

2. Background and context setting

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The following detail provides a chronological overview to the activity that has taken place over the previous 24 months, which has led to the development of a *Pathway to Home*.

The 2010 Vision and the agreed actions set out in *A Key to the Door (2007-2010)* are underpinned by three strategic aims, which relate to:

- The prevention of homelessness.
- The provision of effective services in each of the four Dublin local authority areas.
- The provision of sufficient long-term housing with appropriate supports as required.

In 2007, the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership adopted a statement of direction for emergency and transitional housing and support services called *Pathways to Home*, that identified the need to put in place ‘a model of housing and related housing and care services that support and maintain successful tenancies’.¹

Subsequently, following a progress review (carried out in late 2007, the first year of implementing *A Key to the Door*), the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership agreed three critical priority actions for 2008. These actions were specifically designed to ensure that the momentum gained in achieving the Partnership’s strategic Vision was maintained. They were to:

- Measure and evidence the extent of homelessness in Dublin, the need and demand arising for service responses and the required level of housing provision. This was achieved through the completion of *Counted In, 2008 – A Report of the Extent of Homelessness in Dublin*.²
- Develop and agree a model of service delivery for the homeless sector in Dublin, with the aim being to have in place a ‘pathways approach’ among homeless service providers, which ensures the provision of sustainable solutions to homelessness and eliminating the need to sleep rough. This was achieved through the commissioning of an independent evaluation of homeless services, the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*.³
- Review current expenditure on homeless services and develop and propose a capital and revenue funding mechanism to be agreed as part of a revised funding regime.⁴ This critical priority was achieved by establishing a steering group with representation from statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders and an independent chair to produce the *Review of Finances and Expenditure for Homeless Services in Dublin*⁵ report.

1 Pathways to Home, 2007, pp4.

2 See full report on *Counted In, 2008* on www.homelessagency.ie/Research-and-Policy/Publications.aspx

3 See full report on *Evaluation of Homeless Services, 2008* on www.homelessagency.ie/Research-and-Policy/Publications.aspx

4 Government expenditure on homelessness has increased significantly, with €168 million expended on delivering homeless services in Dublin from 2005 to 2007 and approximately €62.3 million spent in 2008. In the context of such significant expenditure, there was a crucial need identified to ensure that resources currently committed are directed towards achieving the Partnership’s Vision by end 2010.

5 See full report on *Review of Finance and Expenditure for Homeless Services* on www.homelessagency.ie/Research-and-Policy/Publications.aspx

Having conducted the above reviews, the following key findings were produced.

2.1 Key findings from *Counted In, 2008*

Between the 10th and 16th March 2008, the Homeless Agency conducted its fourth census enumerating the experience of homelessness in Dublin. The Counted In survey has been conducted every three years since 1999 as part of the national Housing Needs Assessment as mandated under the Housing Act 1988. *Counted In, 2008* is the most comprehensive picture of the extent of homelessness in 2008 and the profile of households using homeless services in Dublin. It provides information on the definitive minimum number of adults using homeless services in Dublin; it describes who they are, precisely which category of homeless services they avail of and how long they have been homeless and using homeless services.

Homeless population

— A total of 2366 adults (comprising 2144 households) were in homeless services in 2008. This is a 4% increase on the 2005 figure (2066 households). Since 2005, Dublin's population has increased by 5%. Thus, the 2008 homeless population in Dublin represents a decrease of 1% relative to population growth in Dublin city and county. Currently, just over twice as many men as women are availing of homeless services (68% and 32% respectively). Almost half of the 2366 adults in homeless services (46.7%) became homeless for the first time at some point between March 2005 and March 2008.

People 'sleeping rough'

— In 2008, a total of 110 adults reported that they were sleeping rough (i.e. 5% of the total homeless population of 2366 adults). When compared with the figures for 2005 (when 185 adults reported sleeping rough), this represents a decrease of 41%. However, it should be pointed out that there is a notable increase both in the number and proportion of non-Irish nationals, who reported sleeping rough. When compared with the figures for 2005 (which showed that 9% of rough sleepers were non-Irish nationals) the 2008 figure represents an increase to over one third (38%) of all rough sleepers as non-Irish nationals.

Use of homeless services by adults

— The vast majority of people experiencing homelessness were provided with accommodation. 1388 adults (59%) were resident in emergency accommodation (617 adults, 26%) or in private emergency accommodation (771 adults, 33%). In addition, 732 adults, 31% were resident in either transitional accommodation (392 adults, 17%) or long-term supported housing (340 adults, 14%)

2.2 Key findings from the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*

Enablers to exiting homelessness

- Nearly all service users who were asked what enabled or helped their progression through and out of the experience of homelessness identified the quality, competence and commitment of homeless services staff as the single most important enabler.
- From the service manager's perspective the key enablers identified were regular and consistent inter-agency communication and co-operation alongside a detailed and clear referral mechanism leading to appropriate move on into housing and accommodation.
- Also identified as enablers, were the importance of good practice and effective organisational structures and factors such as increasing use of the Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) process and the development of improved care planning and care and case management working.

Barriers to exiting homelessness

- Foremost among these were the need for access to more appropriate and affordable housing options combined with supports in housing as required and the need for greater provision in the area of detoxification and rehabilitation services, as well as access to mental health services.
- Among other barriers identified were a shortage of low-threshold emergency accommodation and the shortage of drug-free emergency accommodation and high-support long-term housing.
- Service users need more and better information about services; they also require continued improvements in inter-agency cooperation and communication.
- The evaluation also found that the flow from emergency to transitional accommodation was less than might be expected. The level of 'user activity' among homeless services was examined as part of the evaluation process, and an attempt to illustrate the flow of homeless households between services was undertaken.
- As part of the evaluations process, a survey of service user needs was also conducted. Of the 1531 homeless households surveyed, 1049 (69%) need mainstream housing with either no support (259; 17%); short-term support (391; 26%); or long-term support (399; 26%). Four hundred and forty-nine homeless households (29%) require supported housing with varying degrees of support. A further 29 (2%) were assessed as requiring nursing home care, and 3 (<1%) did not fit into any of the above categories.
- Overall, the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series* found that too few people move from homeless services' accommodation into mainstream housing and residential supported housing. Indeed, many service users experience multiple stays in different forms of emergency accommodation, and many have experienced repeat episodes of homelessness. There is no one coherent pathway out

of homelessness for many service users; they find their trajectory or progression through homeless services to be ‘non-linear’, and they experience an excessive level of repeat movements in and out of emergency accommodation.

2.3 Key findings from the *Review of Finances and Expenditure for Homeless Services in Dublin, 2008*

- Between 2005 and 2007, €168 million has been expended in delivering homeless services in Dublin with another €62.3 million expended in 2008. The Review analysed homeless service out-turn expenditure of approximately €60.7 million in Dublin in 2007. For the purposes of the Review, ‘homeless services’ is divided into two categories:
 - Homeless accommodation, which includes emergency, private emergency, transitional and long-term housing.
 - Homeless support services, which includes street outreach, settlement, advice, information and food services, detoxification and rehabilitation services, other relevant health services and the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU).
- Homeless accommodation accounts for approximately 72% of total expenditure, and homeless support services accounting for the remaining 28%.
- In real terms, expenditure grew by 6.8% between 2005 and 2006, 2.7% from 2006 to 2007. The rise in expenditure between 2005 and 2006 was mainly attributable to increases in expenditure within emergency and private emergency, long-term, street outreach and detoxification and rehabilitation services. The rise in expenditure between 2006 and 2007 was due to increased provision of emergency accommodation services, long-term supported accommodation services and settlement services in addition to developing both provision and quality.
- The current configuration of services is, in effect, managing the homeless situation in Dublin in the short-term by maintaining people experiencing homelessness in temporary forms of accommodation. From a financial perspective, the overall utilisation of homeless expenditure to date remains ineffective in meeting the strategic Vision of the Homeless Agency Partnership. Therefore there is a need to refocus and prioritise current resources to ensuring long-term solutions, in particular the provision of housing and housing support as required.

2.4 Submission to Government, 2008

Subsequently in December 2008, in response to a call for submissions to the proposed national implementation plan for the revised National Homeless Strategy – *The Way Home 2008-2013*,⁶ and as part of our work towards meeting the Vision of our action plan *A Key to the Door*; The Homeless Agency Partnership made a detailed submission to government. Our December 2008 Submission to

6 See full strategy on www.environment.ie

Government⁷ set out an evidence base for a series of recommendations for change and put forward five priority areas for action in 2009. These are detailed in summary form below.

Priority One:

Affordable and accessible housing with supports as required

The Homeless Agency Partnership Board agreed the need for a new policy direction, which would ensure that current and future resources allocated to the Partnership from the government are directed towards the provision of sufficient affordable and accessible housing with supports as required.

In this context, the Board urged that central and local Government give priority to the establishment of a variant of the current Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) as an additional social housing option specifically for household's experiencing homelessness in Dublin (as recommended in the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*). The Board urged that this option be developed in addition to the established Capital Assistance Scheme funding for Approved Housing Bodies (i.e. housing associations and cooperative housing) and not as a substitute for the ongoing programme of investment in social housing provision.

The Board put forward the position that:

- Households with homeless priority on the four Dublin local authority waiting lists be given priority access to housing via this scheme.
- That the proposed variation of RAS be given its own specific title.
- That the proposed variation of RAS is aligned to the objective established for RAS in the latest social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*, and repeated in the statement on housing policy *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* (2007: 50), namely, 'to help provide the necessary springboard to accessing employment, training or education opportunities, which may lead to broader accommodation options for the individual in the future'.
- That the broader 'accommodation options' for the households involved include alternative forms of social housing tenure from the outset and that transfer and movement between this variant of RAS and local authority or housing association and voluntary and cooperative housing options is available to households.

Priority Two:

Funding of homeless services

The Board adopted the proposition of seeking agreement with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to establish a funding stream that underpins the delivery of supports in housing for households progressing along a pathway out of homelessness. This is in line with the new component incorporated into the Assessment of Housing Need set out in the government's

⁷ See full Partnership Submission to Government on www.homelessagency.ie/Research-and-Policy/Publications.aspx

housing policy statement *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* (2007: 49); the ‘life cycle’ approach.

This approach reflects the fact that ‘different households may experience a need for different types of housing supports, at various stages in their life cycle. The duration and extent of this may also vary over time’.

The Board was particularly cognisant of the recommendations arising from the *Review of Finance and Expenditure for Homeless Services in Dublin* and the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*, which seek to establish a single funding channel for both revenue and capital resources for all non-health care related housing and support services.

Priority Three:
Reconfiguration of homeless services

The Board agreed the necessity to change the way in which homeless services are configured so as to ensure that households achieve a seamless and timely exit from homelessness. To achieve the required reconfiguration a number of important steps were adopted by the Homeless Agency Partnership, as follows:

- An audit of the entire homeless accommodation portfolio of assets will be carried out to determine both the capacity and standard of accommodation in use across the sector. The audit will encompass building quality, suitability and adaptability for use.
- The outcome of this audit will form the basis of the decision-making process required in order to achieve the requisite reconfiguration of services.
- The four Dublin Local Authorities and the Health Service Executive should begin discussion and negotiations immediately on establishing a 24-hour homeless information and placement service.

Priority Four:
Establish a Pathway Model of homeless and housing support services

The Board agreed the need to develop and establish a Pathway Model of homeless and housing support services in Dublin. This Pathway Model would aim to both prevent homelessness and simplify and speed up the journey out of homelessness for those that experience it. Thus, homeless services are to be configured to ensure that early contact, assessment and placement into temporary emergency accommodation is provided for people who present as homeless. Services will also be configured to ensure that the care and case management of a household’s needs will help to move people onto and along the pathway to appropriate, accessible and affordable housing with support as required.

This reconfiguration of current and future housing and accommodation types and homeless services is required to meet the stated Vision of the Homeless Agency Partnership by end of 2010, namely that long-term homelessness and the need for people to sleep rough will be eliminated in Dublin.⁸

Furthermore, the achievement of the Pathway Model in Dublin over the period from March 2009 is the agreed manner by which the Homeless Agency Partnership will deliver its role as an agent of government policy to realise the vision of national strategy on homelessness, namely:

‘From 2010, long-term homelessness (i.e. the occupation of emergency accommodation for more than six months) and the need for people to sleep rough will be eliminated throughout Ireland. The risk of a person becoming homeless will be minimised through effective preventative policies and services. When it does occur, homelessness will be short-term and people who are homeless will be assisted into appropriate long-term housing’

The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013, p. 7

Priority Five: Implementation and change management

In order to maintain momentum towards the tasks set out above, the Board agreed a clear and detailed implementation plan, namely a *Pathway to Home* and timeline required based on the complete set of recommendations set out in *Counted In, 2008* and also in the *Review of Finance and Expenditure for Homeless Services in Dublin* and the *Evaluation of Homeless Services 2008 Series*. A *Pathway to Home* is to specify the tasks and timelines for actions that brings the Homeless Agency Partnership through an agreed transition period towards the development and delivery of the proposed Pathway Model of service provision.

The Board recognised how a *Pathway to Home* is essential in terms of maintaining a sense of leadership and drive when making and delivering change and how it would be required to be closely aligned to the national implementation plan for the strategy on homelessness *The Way Home (2008-2013)*.

Furthermore, the Board recognised as crucial the part the statutory sector partners, who have a clear role and legal responsibility in terms of responding to homelessness, will play in ensuring the establishment of an effective decision-making process that will enable the required changes to be made. In their role as key funding authorities, the Health Service Executive and the four Dublin local authorities are all recognised as central to this process. In their role as service providers, contracted under service level agreements by the state, the voluntary sector providers are also recognised as central to this process.

⁸ The full Vision as stated in the Homeless Agency Partnership’s third action plan, *A Key to the Door (2007-2010)* is that ‘By 2010, long-term homelessness and the need for people to sleep rough will be eliminated in Dublin. The risk of a person or family becoming homeless will be minimal due to effective preventative policies and services. Where it does occur, homelessness will be short-term and all people who are homeless will be assisted into appropriate housing and the realisation of their full potential and rights’.

2.5 Direction and leadership in making change

Subsequently, in early 2009, and in order to ensure the required changes are achieved, the Homeless Agency Partnership established an Implementation Steering Group (ISG) to project manage the development of the implementation plan. The ISG has been established in order to maintain a sense of direction and leadership when introducing and making change. This is especially useful given our requirement that during a period of contraction in available public finance, we ensure the resource expenditure currently committed is maintained and directed towards achieving our 2010 Vision in as cost-effective a manner as possible.

The ISG is comprised of the Director of the Homeless Agency as well as senior representatives of the statutory partners who have control over budget allocations and decision-making about the commissioning of services, as well as the Chair of the Dublin Voluntary Network of voluntary service providers.

Agreeing the details of a *Pathway to Home* required extensive and effective consultation with statutory and voluntary service providers and involves a formal reporting arrangement with the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership. The statutory members of the ISG and Director of the Homeless Agency met on a regular basis with the High Level Liaison Group chaired by the DEHLG. The ISG also liaised with the Voluntary Network membership (who are key stakeholders in the Partnership) in order to agree the detail of how changes can and will be made.⁹

⁹ The full terms of reference for the ISG are set out in Appendix A and details of the full consultation process involved are set out in Appendix B.

