sector, and until last year their record was woeful. In 2005 for example, three quarters of all local authorities carried out less than four inspections! But then the DoEHLG brought in incentives and suddenly local authorities have been galvanised into action. In 2006 the total number of inspections leapt up by 44% and county councils more than doubled their inspections.

This is very good news, but the results of the inspections vary wildly across the country. Overall, 20% of dwellings inspected were sub-standard. But in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, over half the dwellings inspected were sub-standard; in Dublin City Council 40% were sub-standard, and the figure in Longford was one third. But in Donegal not a single one of the 1,102 dwellings inspected was sub-standard! And there were no sub-standard dwellings in Galway Co. Co. either, or in Leitrim, Louth, North Tipperary, Waterford Co. Co., Waterford City, or Westmeath. Someone in the DoEHLG might do worse than take a look at these figures.

Housing tenure and ethnic minorities

The census confirms what many people working in the area will already know – that housing tenure varies greatly according to your nationality.



The difference is most striking when you compare Irish nationals with accession state nationals (the 10 new EU members). 80% of Irish nationals are owner-occupiers, and at the same time over 70% of accession state nationals live in private rented accommodation. ■

Many low income purchasers in arrears

Supporting Low-income Homebuyers in Ireland, 1990–2003: Profile, Policy and Issues is available for download on the Centre for Housing Research's website, or if you want to spend 15 smackers on a hard copy, you can get one from the Centre for Housing Research, Training and Administration Section, 57–61 Lansdowne Road, Dublin 4, tel 01 240 3600, email chr@ipa.ie

Research recently published by the Centre for Housing Research shows alarming levels of arrears among tenant purchasers and others who are availing of the range of low income home buyer schemes. The researchers (Michelle Norris, Dermot Coates and Fiona Kane) found that in urban areas nearly half

(44%) of all tenant purchasers were in arrears of 3 months or more; this was also the case for over a third of shared ownership purchasers; and nearly half (44%) of all affordable housing purchasers were in arrears of some duration. These figures are far higher than those with commercial mortgages.

The researchers argue that such widespread arrears cast doubt on the sustainability of these home ownership schemes and suggest that a significant proportion of the current purchasers would be better off in social or private rented housing, at least until their income rises.

They conclude that there is a limit to the overall level of owner occupation that can be achieved, which is determined by housing and labour market development and demographic changes. Attempts to breach these limits through heavy subsidies that aim to lift households with very low incomes into owner occupation may create serious problems. ■

HOW TO END HOMELESSNESS



Solving the puzzle

Before the last election, the parties forming the present government – Fianna Fáil, The Green Party, and the Progressive Democrats – all endorsed the MakeRoom campaign. But when the programme for government was published, homelessness barely got a mention. **Andrew Brownlee**, writing on behalf of the MakeRoom campaign, sets out what should have been in the programme.



Andrew Brownlee is national research and campaigns manager with the Simon Communities of Ireland

The MakeRoom Campaign

The MakeRoom campaign was launched on 25th October 2007 as a partnership between four major NGOs working to address homelessness in Ireland – Focus Ireland, the Simon Communities of Ireland, the Society of St Vincent De Paul and Threshold. The campaign was based on the premise that with strong political leadership, a responsive policy agenda and adequate resources, homelessness could be ended. A political debate was organised on 13th December 2007 at which all political parties endorsed the objectives of the campaign and an end to homelessness by 2010. Since then the campaign has concentrated on ensuring that these endorsements were followed through in party policy and manifesto commitments in advance of the general election, with the aim that the new government introduce a programme of practical action to deliver on these commitments moving forward.



Unfortunately however, the consensus that has been built up in recent years around policy to address homelessness was almost completely ignored within the programme when it was released.

Prior to the launch of the Agreed Programme for Government in June there seemed to be cause for optimism that it might

contain significant commitments to address homelessness over the lifetime of the 30th Dáil. All the political parties that formed the new coalition – Fianna Fáil, the Progressive Democrats and the Green Party – had given their endorsement

to the MakeRoom campaign in the months leading up to the election. Indeed the Green Party manifesto stated that it would ‘meet the demands and timescales of the MakeRoom campaign in addressing once and for all the scourge of homelessness in Irish society.’

The commitment of the coalition partners to the MakeRoom campaign meant that in formulating the new programme for government, the parties had a relatively straightforward reference point from which to draw their proposed actions. Unfortunately however, the consensus that has been built up in recent years around policy to address homelessness was almost completely ignored within the programme when it was released. There was only brief mention of homelessness within the document, with two related commitments as follows:

‘Our focus, in line with the Homelessness Preventative Strategy, will be to assist with the long-term and sustainable housing of vulnerable people who are in danger of becoming homeless.’

‘With necessary care support we can move people from emergency accommodation to independent living.’

These very general statements offer little insight into any practical actions that will be progressed by the new government. Furthermore, there is little emphasis on the delivery of social housing output, with all commitments under social housing relating to standards, community facilities, regeneration and the path to homeownership. This neglects a number of

existing plans with regard to social housing provision that must be delivered in order to move towards sustainable, long-term solutions for people experiencing homelessness:

- *Towards 2016*, the social partnership framework, makes it clear that NESC social housing targets, with 73,000 units to be provided over the period 2005–2012, remain valid despite slow progress since they were identified. This equates to generating 9,125 new social housing units each year between 2005 and 2012.
- The *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* strategy of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government also commits to provision of 27,000 new social housing units over the period 2007 to 2009, equivalent to 9,000 per annum.
- The *National Development Plan* establishes targets of commencing or acquiring 63,000 new social homes in the period 2007–2013 (again representing 9,000 per annum), through a combination of local authority, voluntary and cooperative housing and new units for the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

Despite these plans, there is concern that in recent years the government has consistently lagged behind in generating targeted social housing output. For example, the National Development Plan 2000–2006 set an initial target of providing 55,600 additional housing units. By the end of 2006, only 42,541 new social housing units had been acquired or completed by either local authorities or community and voluntary sector providers. Progress since the NESC proposals were published also highlights a significant deficit of provision in this regard. The table below compares 2005 and 2006 output with recommended provision per annum, assuming that the 73,000 target is split equally between each year of the overall timeframe (2005–2012). It reveals that in the last 2 calendar years, the number of social housing units delivered has been over 5,000 less than the level deemed necessary by NESC.

| Year | 2005 | 2006 | 2005/2006 Total |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Local Authority Acquisitions and Completions | 5,253 | 5,127 | 10,380 |
| Community and Voluntary Sector Completions | 1,240 | 1,350 | 2,590 |
| Total Social Housing Output | 6,493 | 6,477 | 12,970 |
| NESC Target Social Housing Output | 9,125 | 9,125 | 18,250 |
| Shortfall Against NESC Social Housing Targets | 2,632 | 2,648 | 5,280 |

Source: *Annual Housing Statistics Bulletins 2005 and 2006*, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

The significant backlog in terms of social housing provision noted above meant that a clear opportunity existed for the programme for government to specify social housing commitments on a year-on-year basis over its timeframe and provide greater certainty in this regard. Indeed, given the backlog, this should have involved the frontloading of social housing commitments in order to bring output back on track with the original NESC targets.

So, surely the lack of focus given in the Programme to addressing homelessness and social housing provision was an oversight? Perhaps such a situation arose as a result of homelessness being one of the areas where there was relatively consistent policy commitment from all parties, with attention diverted to other subjects where there was greater divergence of views. We would hope this proves to be the case and while an opportunity may have been missed to specify exact actions, targets and timeframes to make a path towards ending homelessness more tangible, the publication of a new national homeless strategy by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the autumn provides an immediate means of achieving such a scenario. While an opportunity may have been missed to specify exact actions, targets and timeframes to make a path towards ending homelessness more tangible, the publication of a new national homeless strategy by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the autumn provides an immediate means of achieving such a scenario.

The Department is currently coordinating the formulation of this new strategy. The MakeRoom alliance have been involved in this process, with a representative invited to sit on the National Homeless Consultative Committee, an initiative intended to bring together relevant statutory and voluntary bodies to input into the development of homeless policy. MakeRoom has used this opportunity to make clear

our own priorities for moving national strategy forward to make our overall goal practical and achievable.

For many of these priorities, there is significant overlap with existing government commitments. A number of them relate to the 21 recommendations of the Fitzpatrick Associates Review of Implementation of National Homeless Strategies published in February 2006. This involved the most comprehensive research study undertaken of national homeless policy in Ireland to date. The findings were endorsed by the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal at the time and it was stated that the review would serve as the basis for development of new homeless strategy.

One of the central recommendations was that government policy targeted an end to homelessness, and in this regard the MakeRoom campaign has played an important role in getting all of the political parties to sign up to such a commitment by 2010. However in other respects progress has been slow, and little activity has been apparent to deliver the solutions proposed to address different aspects of homelessness moving forward. Of course, the launch of the new national homeless strategy should provide further momentum, and it is only then that we will be able to judge whether investment and action is being targeted on the appropriate priorities in the future. However, neglecting opportunities such as the new programme for government to move policy forward is not an encouraging sign.

It is therefore felt important at this stage to reiterate exactly what must be done in order for homeless strategy to effectively target an end to homelessness. Our organisations believe that there are a number of relatively simple steps required in order to move towards achievement of the MakeRoom goal of ending homelessness by 2010. These relate to homeless service provision, access to social housing and other appropriate move-on accommodation and prevention of homelessness, as highlighted below.



Our organisations believe that there are a number of relatively simple steps required in order to move towards achievement of the MakeRoom goal of ending homelessness by 2010.



Homeless services

- Target existing gaps in emergency service provision.
- Development of Cross-Department response to homelessness among people from EU accession states as result of Habitual Residence Condition.
- Formal monitoring of application of quality standards, controlled via service level agreements wherever possible and clear, transparent funding procedures.
- Mechanisms for sharing best practice.
- Facilitate access to homeless services for those with complex needs.

Access to social housing

- Pursue NESC social housing targets and establish dedicated Part V teams in local authorities to advance social housing provision.
- Provide long-term supported accommodation with a revenue funding stream to allow employment of appropriate specialised staff.

- Establish agreements between local authorities and service providers to allocate a specific number of local authority units per annum.

Access to other move-on options

- Expand and improve rent supplement scheme with review of appropriateness of existing rent caps.
- Comprehensive standards programme for private rented accommodation to protect tenants.
- Expansion of the Rental Accommodation Scheme and measures to improve its effectiveness.

Prevention

- Conduct research on routes into and out of homelessness.
- Develop and fund early intervention preventative actions.
- More effective discharge policies for people leaving mental health and acute hospitals.
- Closer links between agencies working with youths and adults experiencing homelessness.



To deliver these actions, a number of implementation issues must also be addressed. Targeting gaps in service provision will require strong policies and controls for local authorities to ensure that they cannot ignore the problems of homelessness at local level or pass on those problems to other neighbouring

authorities that have invested in adequate infrastructure. Where there remain emergency accommodation needs in certain parts of the country these must be met by the relevant local authority. Local authorities must make specific commitments to local service providers on supply of local authority housing for clients ready to move onto permanent accommodation. Even this simple step of providing greater certainty to providers on the number of units they will receive each year from the council will make

for much more effective planning of progression routes out of homelessness for clients of these homeless services. This must be matched by a serious commitment from each local authority to Part V development to facilitate social housing for people experiencing homelessness within the area. Steps must also be taken to address the issues that make private rented housing too costly, too problematic to access and of insufficient standard to fulfil its potential as a major move-on option for people experiencing homelessness, particularly for single people. Only then will sufficient move-on accommodation be in place to facilitate progression out of homelessness.

However, addressing homelessness is not only about accommodation and related support services. There also needs to be a shift in approach in the new strategy, with actions developed in relation to person-centred working, improved coordination between statutory bodies and the legislative framework.

Person-centred working

- Full engagement by statutory services in delivering a case management approach via homeless services.
- Ensure access by people experiencing homelessness and those that have progressed out of homelessness to services of new primary health care teams.
- Standardised housing needs assessment process in every local authority as a statutory duty and conducted on an ongoing basis.

Improved coordination

- Stronger proofing mechanisms to ensure government policy does not adversely impact upon homelessness.

- Coordinated funding mechanism, with clear responsibility on local authorities to meet people's housing needs and responsibility on HSE to meet people's care or support costs.
- Multi-annual funding with allocations from statutory agencies delivered in a more timely manner.

Legislative framework

- Clarify target to end long-term homelessness by 2010.
- Establish clear, agreed definition of homelessness that takes account of different layers of housing need.
- Introduce statutory local homeless action plans.
- Government commitment to deliver social and economic rights as a central component of homeless strategy.
- Review of 1988 Housing Act.

Setting these priorities for action within national homeless strategy will provide a foundation from which real progress can be made in the coming years. If successful, it will ensure that any individual

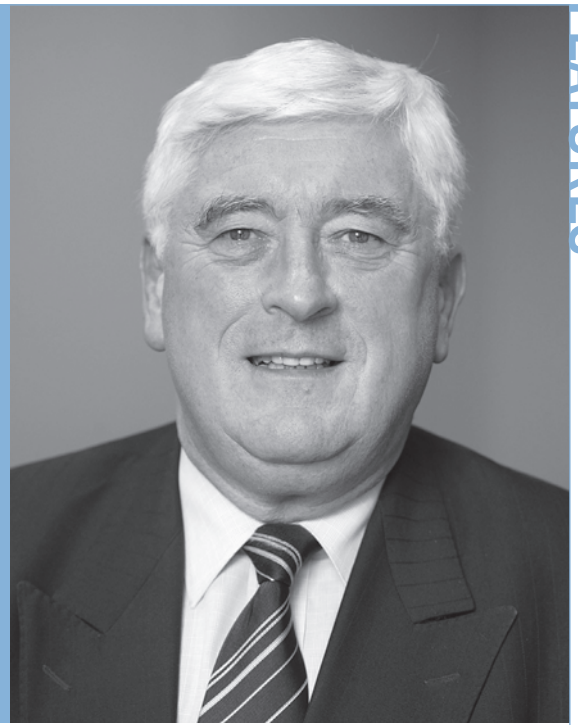
experiencing homelessness is given the support necessary to address the issues that caused this situation and progress back into permanent housing. It will also mean that interventions are in place for those at risk of homelessness to prevent this from occurring. Our organisations will shortly be meeting with John Gormley, the new Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, to outline what needs to be done to end homelessness in Ireland by 2010. With such clear and simple steps to be taken, it is hoped that this will generate a positive response. More and more people continue to sign up to the MakeRoom campaign everyday on www.makeroom.ie and it is our intention to ensure that the growing consensus that homelessness can be effectively addressed is reinforced by strong government action. ■



makeroom

ending homelessness by 2010

An introduction from the new minister



On the 20th June last, Mr Batt O'Keeffe TD, replaced Mr Noel Ahern TD as Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. He will have special responsibility for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas. Prior to his appointment he was a Minister of State in the same Department with responsibility for Environmental Protection.

A native of Cullen near Mallow in County Cork, he was educated in St Brendan's College, Killarney and University College Cork. The former lecturer in communications and general studies at Cork Institute of Technology first entered the Dáil in 1987. He has held a number of important posts on various Dáil Committees including the position of Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children between 1997 and 2004.

I am delighted to have been appointed as Minister with responsibility for housing and I am determined to maintain this government's commitment to tackling homelessness – a core concern of the Homeless Agency and its quarterly publication *CornerStone*. Nationally, there is some €52m available in 2007 for accommodation and related services for homeless persons in all local authority areas and significant funding for their health and care related needs continues to be provided by my colleague the Minister for Health and Children.

In addition, my department is currently in the course of preparing a revised and updated government Strategy on Homelessness. A key focus of the revised Strategy will be to ensure that all the needs of the homeless person are addressed with a view to enabling them to move out of emergency accommodation into more sustainable tenancy options at the earliest opportunity. This will help us to achieve the government's objective of eliminating, by 2010, the long term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation.

More generally, progress in the Irish housing sector has seen the delivery of more than one-third

of homes over the last ten years at one of the fastest rates in Europe. The programme for government reiterates the strong emphasis on creating sustainable places for people to live. It commits to responding to individual household needs by expansion of the range of social and affordable housing options. The new policy statement *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* outlines a range of actions designed to support the building of sustainable communities, improved quality of housing and neighbourhoods and more effective delivery. This is bolstered by the substantial rise in resources under the new National Development Plan (NDP) 2007–2013. €18 billion has been provided under the NDP for housing programmes to meet the accommodation needs of some 140,000 households over the period of the plan.

Specifically in terms of homelessness, we are now in a position to look beyond the provision of emergency accommodation. Our focus must be on long-term accommodation and the non-accommodation supports required to enable the people involved to move out of homelessness. ■

CornerStone claims: the department responds



Des Dowling is assistant secretary with responsibility for housing at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The last issue of CornerStone's lead news item claimed that the 2006 census wildly overestimated the number of housing association dwellings; another item suggested that RAS tenants shouldn't be classified as local authority tenants; and a third reported that social housing output was falling further behind targets. Also, in note from the editor, Simon Brooke complained that the CSO and the DoEHLG disagreed about the total number of local authority homes, and produced different figures for total housing output. So, in this issue **Des Dowling**, writing on behalf of the DoEHLG, responds.

A number of issues were raised in the June 2007 issue of CornerStone. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government would like to thank the editor for the opportunity to respond, in the current edition, to those matters.

The 2006 census

In relation to the number of rented local authority houses, it is important to note that census results have consistently underestimated the local authority housing stock in comparison to the numbers collated by the department on the basis of local authority returns.

There may be a number of reasons for this including issues of timing (census is carried out in April while the department figures report on the end December position) and inaccurate completion of the relevant census question.

At the suggestion of the department, Simon Brooke is in consultation with the Irish Council for Social Housing and the Central Statistics Office (CSO) with regard to the number of housing association tenancies to see if data from the small areas dataset can be isolated in order to establish why there were differences in those areas compared to the voluntary and co-operative housing stock figures. The department is, of course, happy to collaborate on and to provide whatever support is necessary to this work.

The department is fully aware of the figures outlined in the reports published by the CSO to date including the data referred to in the June issue of *CornerStone*. It will be fully considering this and other information to be released by the CSO, as part of ongoing housing policy development. More generally, the department is fully committed to the collation and publication of good statistical data through its monthly, quarterly and annual releases. These bulletins together with the longer historical series of data on the department's website and the publications and commentaries from various public and private reports inform analysis of trends in housing and future policy.

Housing units completed in 2005

As pointed out in 'note from the editor' in Issue 31, the department uses the number of ESB meters connected in new units as a proxy for the number of housing units completed in any reporting period and this has been the case since the early 1970's. This series reflects the number of homes completed and available and does not reflect any work-in-progress.

An issue did arise in relation to the data in question regarding its use as a measure of residential construction activity: this is a methodology employed by economists and the CSO to provide a measure of the level of activity and value added from housing construction. In April 2006, the CSO contacted the department to query the 2005 data as they considered that growth in construction employment suggested that the level of residential construction activity should be higher than the house completion data indicated. On foot of enquiries to the ESB, it emerged that they had experienced longer delays in meeting the demand for connections than in previous years. The ESB estimated that there was a higher level of work-in-progress than usual, of about 5,200 units over the course of 2005, which was cleared during the course of the first half 2006. These units were not completed and not available and could not be counted as house completions but the information was relevant

More generally, the Department is fully committed to the collation and publication of good statistical data through its monthly, quarterly and annual releases.

in looking at trends in housing activity and was published at the earliest possible time in July 2006.

Some important issues were also raised in Issue 31 regarding RAS and social housing output.

Classifying RAS

Social rented housing in Ireland is provided through three main delivery mechanisms:

- local authority rented accommodation;
- the voluntary and co-operative sector; and
- through arrangements, entered into by housing authorities, with private owners of accommodation under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

The question of how to classify housing units provided under RAS was the subject of much debate during the negotiations on *Towards 2016*. In the end, it was agreed that the appropriate designation was to include units procured under RAS as part of the social housing stock. The key factor in this was the recognition that RAS provided rented accommodation for those with a long term housing need based on a subsidised rent related to means. In this, they were closely aligned to households seeking local authority or voluntary / co-operative rented accommodation.

The fact that RAS households are eligible to apply for local authority housing should not affect the designation of RAS accommodation as social housing. This is in line with new directions in housing policy, which recognise that circumstances change over the lifecycle of a household and that it should be easier for tenants of one type of social housing to move to another. Thus, it is possible in the future that as household circumstances change, existing tenants of local authorities and of voluntary and co-operative housing bodies may apply for other forms of social housing including RAS.

Social housing output

Although social housing output figures remained somewhat flat over the three years 2004–2006, with only a small increase in overall figures, it must be remembered that this period saw a massive increase in the volume of private dwellings. Local authority

housing programmes have to compete with the private market for resources, building materials, labour and companies willing to undertake construction projects. It has proved difficult over the past few years to increase output in the face of the demands from the speculative housing sector where there was the potential for significant profits for developers, more than was available from public sector contracts.

Nonetheless, considerable progress has been made and social housing output figures for Quarter 1 2007 are encouraging:

- 1,453 social houses were completed – an increase of 61% on the same period in 2006;
- 11,360 units were in progress; and
- In addition, 66 new units were acquired on long-term leases under RAS.

The improved Part V delivery referred to in the June Issue continued with 444 Part V social and affordable units acquired in the first three months of 2007 (up over 26% on the number delivered a year earlier) and a further 4,859 units were in progress including 490 in the voluntary and co-operative housing sector.

While output in the voluntary and co-operative sector has not developed as anticipated in recent years, the department remains committed to its development. The multi-annual housing action plans process gives new clarity to the sector on the expected response in each local authority area. The

funding provision for schemes has been increased significantly in recent years and it is proposed to introduce new arrangements to optimise the resources available to deliver increased output including 100% funding where all the beneficiaries have been assessed as being in need of social housing. Under *Towards 2016*, the government have committed to the provision of additional sites and land for the purpose of meeting identified housing needs and work continues through the Working Group on Voluntary and Co-operative housing to rationalise and streamline administrative and approval arrangements.

Looking to the future

Our objective is to maintain a high level of housing construction consistent with demand, based on sound planning and a diversity of provision. An important aspect of our approach will be to bring a new focus on quality in the provision of housing. This is at the core of the new housing policy statement *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* launched earlier this year. The programme for government reiterates this commitment to creating sustainable communities and to respond to individual households needs by expanding the delivery of social and affordable housing options.

The policy statement and the National Development Plan 2007–2013 (NDP) provide for a significant expansion of social and affordable housing to meet accommodation needs of households which are not served by the market, as already envisaged in *Towards 2016*. The NDP provides some €18 billion in

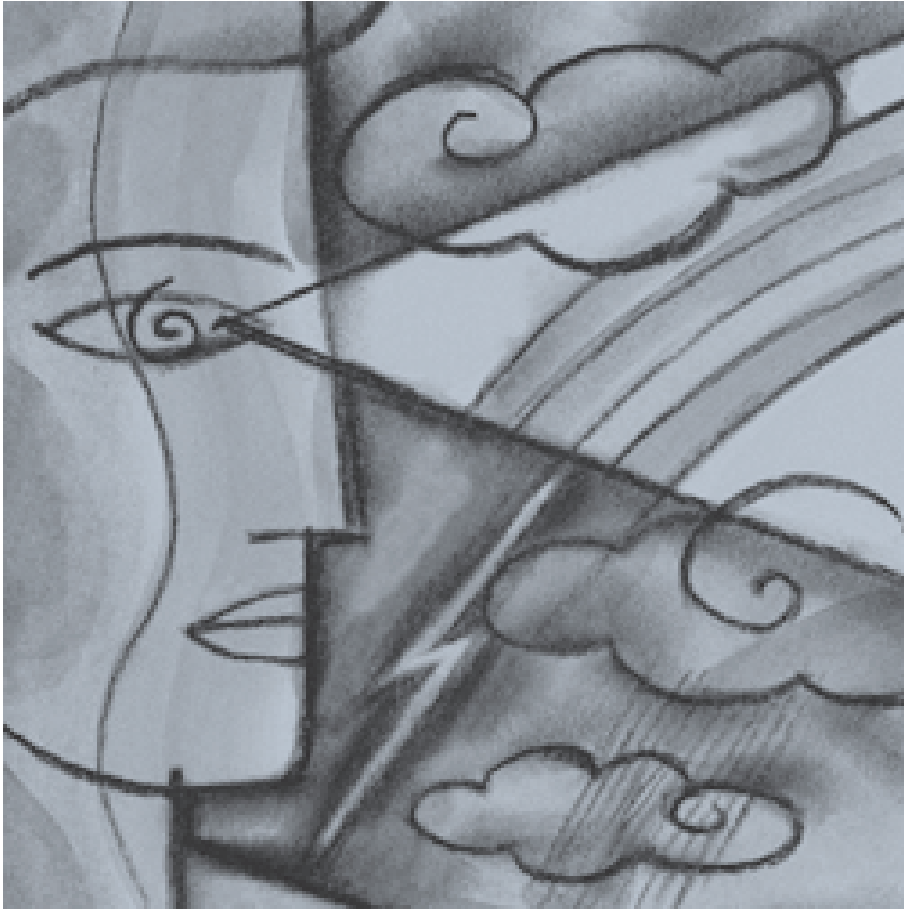
resources, which will be used to meet the needs of some 100,000 households seeking social housing through a combination of local authority, voluntary and co-operative and new units for RAS. Further households will benefit as they transfer to RAS with their existing landlords or from naturally occurring vacancies. In addition, over the period of the NDP some 40,000 households will benefit from affordable housing with 17,000 of these units to be delivered in the 2007–2009 period.

Taken together these policies will provide substantial support to those seeking to establish their first home, either on the housing market or

through supported schemes. At the same time we will be seeking to ensure that both private and public investment in housing results in the kind of high quality integrated sustainable communities, which are worth building. The challenge is to build the type of communities suitable for our fast changing society: communities where people are happy to live and in which all residents can participate and prosper. We have set out an integrated policy approach to address this challenge in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* and the resources are in place through the NDP. Implementation will require commitment from all the stakeholders in this area. ■



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Alice O’Flynn explains how the HSE’s transformation aims to ensure that everyone, including homeless people, will be able to access high quality mainstream health services.

Health and social inclusion: what the HSE is doing

Many people think of health as the opposite of illness or sickness, but in this article I’m talking about a broader description of health that includes well-being. So being and staying healthy is about health promotion and protection, prevention, knowledge and information. It’s about how you live, where you live, the community you live in, what you eat, how you feel, what genes you got from your parents, what you work at, what facilities and services are available, the quality and access to services as well as environmental factors such as pollution etc. It is also highly dependent on general socio-economic and cultural influences. Health promotion and protection is important to everyone, including people who are homeless, and there are very good examples of how services support and promote these as part of their service delivery. It’s just they are not usually identified as health promotion or protection. Over the past 15 years, several models have been developed to show the manner in which these factors or social

determinants affect health outcomes and to make explicit the linkages between different types of health determinants so that entry points can be located strategically for policy action. Perhaps one of the most familiar models is the rainbow layer of influences¹:

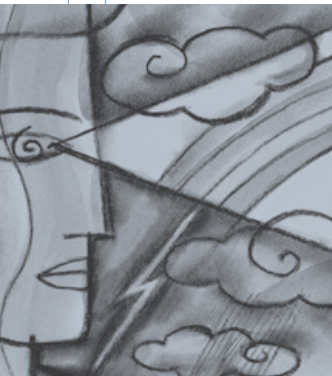


The determinants of the general health of the population can be conceptualised as rainbow like layers of influence as shown below.



Alice O’Flynn is national director of social inclusion at the HSE

¹ Dahlgren & Whitehead *Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health*, Institute of Futures Studies, Stockholm, 1991



This model has become a useful means of demonstrating the need for a more holistic and integrated approach to improving health. It highlights the role of the structural, social and economic factors on health as well as the influences on lifestyle that continue to be a source of public concern and discussion – e.g. illicit drug use/abuse, binge drinking, etc. The model is also useful to illustrate how these factors when missing and/or compromised can lead to health inequalities. Finally it is clear that in order to address health inequalities we need to look at the links between these factors and not just focus on one in isolation.

We know that the chances of a long and healthy life are not the same for everyone, those who are poorer are more likely to die younger and face more illness during their lifetime. Further, the availability of good health care tends to vary inversely with the need for it in the population served – this is known as the inverse care law². In other words, those who most need health care are least likely to receive it. Conversely, those with the least need of health care tend to use health services more (and more effectively). This creates a steep social gradient in health whereby health tends to increase with wealth which is a gradient that runs across all social groups and most countries.

The HSE, which is now a unitary health and social services is in the midst of a transformation programme, the objective of which is to provide quality services that are easily accessible and which the public have confidence in. Common fundamental principles underpin the work which are:

- person-centred: ultimate benchmark
- improved accessibility
- simplified care journey
- responsiveness
- partnership with users and communities
- enhanced service integration
- multi-disciplinary teamwork
- more equitable distribution of services

These principles have a resonance with the social determinants of health and integrate these factors into the nucleus of change. The transformation programme affects all directorates in the HSE, e.g. – Finance; National Hospitals Office; Human Resources; Primary, Continuing & Community Care; Population Health and Office of the CEO.

In the Primary, Community & Continuing services (PCCC) there are now 32 local health offices that are the hub for the delivery of all health and social services to their local population. The margins of these were drawn taking into account, amongst other factors, the boundaries of local and country authorities to support and enhance as much as possible the partnership working between health and local and county authorities. Mapping of existing services and

staff is taking place within each Local Health Office as is data analysis and profiling of the local population with information on DED, census and other population indices. Engagement with national, regional and local partnerships, NGOs, community and voluntary groups is also taking place.

The Primary Care Strategy

A major part of the transformation programme is the Primary Care Strategy. (Primary care means the care provided to someone when they first make contact with the health care system.) This strategy involves the reshaping of community services, adding capacity, increasing resources and broadening the range and depth of services so that can better respond to the needs of their local population and provide services as close as possible to where people are living. This means that primary care services will:

- be easy to access and understand
- be available when needed
- help people to stay healthy
- provide appropriate care in the appropriate setting
- improve the health of the local community and the overall population
- enable people to take control of and responsibility for their health
- co-ordinate on-going care for individuals and families
- contribute to reduction in health inequalities
- respond to the needs of individuals and families when problems or acute needs are experienced.

Primary care services made up of primary care teams and networks are at the forefront of service changes which are underway. The composition of these teams will be influenced by the needs of the local population and needs assessment will be part of the work undertaken as well as the other data gathering exercises already mentioned. It is envisaged that there will be one door that everyone enters to avail of community health and social services regardless of whether they have a sore head, need a doctor's certificate, are homeless, going travelling and need some jobs – whatever the reason, there will be one entry point for all. That entry point may not be the physical location of the primary care services, for example when services 'outreach' to people, but the principle of one entry point is important. Tailoring primary community services to the needs of local populations, targeting resources accordingly, expanding and building capacity of staff teams may seem obvious and straightforward; but in reality it's very complex. The legacy of how services have evolved; the deficits that need to be addressed; along with reshaping the orientation of services and supporting a focus on multi disciplinary and interdisciplinary working are central to the development of primary care teams and networks. It's a culture change as well as management change as well as service change.



In other words, those who most need health care are least likely to receive it.



² Julian Tudor Hart in a paper for *The Lancet*, 27th February, 1971

The HSE, along with adopting a population health approach is also integrating a social inclusion approach as a key concept into its framework.

Social inclusion

The HSE, along with adopting a population health approach is also integrating a social inclusion approach as a key concept into its framework. By this I mean addressing how poverty impacts on health and well being, acknowledging that to ensure services are inclusive of the whole population and addressing marginalisation we need to balance targeting services with ensuring mainstream services are supported to respond to the needs of the totality of the local population and that planning, commissioning and provision of services is done in consultation and in partnership with the NGO, statutory, community and voluntary sector as well as those who use services. Building capacity and community development are equally important to enhance mechanisms for empowerment and greater participation in designing, planning, monitoring and decision making for marginalised groups and communities. None of this is realistic without supporting and training for staff.

These strands are reflected in the transformation objectives referred to earlier so there is change happening on a number of fronts simultaneously both internally in the HSE but also externally. We know that risk factors for some communities are particularly serious, e.g. people who are homeless, migrant workers; minority ethnic communities, travellers, asylum seekers, refugees, individuals with problematic drug and/or alcohol dependency, lesbian, gay, transsexual and transgender communities and those who have a positive HIV/AIDS status and so we organise our work both within the HSE and with a wide range of NGOs, statutory organisations and government departments so that these communities of interest and the risks and vulnerabilities they face can be factored in at the commissioning and design stage of service planning and delivery. Our approach then is to address the needs of people who are homeless within the social inclusion brief because that is how inclusion and mainstreaming of services can be better achieved and issues of access and equity can be addressed. We know that people who are homeless are not a homogenous group but sometimes how services are planned and delivered may assume they are. The needs of women who are homeless are at times still underestimated and not fully met; at the same time, the needs of those who are homeless and dependent on alcohol and/or illicit drugs have been increasingly highlighted and targeted services have been developed to meet their needs but again, the needs of women require capacity building, integration and support. Apart from planning and delivering services that take account of these issues, the balance between targeting services and mainstreaming services has always been a difficult line to tread. Targeting health services to people who are homeless has

gained considerable traction and resulted in significant developments, however, integrating those services so there are better connections for the service user between services can be problematic.

Lifecycle approach

The external push on social inclusion creates a wider platform and support for our own changes in health services. An example of this is the adoption of a lifecycle approach by key strategic government policies e.g. National Action Plan for Social Inclusion & Towards 2016 to target resources. The lifecycle approach places the individual at the centre of policy development and service delivery by assessing the risks facing them and the supports available at key stages of the lifecycle. These key lifecycle groups are: Children, People of Working Age, Older People & People with Disabilities. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion has adopted this approach as has Towards 2016 (T2016), the 10 year social partnership agreement which is then further supported in the National Development Plan. Each of these also contains targets for the health services which reflect the changes taking place and the developments of services and ways of working. Thus, the target on expansion and development of primary care teams is contained in both T2016 and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy as well as the National Health Strategy. They also contain actions with regard to homelessness which are reflected in the Homeless Agency Action Plan, and they include targets with regard to developments in mental health services. Other developments and change in the health services also have a resonance with addressing the needs of people who are homeless which may not be immediately apparent. There are significant resources targeting the development of older people services to provide support and capacity so that people can be supported to remain in their local community. We know there is a pocket of homeless people who are older and so we need to ensure they are included in the planning of older people's services and resources.

Nothing in this article denies the difficulties that still persist for people who are homeless trying to stay healthy, and when they are sick trying to access health services, or the frustration that staff experience in advocating and negotiating access to services. But very real developments in services have been and continue to be made and very good partnership working exists and is developing experientially. There are particular opportunities now to push hard and support the changes that need to be made since the momentum both internally and externally widens the platform of traction and accountability and provides opportunities to mainstream health services for people who are homeless. ■

TWO CHEERS FOR NEW GUIDELINES



Nick Sheward is director of development with Clúid Housing Association

Earlier this year the long-awaited revamp of the 1999 Social Housing Guidelines was published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. **Nick Sheward** assesses *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*.

Along with the policy document *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*¹, these design guidelines are intended to help secure delivery of housing under the National Spatial Strategy 2002–2020 and the National Development Plan 2007–2013.

The development of social housing is a major investment for the public purse. The design of new housing schemes can enhance the local environment and create or reinforce a sense of place as well as producing attractive places for people to live and invest in. Conversely, poorly considered design can lead to creation of housing developments that lack a sense of identity, which may lead to issues of antisocial behavior and an absence of buy-in or involvement on the part of those that live there. Good design is therefore critical in the creation of sustainable and vibrant communities.

Guidelines are important

As a developer of social housing, Clúid uses design guidelines that have been developed in-house to establish a framework that will increase awareness and understanding by our appointed consultants (the architects, engineers, builders and developers who work with us on a scheme) of good design within residential developments. In conjunction with a detailed design brief, the design guide is the mechanism that is used to communicate the client's (the housing association's) requirements for a scheme to the design team at the beginning of the development process. Designers can only be expected to produce layouts and scheme designs that satisfy a client's long-term requirements if they have a full understanding of what these requirements are. The successful design of any scheme is therefore dependant upon the client providing a clear statement

Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities is available at www.environ.ie

¹ See CornerStone issue 31, June 2007

of what is required of the consultants and this is accomplished by providing details on a broad set of agreed standards to be achieved by the consultants when putting together the scheme design. Design compliance with the agreed standards should ensure the delivery of quality housing developments and the creation of homes rather than houses.

So the fundamental assessment of *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* is whether it provides this clear basis of instruction to design consultants. Can the document be issued to consultants safe in the knowledge that the majority of the housing association's design requirements have been expressed? Does it clarify the housing association's requirements for the future long terms maintenance of the scheme; does it describe what the housing association would expect in terms of amenity and open spaces. Is the consultant clear on how they are expected to address the design of internal living areas and the natural circulation flow the housing association will require inside dwellings?

A useful tool for all housing schemes

On the majority of the key design issues the answer would have to be a resounding 'yes' and *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* certainly has much to be applauded. As with the 1999 guidelines, the document is concise and easy to navigate. It usefully combines into one document the Department's 1999 *Social Housing Design Guidelines* and the 1997 guidance on site selection, and maintains the logic of examining design in terms of urban / estate layout before considering the design of individual dwelling houses. It successfully highlights the often neglected role of the detailed design brief which as mentioned earlier is an essential element in communicating a Client's requirements for a scheme to the design consultants. It promotes a strong drive to delivering social, economic and environmental sustainability of both dwellings and communities. The increase in space standards, floor areas and minimum room widths are also very much to be welcomed, specifically in relation to the 2 bed 3 person single storey unit which has increased from an unrealistic 52m² under the 1999 guide to a much more reasonable 60m² (or 63m² for an apartment), as too is the vastly increased storage requirements for apartment developments.

It could be argued that greater detail could have been provided in terms of dwelling design and that the current document would prove inadequate in terms of communicating a client's requirement for the design of a number of elements. For example, the document refers to the Dwellings Energy Assessment Procedure (DEAP) assessments and Building Energy Ratings (BER) yet makes no statement regarding a specific BER target. Clarification on the minimum level of home energy rating the department wishes to see built would have been very useful as this would have given a clear indication of the degree of financial support likely to be available to those providing social housing.

However this degree of nit picking might be considered somewhat churlish as no design guide, no

matter how comprehensive and thorough, is likely to be able to provide detail on all of the client's requirements for a scheme. The department's document should therefore be viewed as a useful tool that can be applied by local authorities, housing associations and private sector clients when formulating their design requirements. It is interesting that the document no longer retains the phrase 'social housing' within its title as the department feel that document reflects general good practice that is equally relevant in the design of both public and private housing, and also underpins the government's policy for more integrated housing tenure.

Apartment design gets short shrift

There are however, a number of larger issues that remain unaddressed by the new guidelines. In view of the scale of development in the major urban areas that revolves around the construction of apartment complexes it is surprising that the guidance on apartment design stretches to as little as 72 lines of text. Section 4.3.6 briefly deals with special considerations relating to the site layout whilst section 5.1.2 provides a little more detail when considering factors affecting the design of individual apartments. It is regrettable that the work on the 'draft guidelines for design standards for apartments' circulated for consultation in January this year could not have been completed and featured as a specific design section of the revised design guide. The vital importance of ensuring that we design apartments to be sustainable should surely merit further guidance from the Department. It is a pity that similar guidance hasn't been offered to that provided by the excellent *Higher Density Housing for Families – a Design and Specification Guide* produced by the London Housing Federation. With the proliferation of apartment developments over the past few years and the much talked about fall off in housing (and apartment) output it may prove to be that the Department has already missed the boat in terms of influencing sustainable apartment design.

Woefully short on special needs and disability

In a similar vein, *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* can be said to woefully short on specific guidance in the design of special needs and wheelchair accessible accommodation. In the introduction, the document admits that it is primarily focused on the construction of general housing accommodation for individual households. The guidelines do not deal with special design features for group homes or special needs accommodation and combined with a perceived lack of guidance on apartment design discussed earlier the relevance of the guide could be viewed as focusing on the design of traditional housing. For all other 'non traditional' areas, the guide merely refers to documents produced by others: Habintag's *Wheelchair Housing Design Guide*; the National Disability Authority's *Building for Everyone*; the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Lifetime Adaptable Home Standards* and the City of Vancouver's *High Density Housing for*

...*Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* certainly has much to be applauded. As with the 1999 guidelines, the document is concise and easy to navigate.

families with Children to name but a few. It may be considered legitimate to merely refer to the design documents produced by others rather than incorporate them into a more comprehensive design statement, after all, why reinvent the wheel... Unfortunately however, the failure to cover these essential design issues comprehensively within its text diminishes the overall value of the guide.

Modern methods of construction ignored

A further difficulty with the guide lies with the complete absence of any reference to the introduction and use of modern methods of construction. For some time now construction has been increasingly viewed in terms of process engineering with a reduction in traditional trade based construction methods and an increase in off site fabrication and on site assembly. Early examples of modern methods of construction (MMC) included timber frame housing although the whole MMC industry has progressed significantly from the 1980s. Today, off site fabrication can involve the use of open or closed panellised units, volumetric or three dimensional modular units, pre cast or pre formed sub assemblies or hybrids that use a combination of approaches and technologies.

It has been argued that at a time when demand for housing outstrips supply, the change to build better homes more cheaply and efficiently using modern approaches to construction is essential. The National Audit Office in the UK suggests that it could be possible to build four times as many homes with the same amount of on-site labour, whilst also reducing on-site construction times by up to 50%. This is a view strongly endorsed by the UK's Housing Corporation, highlighted recently by the new joint Housing Corporation and English Partnerships' publication *Modern Thinking – building better value homes using modern approaches*. In this paper Margaret Ford, Chair of English Partnerships, states that 'modern approaches allow us to build more high quality homes and community facilities, more quickly and more cost effectively'. She goes on to further state that '...savings in labour costs and on site construction time maximise the number of affordable homes built for every pound of public money invested and allows private sale homes to be offered with additional environmental features at the same market price as traditionally built homes'. Surely this is something that should be welcomed in the current housing market in Ireland. It seems somewhat strange then that *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities*, which features the theme of sustainability so strongly, should fail to make a single reference to the use of modern methods of construction.

Take this one stage further and search the Department's web site for 'modern methods of construction' and again the issue is conspicuous by its absence. The only real reference is to a partly completed study of timber frame housing. A similar search on the Housing Corporation's web site will prove far more productive and highlights the degree of work that has been carried out in the UK since the 2001 Kick Start Programme.

Perhaps the use of modern methods of construction is not a design issue and therefore doesn't need to be included within design guidelines? No doubt CABE (the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) would take issue with this hypothesis. Their report *Design and Modern Methods of Construction* specifically discusses the importance of design and MMC highlighting that 'MMC requires significant design time at the early stages of the project'. This is echoed by Peter Dixon, Chair of the UK's Housing Corporation who confirmed in *Modern Talking* that '...parachuting off site manufacturing into a conventional design process doesn't produce savings – the savings are produced by reconfiguring the whole design process'. Design and the brief issued to design consultants is therefore an essential element to successfully delivering a MMC scheme.

As a housing provider, Clúid is anxious to embrace the benefits that MMC can bring. We already have a number of timber framed schemes in management which have utilized off site flat panel fabrication. A number of our apartment schemes feature bathroom, en-suite and kitchen pods and we also have units constructed using light gauge steel frame panels for internal and party walls. The next step should shortly see the construction of one of our apartment schemes utilizing full modular construction with three dimensional factory built units. These structures can be brought to site in a variety of forms ranging from a basic structure to one with all internal and external finishes and services installed. To safeguard standards, all systems must have appropriate certification and comply with all aspects of the Building Regulations and technical guidance documents; we should ensure that all parties involved in the scheme (contractor, consultants and clerk of works in particular) are familiar with the proposed system and that site supervision is strong to ensure the required detailing is achieved. With these safeguards secured we should increasingly look to MMC when designing schemes and bodies such as the department should be taking a lead.

Not a one-stop-shop

In conclusion, the DoEHLG's design is unfortunately not the one-stop-shop it could have been. It provides detailed and useful guidance on the design of traditional housing types but falls short on being a definitive guidance document in the design of apartments and special needs housing and completely misses a trick in not actively promoting MMC. As mentioned above, *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* therefore can only be viewed as part of the detailed information required by a design consultants and will need to be supplemented by further documentations outlining a client's full design requirements. This is a disappointment as with a bit more work *Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities* could have been a genuinely comprehensive set of guidelines. The document is good but could have been better – unfortunately, a missed opportunity for all those involved in the delivery of housing schemes. ■

The document is good but could have been better – unfortunately, a missed opportunity for all those involved in the delivery of housing schemes.

CARE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

“Care and case management focuses on how services can work together to meet client’s needs...”

Nearly everyone’s heard of care and case management. But how many people know what it means, or what the difference is between care management and case management? **Elaine Butler** explains, and outlines the Homeless Agency’s role.

A key area of work is emerging across homeless services, focussing on improving structures and systems to support effective care and case management. As the Homeless Agency initiates its care and case management steering group, a key issue is to ensure clarity regarding the concepts behind care and case management, and roles in relation to this strategy.

What is care and case management?

Quite often, a service user has a range of needs, which cannot be met by one service alone. Currently, there are no standardised agreed procedures for homeless services to collaborate in a multi-service care plan. This leads to many problems, for the service user and the service providers.

Care and case management focuses on how services can work together to meet client’s needs, on two levels:

- Management/policy level and
- Client level

Care management involves the co-ordination of services at management and policy level, while case management involves the collaboration of service providers at client level in the delivery of individually tailored care plans. Care and case management, when implemented effectively has been shown internationally to significantly improve the delivery of services to clients, meeting of clients needs and achieving positive outcomes with clients.



Elaine Butler is integrated services co-ordinator at the Homeless Agency

What is the Homeless Agency's care and case management strategy?

In the absence of agreed standardised ways to collaborate, the care and case management strategy sets out to develop agreement across services about how they can collaborate more effectively. This strategy involves four key stages:

1. *Conception*: Agreement is to be achieved on a conceptual model of the journey through care and case management: the continuum of care, supporting people out of homelessness
2. *Development*: Development of policies, processes, and protocols which support this continuum of care, or model of care and case management
3. *Application*: Implementing the model, policies, processes and protocols and analysing effectiveness
4. *Mainstreaming*: Ensuring the model, policies, processes, and protocols are adopted universally across the sector.

The case management strategy will involve the development of a range of case management tools and processes, in consultation with service providers, which will improve the collaborative delivery of services. The following tools are either currently in place or are being developed to support interagency work:

- Holistic needs assessment
- Risk assessment
- Care plan
- Job description of care manager and case manager
- Interagency protocols including; referral protocol, responsibilities and accountability agreement, case conference protocols, confidentiality agreements and data protection protocol, gaps and blocks protocol detailing external and internal supports, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, service user feedback mechanism and outcome measurement

These tools and processes will provide supports to the case management process and promote clarity, consistency and accountability in the responses of services to service users who may have a range of high support needs.

How does this fit in with the Homeless Agency's action plan?

The Homeless Agency Partnership has committed to the implementation of a care and case management system across homeless services in Dublin, as outlined in Core Action 4 in *A Key to the Door*: The Homeless Agency Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2007–2010. The establishment of a clear and workable framework underpinning care and case management is vital to the partnership achieving its vision, which is about eliminating long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough by 2010.

All services funded under the Homeless Agency arrangements have

committed to implementation of the holistic needs assessment and to work within a care and case management approach.

The role of the Homeless Agency

The Homeless Agency is responsible for the delivery of services to people who are experiencing homelessness in Dublin and is working to ensure that services work in partnership, developing structures and systems that support partnership. With regard to care and case management, the Homeless Agency has responsibility for coordinating the development of structures and processes which will support effective case management at both policy and practice levels. The Homeless Agency will not actively participate in case conferences but will respond in a strategic manner if the case management process is met with blocks and barriers. This will take place through a range of mechanisms, but in particular through the care and case management steering group, and the Homeless Agency's integrated services coordinator.

The care and case management steering group

The role of the care and case management steering group is to oversee the process of development and implementation of the case management model across homeless services. The steering group has representatives from the voluntary and statutory sectors and has set up a number of subgroups. These pull together expertise on particular issues and develop proposals to improve current structures for the steering group. Currently there are 4 subgroups focussing on:

- Developing a continuum of care model
- Developing tools for interagency work
- Prison discharge processes
- Provision of accommodation and supports for sex offenders

It is expected that a more subgroups will be initiated in the coming months, in order to pull together expertise and develop practical and workable proposals to improve service delivery to people who are homeless.

The role of the integrated services co-ordinator

The Homeless Agency's integrated services co-ordinator is responsible for coordinating this strategy: acting as a sectoral 'care manager' for the development and implementation of care and case management processes within homeless services.

The integrated services co-ordinator has a co-ordinating role and will not get actively involved in individual cases as this will be the function of case managers appointed by service providers. This role involves working with service providers to systematically identify policies, practices and procedures, which act as barriers to the effective implementation of continuum of care for people who are homeless, and to work with the relevant voluntary and statutory agencies to resolve these problems, at a structural level. ■

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Crosscare Housing and Welfare Information and Crosscare Migration Project

These two services which were previously called CentreCare and Emigrant Advice, have just changed their names to emphasise their Crosscare connection. Crosscare Housing and Welfare Information provides advice on housing, homelessness and social welfare; and Crosscare Migration Project gives advice to people leaving Ireland, people returning to Ireland, and people coming to Ireland for the first time. **Fran Cassidy** met the services' manager, **Yvonne Fleming**.



Twelve months volunteering with the Cork Simon Community sixteen years ago steered Yvonne Fleming from a communications degree towards community development work, and a subsequent change of career direction that has brought her to Crosscare where she currently manages the CentreCare and Emigrant Advice projects.

'Crosscare, she tells me, 'is the social care arm of the Catholic Church in the Dublin Dioceses and was set up in the 1940s, originally with a charitable focus, to work with people in vulnerable situations'

Of Emigrant Advice and CentreCare's recently refurbished offices on Cathedral Street she remarks that, 'as a mark of respect to our service users and our



‘Crosscare has just completed an ‘ambitious and exciting’ document laying out a vision for the next twenty years...’

staff team we wanted to have premises of the same high standard as the service we offer. The change has been significant and service users have expressed their appreciation. In fact the only difficulty is that we’re already outgrowing the building on account of increases in staff!’

Yvonne tells me that Crosscare has just completed an ‘ambitious and exciting’ document laying out a vision for the next twenty years that incorporates, amongst other things, the extension of their services outside the city centre and an increased reliance on research and social policy work to address issues arising for service users. More cosmetically, project titles have been changed to reflect the fact that they are strands of the one organization.

‘Instead of having different names, Crosscare, Emigrant Advice, CentreCare etc. which can be confusing, the name of every project will now start with ‘Crosscare’, so CentreCare is now ‘Crosscare Housing and Welfare Information’ and Emigrant Advice is now ‘Crosscare Migration Project.’

Yvonne explains that ‘CentreCare’s core remit is the provision of information and advocacy on housing, homelessness and social welfare. We are constantly reviewing how we fulfill that remit’.

‘Emigrant Advice on the other hand deals with three areas – information and advocacy for Irish people emigrating, Irish people returning, and people from other nationalities immigrating to Ireland for the first time.

‘When people come in here, they fill out a brief query form and our receptionist Ian directs them to a CentreCare worker or an Emigrant Advice worker. However, the work is increasingly overlapping and there is a lot of collaboration across the two services.

‘Of the two projects, CentreCare is more relevant from a homeless perspective. Our service users range from somebody having a once-off rent supplement query, to people in emergency accommodation who want help looking at their options and moving on, to people who have used the service intermittently for years when they have a problem with social welfare payments or maintaining their tenancy.

‘CentreCare’s work might involve intervention with the Department of Social and Family Affairs or a landlord, help in exploring viable options with regard to accommodation, support in navigating administration for people who are overwhelmed by paperwork, or working with someone to prepare for a Local Authority housing interview.’

‘During the refurbishment we lost what we call our ‘passing trade’ as we were in a rather intimidating

building without window signage in Marlborough Street. It forced us to develop CentreCare in a range of ways, which was a good thing. We now see this central base as just one part of our service, we also have eight outreach clinics at Dublin city food centres. People who have an information need can speak to our workers over or after their meal. A skill of the information worker is not just to respond to the one issue raised but to make sure that they pick up on other issues.’

‘We also publish a widely used map of homeless services, with advice on the immediate steps a person should take if they become homeless. To accompany this, we give an information input on request to organisations on the basic information they should know and on how to use that map.’ (Having once attended one of these sessions by CentreCare employee Ciara Mc Grath in the Anna Liffey Drug Project I can vouch for their usefulness.)

‘Another information session we provide is on everything to do with private rented accommodation – how to sort out the payments, what you should be doing in parallel, advice on the housing list, that kind of thing. The thinking behind these information inputs is to create the situation where people can be provided with accurate information from whatever organisation they link in with (from Citizens Information Centres to Community Guards), thus reducing the need to always refer people into the city centre services like CentreCare. ‘CentreCare works with both Irish and non Irish people. We have tailored the service to meet the needs of non Irish service users where possible (including the use of volunteer Polish interpreters to translate what the information worker of Centrecare is saying, and that is working very well). We’re looking at adding more languages over the next three years. Accurate information is a key ingredient of integration of new communities. Increasingly Emigrant Advice refers its service users (with whom they have worked on immigration matters) to CentreCare for advice on accommodation, social welfare etc’

With regard to Emigrant Advice I wonder has emigration changed since the darker economic days of the eighties when the service was established on Cathedral Street.

‘The profile of emigrants from Ireland has definitely changed and Emigrant Advice’s remit is broader than its original emigration only one. What Emigrant Advice is trying to do is to focus on Irish emigrants in vulnerable situations. We did a piece of research [*Still Leaving*] in 2005 and looked at people leaving Ireland for the UK in a 12-month period. Of the 4000 people who emigrated, about 10%, ended up approaching Irish or other welfare organisations in the UK for help. The profile of that 10% included those just out of prison, people trying to get away from the drugs scene here, those fleeing domestic violence and gay or lesbian people fleeing homophobia.

‘Another area Emigrant Advice is interested in is Irish people coming back here, often with unrealistic

expectations. We have a publication called *Returning to Ireland* available in the Irish Centres in the UK, Australia and the US giving people the information they should have before coming back, not to discourage them, but as a reality check as to the cost of living and social welfare entitlements etc. The returned emigrant might be coming back to nothing and need our support in terms of sourcing appropriate accommodation – Centrecare may be called in here'

I ask where the service users come from.

'We will accept referrals from anywhere and we put a lot of effort in to publicising our service through posters and pamphlets, and networking as part of the Homeless Network and the Dublin City Council Central Area Homeless Forum. But feedback from service users suggests that people still mainly hear about us through word of mouth – the fact that we have been here, near the Pro-Cathedral, for so long also helps. Our window signage is very clear as to the services we offer. We don't ever send anyone away, although we might refer them to specialist organizations, for example those that have expertise in mental health or addiction. It also happens that someone comes to Emigrant Advice with a migration question ends up in the CentreCare service because they also have a housing/homeless or social welfare question, and then spreads the word.

I ask about the organisation's involvement in a recent much publicised situation involving Roma gypsies camped at the M50 roundabout.

'We sent a bus to the roundabout daily and most of the Roma came in to our food centre in Holles Row for food and showers and clothes. A CentreCare information worker met with each of the families to see if there were immediate/emergency needs. We were very clear about our involvement – it was about supporting the Roma families on a humanitarian level. Afterwards we put out a press release saying what we had done, why we had done it and requesting Minister Dick Roche to be a voice in Europe about the treatment of Roma.

Yvonne asserts that social policy work is increasingly important in Crosscare's development.

'We've a half-time social policy worker in CentreCare now and we need to build on that resource. We strongly believe that there is no point in us repeatedly answering the same queries. We need to document trends and address the issues arising for our services users at the source of the problem. For example, our experience shows us that people on rent supplement are repeatedly discriminated against when pursuing private rented accommodation. So, with Threshold, we have spoken to the Department of Family and Social Affairs to outline the problem. We are now compiling evidence of this matter for discussion with the department. We have also identified a trend in Polish people requiring assistance filling in forms for certain social welfare and HSE payments. We are documenting these needs and will

work with the relevant statutory service providers to make these systems more accessible.

What are the immediate objectives of the organisation?



'We have a lot of aims for the next three years – developing the city centre service by increasing the number of languages through which we offer the service, evaluating the information inputs we do with organisations in order to develop them further, increasing our social policy remit so that repeated issues of service users can be addressed at a macro level, bringing the CentreCare service to people who live in B&Bs (by developing a model to engage them). To date we've linked up with Hill Street Family Resource Centre and we're visiting five B&Bs in the Dublin 1 area with our information services and the family and support services of the Resource Centre – we plan to develop a regular group of people who live in B&Bs in Dublin 1 (with on-site childcare). Through this group the information, advocacy, and support needs of the participants can be addressed. In addition, as outlined in the Crosscare 20 year plan we will be developing our services throughout the Dublin Diocese area, among other broad developments.

'We have lots of ideas. In a dream world we'd have a lot more resources, government departments would be 100% receptive to all the recommendations from our social policy work and we'd be nearing the point where every one has a permanent home with tailored supports.

'Our work in both projects is all about prevention – ideally giving people the information they need before the crisis happens and informing the relevant body (government dept or other) of the adverse impact of their policies so they can amend their practice for the better. Its sounds straight-forward – but we're not there yet!' ■

Crosscare Housing and Welfare Information

(formerly CentreCare) – tel 01 872 6775

Crosscare Migration Project

(formerly Emigrant Advice) – tel 01 873 2844

1 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1

Open weekdays 9.30–1pm (except Wednesday when it is closed in the morning) and 2–5pm

www.crosscare.ie



CornerStone Questionnaire

Bob Jordan

Director, Threshold

When and why did you first get involved in the area of homelessness?
I carried out research for the Homeless Initiative (now Homeless Agency) in 1996 which looked at how computer technology could be used to deliver services to people who are homeless. This was one of the acorns that grew into the LINK system.

Has your understanding of homelessness changed since then?
Yes, I have learned that homelessness rarely arises from a single event but rather from poverty. Solving people's housing and income problems before they get too big is the key to prevention.

What one policy initiative would make the most difference to homelessness people?
Guaranteed move-on accommodation for people leaving emergency homeless accommodation.

What have you learnt from homeless people you have met?
That the experience of homelessness often begins early and that many homeless adults experienced homelessness as a child.

Do you think poverty and homelessness will always be with us?
Yes, but we can minimise the numbers of people who become homeless. Where people do become homeless, homeless services must aim to make that experience as short as possible.

Can you think of anything we can learn from another country about tackling homelessness?
Perhaps the most successful effort was in Finland. After the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, the government devised a response that including building more social housing, creating welfare and health care services, and a target to provide a dwelling of minimum standards for every homeless person. This shows that homelessness is best solved when prevention, emergency and long-term housing responses go hand in hand.

What's the difference between NGOs and the statutory sector?
NGOs complement the work of the statutory sector. They act as a substitute for state services or

deliver services on behalf of the state; they advocate on behalf of clients to ensure they get the state services they need; and they campaign to make the system better.

Which matters most, charity or political change?
Charity addresses the most basic needs of people affected by poverty, but political change is necessary to address the root causes of poverty and its effects are therefore more far-reaching and enduring.

What would you do if the homelessness problem was solved and you were no longer needed?
Celebrate, and look at how the solutions developed could be used to solve other poverty-related problems.

Do you give money to people who are begging?
Rarely, except if they know me! ■

CornerStone is distributed free by the Homeless Agency. If you know someone who would like to receive CornerStone, or you would like your own copy, contact:

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