

# Evaluation of Transitional Housing and Support Services Funded Under the Homeless Agency Arrangements in the Dublin Area

## Evaluation Framework

### **Introduction**

---

Following selection of Fitzpatrick Associates to undertake the above evaluation, a meeting was held with Derval Howley on Wednesday 13th September to discuss our proposal. In light of the experience of a number of previous evaluations undertaken for the Homeless Agency, a number of issues with regard to the evaluation framework were raised, and it was agreed that we would adapt our framework in order to ensure that the evaluation progresses with maximum effectiveness. This note highlights the revised evaluation framework proposed by Fitzpatrick Associates for discussion at the Steering Group meeting on Wednesday 27th September.

### **Overview**

---

The main changes to the original evaluation framework proposed concern the introduction of a briefing session for representatives of the services being evaluated and the introduction of a questionnaire/request for information task that facilitates the gathering of consistent detailed information from each of the services prior to the evaluation visits.

### **Phase 1 - Inception**

---

The inception phase began with the meeting with the Homeless Agency on 13th September and will conclude with the Steering Group meeting on 27th September where the full work programme and appropriate deadlines will be agreed and the outputs for the evaluations of individual services clarified. The 21 services have been selected and material for review has been passed on to the consultants. A meeting is also being held with Simon Brooke, who has recently undertaken an evaluation of emergency service provision, in order to learn lessons from his experience.

## Phase 2 – Strategic Consultation and Research

---

### Review of Relevant Material

It will be important to ensure that the consultants undertaking the evaluation have a close understanding of all relevant legislation, policy material, organisation strategies, previous evaluations and reviews, and relevant research undertaken. Fitzpatrick Associates will undertake a thorough review of all such relevant material. In addition it will also be important to examine any key documentation held by the Homeless Agency with regard to each of the twenty-one services being evaluated. Such information may include the provider's application for funding assistance, internal evaluations conducted, progress and monitoring reports, and financial information. This will all be reviewed as part of the evaluation process prior to visiting each of the services as described in Phase 3 below.

### Stakeholder Consultation

A number of stakeholders will be worthy of consultation given their respective roles in policy-making, funding and operation of transitional services in Dublin. It is therefore proposed that discussions will be held with appropriate representatives of the following organisations:

- Service users
- Homeless Agency.
- Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council and South Dublin County Council. As part of these consultations to review their protocols with transitional service providers regarding the allocation of social housing following successful completion of a programme.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- The Department of Health and Children and the HSE.
- Other relevant departments or agencies as agreed with client – FAS, Probation and Welfare Service, Department of Social and Family Affairs, etc.
- Referral Agencies
- The Irish Council of Social Housing and other appropriate organisations from the community and voluntary sector.

## Phase 3 – Direct Service Research

---

### Identification of Key Contacts

It will be important to ensure that a key contact can be identified in each of the services being evaluated that can serve as the liaison point with the consultants throughout the duration of the evaluation. Fitzpatrick Associates will get in touch with all services following the Steering Group meeting to establish such a contact person and invite them to the Briefing Session discussed below.

**Briefing Session**

Given the success of such an exercise in the previous evaluation of emergency service provision, it is proposed to invite key contacts from each of the 21 services being evaluated to a Briefing Session. At this Briefing Session, we will introduce the evaluation team, outline the objectives of the study, highlight the research tasks that are to be undertaken, and identify the information that we will require from each of the services.

**Questionnaire and Request for Information**

In order to facilitate the efficient progression of the evaluation, it is intended to introduce an additional task involving the distribution of a questionnaire and request for further information. The questionnaire will concentrate on non-subjective issues such as standards, facilities, capacity, occupancy, funding, financial performance, etc. A request for other relevant information such as evaluations, progress or monitoring reports, service level agreements, annual reports, financial statements, documentation relating to Complaints and Appeals, Codes of Conduct for Board and Employees, health and safety policy service regulations and standards, etc. will also be submitted at this stage. This exercise will be an important tool in assessing compliance with Putting People First quality standards and key information about the service prior to any evaluation visits. It will also allow the evaluation visits to concentrate on more qualitative discussion about the effectiveness of provision. The questionnaire would be submitted to the homeless agency for approval prior to distribution.

**Evaluation Visits**

With a base of information gathered about each service, it is proposed to visit all of the 21 selected services at the point of delivery and consult with representatives responsible for managing the services, staff delivering the service, and users who are benefiting from the service. To develop a synergy between the various consultations and allow a full picture of performance to be developed, it is proposed that each of the services is visited for a concentrated consultation process spanning a full working day. One member of the consultancy team will devote time to discussions with service users, while another will conduct bilateral meetings with management of the services and consultation with staff. As highlighted in the proposal, the consultations would be highly structured, with a list of issues to be discussed in each meeting also provided in this document.

**Phase 4 – Progression Routes**

---

The purpose of transitional housing and support services is to facilitate the progression of people that are homeless into a permanent, sustainable living environment, and therefore it is critical that account is taken of this impact. This can only be effectively achieved by consulting with those individuals that have progressed through the

transitional services into permanent accommodation. It is therefore proposed that a series of 10-12 interviews be held with individuals that have progressed through the transitional services being evaluated, using the same approach as described above for consulting services users. The assistance of the transitional service providers and other key stakeholders involved in delivering homeless services would be used to identify appropriate individuals for this exercise. A list of indicative issues that would be covered in these discussions was provided in the proposal.

## Phase 5 - Evaluation and Reporting

---

The reporting requirements specified within the Invitation to Tender are no longer practical given the later starting date than originally envisaged. Given the date of commencement and the longer lead-in time prior to the service evaluation visits as a result of the introduction of additional tasks it is now proposed that the following revised deadlines are adopted for submission of reports:

- First Interim Report to be provided by 21st November 2006
- Second Interim Report by 21st December 2006
- Final report by 28th February 2007.

This timeframe should still allow the interim reports to comprise the following components, as detailed in the original proposal:

- The first interim report would consider the policy context underpinning service delivery, summarising the findings from the key stakeholder consultations and the review of relevant material. A profile of transitional housing and support services activity in Dublin would be provided, based on desk base research of all such services. By this time it is expected that 5-6 service specific assessments would be undertaken, and an initial evaluation of performance of each of these 6-8 services would be provided. Finally the report would highlight a number of emerging issues with regard to transitional service provision in general from the first research phase, which can then be further investigated as the study progresses.
- The second interim report would provide, as far as possible, quantitative and qualitative analysis across all 21 services, using desk research sourced from the individual services and the Homeless Agency. A summary evaluation of performance would be given for the 14-18 services that would have been visited at this stage and overall findings to date across all provision would be detailed. The case study research on progression routes would also have begun at this point and any initial findings from this research would also be highlighted in the report. To conclude the report, emerging conclusions and recommendations would be specified.

HOME  
LESS  
agency

HOME  
LESS  
agency

The draft report would be submitted to the homeless agency and Steering Group for their comments at the end of January 2006. It would then be amended and a revised, finalised version produced prior to the proposed revised deadline for completion of the evaluation exercise of 28th February 2007.