



**8. Future options for the building stock in current use for housing and homeless services**

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### 8.1. Background and context

Arising from the commitment in the Homeless Agency Partnership's 2008 Submission to Government to reconfigure homeless services and establish a *Pathway to Home* model of homeless and housing support services, an audit was undertaken of the capacity, configuration and condition of the building stock in current use for housing and homeless services. The findings of this audit are presented here and will be relied on to assist the Homeless Agency Partnership to begin to reconfigure homeless service provision and temporary emergency accommodation into more appropriate built environs that can become places of change and homes for people experiencing homelessness.

The process of information gathering commenced in January 2009, consisting firstly of a paper exercise whereby both statutory and voluntary service providers were requested to complete an initial form and secondly, a physical site survey of the buildings themselves. The initial form collated information regarding the current functional use of buildings, the ownership, leasing arrangements, planning applications, adherence to fire safety regulations, noting as well other factors that could affect potential reconfiguration. As a result, a list of properties was compiled and from this, a number of buildings were short-listed to be surveyed by an architect, focusing primarily on the institutional buildings.

Given the tight timeframe, Dublin City Council commissioned an external architect to conduct site surveys in order to provide an initial appraisal of building stock. This resulted in an "as seen" description of the condition, spatial configuration, capacity of accommodation, ancillary facilities along with drawings depicting the layout of the building and grounds. In addition, the architect reported on fire safety issues and commented on physical features that could impact on reconfiguration. Site surveys were conducted throughout mid February to mid March 2009.

The audit concentrated mainly on buildings owned by statutory agencies and voluntary service providers along with a separate but parallel audit process carried out by Dublin City Council for private emergency accommodation used in the four Dublin local authority areas.

A summary report on the audit was presented to the Implementation Steering Group on 20th March in respect of determining and categorising accommodation under the *Pathway to Home* model and a second phase of the audit is planned to take place post the development of the model. This second phase will involve more detailed inspections and surveys of buildings selected as suitable for reconfiguration but requiring renovations to align it with building regulations and with its functional use under the *Pathway to Home* model. Phase Two will specifically examine the level of material resources required and associated costs for potential renovations and maintenance of the building.

### 8.2 The stock of buildings in current use and their future potential role in the *Pathway to Home* model

In responding to the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*, which recommended that an audit of all emergency and transitional accommodation take place in addition to reviewing relevant aspects of

Health and Safety,<sup>57</sup> the Homeless Agency in partnership with Dublin City Council took a lead role on behalf of the Implementation Steering Group to ensure a comprehensive audit was carried out. The specific purpose underpinning the audit was to facilitate the reconfiguration of current provision into a homeless and housing pathway model of provision to meet the 2010 Vision.

It is crucial to note that the primary emphasis behind carrying out an analysis of current building stock in use is to assist the partnership in identifying the ‘potential’ for reconfiguration into a *Pathway to Home* model of provision. It is acknowledged and respected that there needs to be sensitivity to the fact that current buildings are in direct ownership of a variety of voluntary and statutory organisations and used for purposes which reflect requirements as presently understood. Any change in current use will require extensive consultation and agreement with providers in terms of change of use.

### 8.2.1 Determinants in categorising the building stock in current use

The Implementation Steering Group established and agreed a range of factors that helped determine how the building stock in current use could be categorised and therefore reconfigured. The following are considered key factors that shaped this understanding:

- Differentiation of service users resident in hostels – i.e. composition of the household (families with children of varying ages/gender, couples, single sex accommodation or integrated accommodation).
- Specialisation of programme activities within the hostel.
  - life skills.
  - high/medium/low risk categories as assessed by HNA.
  - addiction (wet hostel, dry hostel, consumption rooms, harm reduction etc).
  - detox/step down.
  - intermediary/respite care facilities including medical clinic rooms, pharmacy.
  - consultation rooms.
  - crèche, play rooms/areas.
  - ancillary accommodation/office space/utility rooms.
- Minimum building standards.
  - single or double rooms - minimum room size.
  - minimum number of shared bathrooms, toilets, showers.
  - en suite rooms – facilities (wash basin/toilet/shower/bath).
  - separate or communal cooking facilities or canteen style.
  - self contained units – no. of units and minimum floor space.
  - recreation rooms.
  - laundry.

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<sup>57</sup> See *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series* and recommendation(s) 18 (page 105) and 23 (part d page 114).

— Access and Security.

- front door with own key access.
- 24 hr access to building, security gate.
- 24 hr or day/night waking staff.
- on site porter, security, caretaker.
- nurses station.
- disability access, lift.
- secure reception/lobby area.

— Ownership of the Building.

- Statutory owned.
- Third party (Voluntary Service Providers, housing association, private landlord etc).

Outline specifications were then agreed by the Implementation Steering Group for the different types of temporary accommodation and housing (mainstream specialised with on-site housing support) that will be established under the *Pathway to Home* model. This allowed for a spectrum of specifications to be agreed that help ensure the desired flexibility to use or adapt buildings as necessary is available. The following matrix of specification was developed as a result.

**Figure 4. Building specification for Temporary Emergency Accommodation in *Pathway to Home* model**

Proposed specification	Temporary emergency accommodation	Supported Temporary accommodation	Housing with on-site support
<b>Accommodation</b>			
Single/Double Room	✓		
Single/Double Room en suite	✓	✓	✓
Self contained (singles/couples)	✓	✓	✓
Self contained (families)	✓	✓	✓
<b>Communal facilities</b>			
WC/showers/bathrooms	✓		
Kitchen	✓	✓	✓
Canteen (meals provided)	(✓)	✓	✓
Dining room	✓	✓	✓
Recreation room	✓	✓	✓
Laundry	✓	✓	✓
<b>Ancillary facilities</b>			
Consultation room	✓	✓	✓
Training/meeting room		✓	
Medical/clinic room		✓	✓
Nurses station		✓	✓
Creche/play areas	✓	✓	
Office/administration	✓	✓	✓
Staff accommodation (sleeper or 24hrs)		✓	✓
<b>Access and security</b>			
Mobility access/lift	✓	✓	✓
Secure lobby/reception area		✓	✓
(✓) Depending on individual cooking facilities			

### 8.2.2 Categorising the building stock in current use

The following categories for the building stock in use were agreed

**Category One:**

Buildings that can be converted into housing with or without visiting supports

**Category Two:**

A) Buildings that can be reconfigured as housing with on-site supports

B) Buildings that can be reconfigured either as housing with on-site support or aligned to *Pathway to Home* model.

**Category Three:**

Buildings that require renovations in order to align with *Pathway to Home* model.

**Category Four:**

Buildings that are fit for purpose and can be reconfigured under the *Pathway to Home* model.

**Category Five:**

A) Buildings that are not fit for purpose in current condition but have potential to be aligned to *Pathway to Home* model.

B) Buildings that are not fit for purpose in current condition or have no potential to be aligned to *Pathway to Home* model.

**Other:**

Buildings suitable for other non-homeless provision i.e. residential care home, domestic violence refuges etc.

Of the 52 sites architecturally surveyed, the Implementation Steering Group categorised the buildings as per Table 8. It is worth pointing out, that there were a number of buildings that the Implementation Steering Group categorised potentially as either housing or as the *Pathway to Home* model accommodation. For the purposes of this report, these buildings have been grouped into the housing category, given the strategic priority in *A Key to the Door* to provide as much housing with supports as possible to people experiencing homelessness. It should be noted that some of this housing can take the form of residential supported housing.

**Table 8. Proposed categorisation of building stock under *Pathway to Home* model**

<b>Category 1</b>	Building can be reconfigured as housing with or without visiting supports	19
<b>Category 2A</b>	Building can be reconfigured as housing with on-site supports	2
<b>Category 2B</b>	Building can be reconfigured either as housing with on-site supports or under the <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	4
<b>Category 3</b>	Building requires renovations to align with <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	10
<b>Category 4</b>	Building can be reconfigured and aligned under <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	9
<b>Category 5A</b>	Building is not fit for purpose in current condition but has potential to be aligned to <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	3
<b>Category 5B</b>	Building is not fit for purpose or has no potential to be aligned to <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	3
<b>Other</b>	Building is suitable for other non-homeless provision i.e. residential care home	2

### 8.3 Profiling the building stock in current use: emergency accommodation, transitional and long-term supported accommodation

Based on the information collected from providers, 135 sites are used to accommodate and house people experiencing homelessness.<sup>58</sup> Buildings ranged from institutional type buildings operating as homeless hostels and shelters to individual houses. For the site survey, fifty-two sites were short-listed focusing on those buildings that were mainly institutional or within a development complex.

It is worth noting a number of services in the *Evaluation of Emergency Accommodation Services* by Brooke and Courtney 2007 were identified as working from buildings that were in poor physical conditions. These were not included in the site survey as plans are currently underway to source alternative buildings and relocate residents to more appropriate forms of accommodation. Likewise, new buildings erected in the last number of years that are purpose-built homeless facilities were not included in the list for a site survey given that architectural drawings can be sourced from provider. Buildings in both these groups have been considered and included in the analysis of the overall building stock in Dublin.

The short-list list does not represent all the homeless accommodation across the four Dublin local authority areas since there are a number of accommodation providers that are not within the Homeless Agency Partnership structures nor do these providers receive known state funding. Thus the Homeless Agency is unable to include these buildings as part of this audit. It is proposed that future planning for homeless services should take into account this category of homeless service providers.

#### **Key findings**

- 47% of buildings are currently used as temporary homeless accommodation.
- 41% of buildings are currently used long-term to accommodate people requiring supports.
- 12% of buildings are currently not in a condition fit for use.
- Emergency accommodation tended to be provided in institutional buildings and resembled hostel bedrooms or dormitory style beds.
- Transitional services were delivered in various structures, some being in institutional buildings, converted convents or in regular housing.
- Long-term supported housing tended to be provided in regular housing with a few services being delivered in small development complexes where support staff were based on-site.

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<sup>58</sup> 'Site' refers to single buildings or multiple buildings located in housing estates owned/managed by the local authority, homeless service provider or an approved housing body.

**Table 9. Current use of building stock**

<b>Current Use of Building</b>	<b>Of all Building Stock</b>	<b>Of the Buildings Surveyed</b>
Emergency (including night only hostels)	21	16
Transitional	35	17
Long-term supported	55	13
Detox/Rehab/Aftercare	8	3
Other <sup>59</sup>	16	3

### 8.3.1 General location of building stock across Dublin

Sites reviewed in the audit were distributed across the four Dublin local authority areas. The majority of these buildings are located within the boundaries of Dublin City Council's five functional areas.

**Table 10. Distribution of building stock**

<b>Local Authority Area</b>	<b>Of all Building Stock</b>	<b>Of the Buildings Surveyed</b>
DCC Central	31 sites	22 sites
DCC North Central	23 sites	8 sites
DCC North West	13 sites	2 sites
DCC South Central	28 sites	12 sites
DCC South East	14 sites	7 sites
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	7 sites	1 site
Fingal	4 sites	None
South Dublin	15 sites	None

### 8.3.2 Ownership of building stock between statutory and voluntary providers

The ownership of buildings was as varied as the type of buildings. A significant proportion of buildings, 60%, were owned by a combination of voluntary providers or by approved housing bodies. 24% of buildings were owned by one of the four Dublin local authorities. It is important to also note that 13%, of buildings accounted for were leased from private owners, either to a local authority or voluntary service provider on an annual or long-term basis.

<sup>59</sup> 'Other' accounts for domestic violence refuges, vacant buildings in need of major renovation and accommodation for specific categories of persons e.g. Defence Forces.

**Table 11. Buildings owned by local authority, voluntary provider, approved housing body or private landlord**

Ownership Detail	Of all Building Stock	Of the Buildings Surveyed
Dublin City Council	25	20
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	3	0
Fingal	3	1
South Dublin	1	0
Voluntary Provider or Approved Housing Body	81	27
Private Landlord	18	4
Unknown	4	0

## 8.4 Assessing the future role of the building stock currently in use

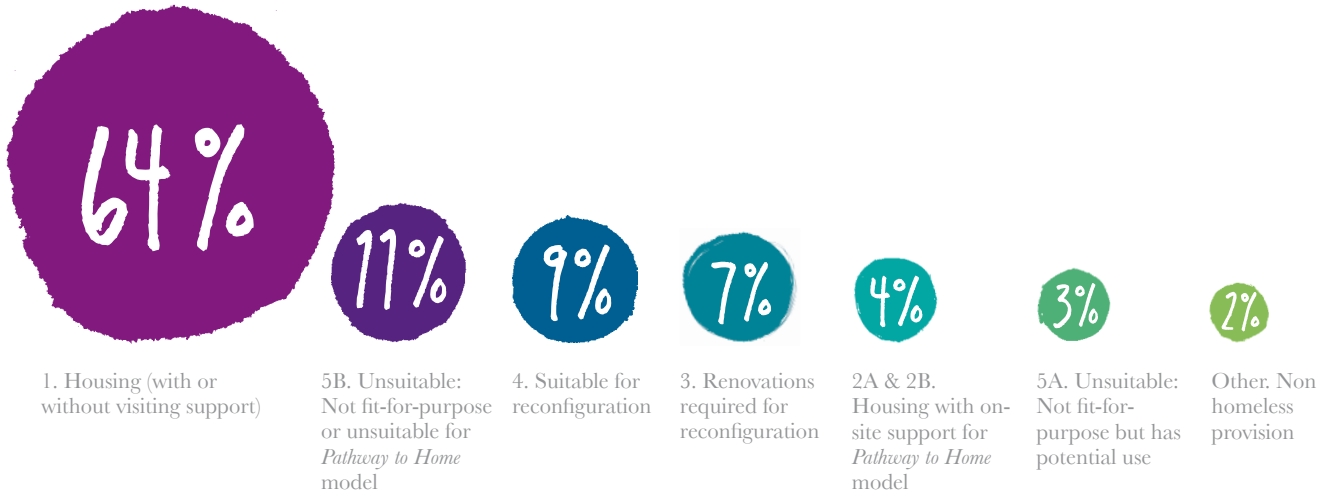
### 8.4.1 Reconfiguration of use

**Table 12. Proposed reconfiguration of the buildings stock in current use**

Building Category	Buildings Surveyed	Buildings Not Surveyed	Total Building Stock
1. Housing	19	66	85
2A. Housing with on-site support	2	0	2
2B. Housing with on-site support or <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	4	0	4
3. Renovations required before reconfiguration	10	0	10
4. Suitable for reconfiguration	9	3	12
5A. Unsuited: Not fit-for-purpose but has potential use	3	1	4
5B. Unsuited: Not fit-for-purpose or unsuited for <i>Pathway to Home</i> model	3	12	15
Other. Non homeless provision	2	1	3

- A total of 68% of current building stock can be converted into independent housing with or without supports including on-site services.
- A total of 19% of current building stock can be reconfigured under the *Pathway to Home* model.
- A total of 2% of current building stock requires further consideration as to whether these should remain funded under homelessness as opposed to a different funding stream.
- The remaining 11% of current building stock is not appropriate for use as homeless accommodation under the *Pathway to Home* model.

**Figure 5. Illustration of proposed reconfiguration of all building stock**



#### 8.4.2. General distribution for reconfiguration of use

Based on the categorisation of buildings, the table below shows the general distribution of geographical locations (broken down into local authority areas) where the potentially reconfigured buildings can be found. It must be noted more buildings need to be acquired in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin areas as part of the localisation of homeless services.

**Table 13. Local authority areas for proposed categorisation of buildings surveyed and building not surveyed (in green)**

Category of Building	1	2	3	4	5A	5B	Other
<b>Local Authority Area</b>							
Central	6	6	1	0	5	0	6
North Central	4	12	0	0	0	0	2
North West	1	11	0	0	0	0	1
South Central	4	13	1	0	4	0	2
South East	4	4	0	0	1	0	1
Dun Laoghaire	0	5	0	0	0	0	1
Fingal	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
South Dublin	0	14	0	0	0	0	0

## 8.5 Audit of Private Emergency Accommodation

Dublin City Council undertook a separate and parallel audit process for private emergency accommodation within the Dublin city and county areas in order to assess and identify properties suitable for long-term occupancy through a formal tenancy agreement. Thirty-four properties were selected for the audit and inspected by Dublin City Council’s Environmental Health Unit using the criteria and standards set out for the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

It was found that 19 out of the 34 properties are suitable for reconfiguration into long-term independent housing with minor refurbishment and redevelopment to upgrade buildings. The 19 properties comprise a potential of 161 units, ranging from 1-bed units to 5-bed houses.

## 8.6 Matching the capacity of buildings surveyed to the estimate of housing need for homeless people in Dublin (Action H1)

Information was also obtained through the site surveys on the bed and unit capacity for the current buildings in use, indicating the quantity of rooms, self-contained apartments and houses (single or multiple beds) for each site. This allows for an initial comparison to be made against the estimate of housing need (Action H1, *A Key to the Door*).

**Table 14. Type of housing units required for homeless persons in Dublin, Action H1**

	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4-Bed or larger	Total
<b>Estimate of Housing Need (Action H1 and Counted In)</b>	1762	182	146	54	2144

**Table 15. Type of units in current building stock used as homeless accommodation**

	Rooms (Singles/Doubles)	Studio Apt	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4-Bed or larger	Total
<b>Capacity of Buildings Surveyed</b>	686	237	132	44	37	2	452*
<b>Private Emergency Stock</b>	-	46	64	44	4	3	161
<b>Total of Known Building Stock</b>	-	283	196	88	41	5	613
<b>Capacity of Buildings not Surveyed</b>	Further exercise to be carried out by the Homeless Agency.						

\* Note: Number excludes single and double rooms since they are not required in the estimates of housing units.

The audit and site surveys have concluded that the majority of buildings currently used are in reasonable condition meeting the criteria and specifications for homeless accommodation and housing under the *Pathway to Home* model.

Currently within the homeless system, nearly 68% of building stock is deemed suitable to be converted into independent housing with on-site or visiting housing supports. This is particularly so for stock whose current functional use is as a “transitional service” or “long-term supported accommodation” (especially as these buildings are already divided into self-contained units/apartments or indeed are individual houses).

The audit also revealed that of the institutional buildings surveyed, there are up to 23 sites that can be readily reconfigured into temporary emergency accommodation given they already have the desired units, spatial layout and facilities on site. The Homeless Agency will work closely with service providers to develop and agree plans for the development of these sites.

Of the 15 buildings assessed as being unsuitable for use under the *Pathway to Home* model, some are institutional buildings leased from private landlords. Under the *Pathway to Home* model the future use of these privately owned buildings will be minimal and residual and many will be returned back to their owners. Households currently residing in these buildings will be relocated into appropriate accommodation under the *Pathway to Home* model or into independent housing with or without supports.

There are also some buildings that are used as dormitory style accommodation. These buildings comprise several storeys and in addition to dormitory rooms, have private bedrooms on other floors of the building. Under the *Pathway to Home* model the use of dormitory beds will be phased out. However, these spaces could be retained as contingency beds under future cold weather initiatives. The Homeless Agency and statutory funders will work with the relevant service provider to agree plans and protocols for type of service provision.

Lastly, the audit confirmed there were a very small number of buildings in poor conditions that should not continue to be used as homeless accommodation. There are existing plans and action underway to source alternative accommodation and relocate residents for these buildings.

The results of this audit process indicate that there is a sufficient bank of existing building stock that has the potential to be retained, adapted and reconfigured under the new *Pathway to Home* model. The following steps will require agreement in order to proceed with the planned *Pathway to Home* model reconfiguration of homeless services:

- Development of move-on options for persons residing in buildings not chosen to be reconfigured for use under the *Pathway to Home* model.
- Development of an agreed process between the Homeless Agency, funders, statutory and relevant voluntary service providers in respect of agreeing and implementing the proposed reconfiguration of their buildings to align with the *Pathway to Home* model of homeless services.

- Development of an agreed process between the Homeless Agency, funders, statutory and voluntary service providers in respect of agreeing and implementing the proposed reconfiguration of building into independent housing with or without supports. This will involve agreement between organisations on a standardised licensing and tenancy agreement for residents.
- In order to quantify the work and costs required to bring buildings into use under the *Pathway to Home* model, all buildings categorised as requiring renovation (Category Three) should undergo a more comprehensive and detailed inspection as part of a second phase of the audit process.
- An additional exercise that is required, is to undertake an analysis of the building and unit capacity of the stock in use not included in the site survey. As part of future planning, cognisance should also be taken in relation to homeless accommodation and services in Dublin that does not fall within the Homeless Agency Partnership structures.
- In order to secure these premises for long-term occupation and residence under a formal tenancy agreement for occupants, Dublin City Council should commence an immediate process of negotiation with landlords of the 19 identified premises in use as private emergency accommodation that are considered suitable for use under the *Pathway to Home* model.

