

Pathways to home

Emergency and transitional
housing and support services for
homeless persons in Dublin to 2010

*A Homeless Agency Partnership response to the
independent evaluations of emergency and transitional
housing and support services in Dublin*

A blurred, low-angle photograph of a crowd of people walking, likely in a public space or transit area. The image is out of focus, showing the lower legs and feet of many individuals in motion.

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Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2007) *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*, Government Publications Office, Dublin

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Homeless Agency (2007) *A Key to the Door, Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2007–2010*, Homeless Agency, Dublin

Foreword

Kathleen Holohan

Chair · Homeless Agency Partnership Board

Director of Housing · Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council



During 2006, the Homeless Agency Partnership commissioned an important suite of independent evaluations of both emergency hostel and transitional housing provision in the Dublin area. The result is the first comprehensive, in-depth and detailed evaluation of these two important forms of homeless service provision made against a quality framework agreed between the Homeless Agency and service providers.

Significantly, there now exists a completed evaluation for each homeless service provider included in the process. Each evaluation gives an indication of the quality of service provision currently in place, as well as specifying ways in which quality can be strengthened to ensure improved outcomes for service users.

Linking homeless service provision to agreed quality standards is an important aspect of our work to ensure vulnerable households experiencing homelessness can realise their full potential and rights. This is why we developed a quality framework for the evaluations based on our good practice handbook in place since 1999 *Putting People First*. Ultimately, we wish to ensure that these types of specialist provision accord to the highest possible standards in terms of quality and capacity to deliver the sought after outcomes for both the individuals and families using them.

The evaluation process generated a number of overarching recommendations relevant to the future development of emergency and transitional housing and support services in Dublin. These recommendations for action and change, as well as investment and development are informing how we improve the delivery of *Pathways to home* and independent living for people experiencing homelessness in Dublin.

They will assist us achieve the vision set out in our action plan *A Key to the Door*. That is, to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough by 2010. As such the recommendations detailed in this document, provide us with a compass with which to navigate the future direction of both emergency and transitional programmes in the near future.

Within the context of the strategic aims and core actions set out in *A Key to the Door*, this journey to achieving the pathway to home for homeless households in emergency and transitional provision is now underpinned by a newly agreed set of primary objectives. These were put forward by the implementation groups tasked with advising the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership on how best to achieve implementation of the overarching evaluation recommendations. It is within this context that the Board is pleased to adopt the recommendations made.

Lastly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who participated in this process of the evaluation, the independent consultants retained and the staff of the Homeless Agency. A special tribute needs also to be paid to service users whose participation in these evaluations has ensured that we remain absolutely focused on what works for those in need of homeless services and on the pathway out of homelessness towards having a place of their own to call home.

Introduction

Cathal Morgan

Director · Homeless Agency



The vision of the Homeless Agency Partnership is that by 2010 long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Dublin will be eliminated. Our action plan *A Key to the Door*, focusing on the three strategic aims of prevention, support and housing, now places the emphasis on ending long-term homelessness as opposed to managing it¹. Our vision also provides a clear direction on the need to ensure that where homelessness does exist there will be an effective response in terms of quality specialist service provision.

It is within this context that a range of emergency and transitional programmes exist in order to progress both individuals and families away from long-term homelessness and into sustainable accommodation outcomes. This is the pathway to home that must be achieved for homeless persons whether through local authority rented accommodation or the voluntary and co-operative sector, as well as through arrangements entered into by housing authorities with private owners of accommodation under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

During 2006, the Homeless Agency commissioned a programme of independent evaluations. Sixteen emergency hostel evaluations were conducted by consultants Mr Simon Brooke and Mr Roger Courtney. Additionally, twenty transitional housing and support services were evaluated by economic consultants FitzPatrick Associates. I invite the reader to refer to the full versions of the overarching reports of both sets of evaluations in order to appreciate the range and depth surrounding the evaluation process and outcome².

Following the conclusion of the evaluation process in early 2007, the Homeless Agency established two implementation groups comprised of stakeholders nominated from both the statutory and voluntary partners. The task of both these implementation groups over the period since then was to consider the overarching recommendations made by both sets of independent consultants, to explore the implications of their implementation as well as identify on a priority basis the lead actors responsible for driving and achieving implementation. As a result of this important follow-on process a number of key objectives to ensure implementation, in an appropriate manner, have been agreed by the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership.

¹ *A Key to the Door*, which was launched on February 7th 2007, is Dublin's third action plan on ending long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough by 2010.

² Both these documents are contained as appendices on the CD ROM attached to this publication.

The purpose of this document *Pathways to home* is therefore threefold. It outlines the context within which the independent evaluations were conducted and details the methodology used. It summarises the over-arching recommendations made from both sets of evaluation, and then sets out the agreed key objectives that can ensure the Homeless Agency partnership drives their implementation within the context of the prescribed actions in *A Key to the Door*.

Pathways to home is therefore a statement of direction for emergency and transitional housing and support services in Dublin to 2010. As such it provides us with the opportunity to move closer towards the attainment of our vision to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Dublin.

Nonetheless, *Pathways to home* still only represents two-parts of a three-part picture. Delivering a pathway to home that moves people out of the crisis experience of homelessness and through a transitional period of settlement and residence requires the provision of dedicated move-on housing options and appropriate care and related supports to assist a person's exit from the experience of homelessness.

In other words, a model of housing and related housing and care services that support and maintain successful tenancies is the final part of our picture that will fully illustrate the pathway to home. This in turn will be the focus of the next stage of our service evaluations that will help us finalise our overall model of quality service provision for people experiencing homelessness in Dublin and delivery the pathway to home for all households experiencing homelessness.

Pathways to home: the policy context

The policy context for identifying, developing and securing a pathway out of homelessness and into home has been strengthened by the agreement and recent launch of a range of separate but inter-related social and housing policy frameworks. Underpinning many of these frameworks is the adoption of a lifecycle approach to the provision of public services as advised by the National Economic and Social Council in its 2005 report (No. 113) *The Developmental Welfare State*. In short this means that state policy will recognise a holistic perspective on people's needs as they move through key life cycle phases – childhood, working age and older people.

Related policy frameworks dealing with poverty reduction, elimination and social inclusion (i.e. the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007–2016) and with disability, equality and diversity issues are also of key relevance to the elimination of rough sleeping and long-term homelessness in Dublin.

Notwithstanding these, the most significant policy frameworks within which the Homeless Agency Partnership currently works are: *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy* (2000) and the *Homeless Preventative Strategy* (2002). A newly revised national homeless strategy is expected in early 2008. Alongside these, the new statement on housing policy launched by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in February 2007 *Delivering Homes and Building Sustainable Communities* is pivotal to the realisation of our vision to eliminate rough sleeping and long-term homelessness in Dublin by 2010.

Also of relevance are the investment programmes to tackle social exclusion and to build new social housing established in the national social partnership agreement *Towards 2016*, and announced in January under the new *National Development Plan* (NDP) 2007–2013.

The NDP commits to investment of €17bn for social housing provision and renewal to provide 60,000 new units over the period to 2013. Specific targets of new social housing units provided by local authorities and housing associations have been agreed nationally over the period to 2009. Within this target output are commitments to build and acquire an additional 4,000 new housing units for households who cannot afford to provide for

their accommodation needs from their own resources. This will be realised through a combination of 2,000 local authority units, 1,000 voluntary and co-operative units and 1,000 units arising from long-term contractual arrangements under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) for new supply. A total of 27,000 units of social housing will be provided over the period to 2009.

Returning to the detail of both homeless and housing policy frameworks, the 2006 FitzPatrick Review of homeless policy made a number of key recommendations subsequently accepted by government as the basis for revised policy. They are *inter alia*:

- The provision of long-term accommodation and the necessary supports to enable homeless persons make the move to independent living through local authorities, housing associations and the private sector;
- The appropriate provision of accommodation, care and support services at local level to meet local need;
- A case management approach for homeless individuals to be developed and mainstreamed to ensure that each individual's unique needs are addressed and effective long-term solutions are found;
- Improvement in the coordination of capital and revenue funding for homeless services by means of enhanced cooperation between the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Health and Children/ Health Service Executive in the planning and funding of initiatives; and,
- Better data on the extent, nature and causes of homelessness.

Notably, many of these recommendations are reflected in the core actions of the Homeless Agency's action plan to 2010 *A Key to the Door*. However, the newly revised and keenly awaited new national policy on homelessness offers the greatest opportunity to ensure our vision to eliminate rough sleeping and long-term homelessness in Dublin can be met.

Lastly, and of equal significance to the foregoing, commitments in the new housing policy framework *Delivering Homes, Building Sustainable Communities* are critical to the realisation of our vision. This new policy framework provides a clear assessment of the current situation and what is required next:

'It is generally accepted that there is an adequate supply of emergency accommodation now in major urban areas. It is also recognised that the primary objective is now to provide transitional programmes, where necessary, and in due course long term accommodation with necessary care supports, to enable people to move from emergency accommodation to independent living'

Delivering Homes, Building Sustainable Communities, pp56

In order to progress further the long-term response to homelessness, housing policy directs that statutory and voluntary sectors amend their strategies in accordance with the objective of providing this pathway to independent living and to home. Policy states that existing funding mechanisms will be re-targeted to support such amended strategies, that provision of dedicated accommodation and support systems for homeless persons who are assessed as being not capable of independent living will be a priority and also that government will:

'Continue to provide the funding necessary to support the provision of accommodation and related supports to homeless persons and develop a more effective and transparent funding mechanism for both the accommodation and care elements through greater coordination at a local level between local authorities and the HSE'

Delivering Homes, Building Sustainable Communities, pp57

The Homeless Agency approach to evaluation

A key component that helped us build a robust and coherent evaluation process for both emergency and transitional services was the establishment of two separate respective steering groups. They were comprised of a membership reflecting not only our partnership approach and structure, but also a diversity of experiences and competencies that helped ensure there was an optimum level of expertise in the area of homelessness service provision involved³.

The two steering groups were tasked with developing a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation framework, including consideration of the best practice standards outlined in *Putting People First*⁴. The aim was to adopt an evaluation framework that ensured objectivity, fair and relevant measures and indicators of service quality as well as securing a consistency of approach in the evaluation process across the variety of service types involved.

The successful development and deployment of the evaluation framework was both a key strength and outcome of the evaluation process. It demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of partnership and collaborative working, ensured service user participation in terms of capturing people's unique experience of service provision and secured evidence required to inform how service providers were meeting the agreed standards as set out in *Putting People First*.

The agreed methodology identified for the evaluation of emergency services was as follows:

- Completion of a very detailed best practice questionnaire, based on the quality standards set out in the Homeless Agency's best practice handbook *Putting People First* and the enclosure of attachments providing evidence against the standards;
- Completion of a needs assessment questionnaire;
- A survey of agencies that refer clients to emergency services and receive referrals from them;
- A focus group interview with service users from each service and interviews with homeless people not currently resident in emergency services;

³ See Appendices.

⁴ See Appendices.

- An initial inspection visit to the accommodation premises;
- A focus group interview with the staff (and volunteers where relevant) in the accommodation;
- A follow-up interview with the manager of the service to fill in any gaps in the information and clarify any information that was not clear;
- Production of a draft evaluation report for comment by the manager of the emergency accommodation service;
- Completion of a resident outcomes survey and referral outcomes survey;
- Production of a final evaluation report with recommendations on each emergency accommodation service;
- Consultation with funders; and,
- Production of a draft and final overarching report with recommendations on common issues raised by the evaluation process.

The methodological framework agreed for the evaluation of transitional housing and support services was developed to encompass key principles of effectiveness and efficiency as well as to establish the ongoing relevance of the services provided. Specifically, the core evaluation criteria included in the framework were based on the following key components:

- Corporate governance
- Stakeholders and service users perspectives
- Financial reporting and internal cost controls
- Service monitoring and reporting

The methodology included:

- A review of relevant material (legislation, policies, organisation strategies, previous evaluations and reviews and relevant research material);
- Evaluation visits to all service providers to consult management, staff and service users;
- Questionnaire survey on issues such as standards, facilities, capacity, occupancy, funding and financial performance;
- Service user interviews to examine progression routes out of transitional housing; and,
- Stakeholder consultation with statutory as well as community and voluntary sector organisations as appropriate.

Three steps on a *Pathway to home*

As referred to earlier, following the conclusion of the service evaluations implementation groups, which were convened by the Homeless Agency to advise on how to deliver on the range of recommendations emerging from both sets of evaluations, these two implementation groups proposed and agreed a set of primary key objectives that were subsequently adopted by the Board of the Homeless Agency Partnership.

In short, they represent a priority 'to do' list considered as being the most appropriate way in which to achieve a real and lasting implementation of the overarching recommendations for emergency and transitional housing and supports services as we move forward to 2010. In short, we have identified three steps to be taken to help ensure delivery on the recommendations is made.

Step One **Quality standards for homeless services**

Both the dynamics and required responses to homelessness in Dublin have continued to change in recent years. Individuals and families experiencing homelessness are presenting with a complexity of need that requires service providers be ever more ably equipped to respond effectively and in a timely and appropriate manner.

In overall terms, it is proposed to develop a revised comprehensive standards-based approach to the delivery of quality homeless service provision, underpinned by appropriate and agreed financial regimes to support delivery. This will mean developing further the scope and range of quality standards originally set out in *Putting People First* upon its inception in 1999. Therefore, work towards a revised edition of *Putting People First* will be undertaken in order to ensure that minimum, good and best practice standards are developed and in place to underpin the development of homeless services in Dublin.

The second edition of *Putting People First*, containing good practice guidelines will be revised to incorporate both the individual services' and sectoral overarching recommendations arising from both series of evaluations. In addition it will include

other quality standards that have been developed and agreed over the period since 1999. The Homeless Agency Partnership will also work to standardise and promote a common understanding of the terminology used across homeless services and agree a glossary of terms within the handbook.

An agreed monitoring and reporting framework will be explored by the Homeless Agency Partnership in order to facilitate organisations to align their service provision with best practice quality standards. Such monitoring mechanisms could include peer review processes.

Step Two **Investment to build and finance places of change**

The policy framework for investment to deliver homes and build sustainable communities has been established by government and is articulated through the range of social policy frameworks referred to earlier.

Dedicated capital investment programmes to build social and affordable housing and tackle social exclusion are in place alongside stated output targets for housing and accommodation provision that can meet the needs of Irish society. Policy aims to ensure individuals and households in need are offered options tailored to their need. A second aim is delivery of a services based approach that is both client-centred and based on a lifecycle approach.

Within this context the Homeless Agency proposes a targeted programme of frontloaded capital investment is undertaken alongside appropriate innovation in the delivery of a revenue finance model to support the development of best practice models of service provision in Dublin. This investment programme must support the building and financing of an array of housing and accommodation types inclusive of emergency, transitional, supported and wider social housing options.

Primarily, emergency and transitional housing and services must become places of real change for the service user so that they can begin to undertake their journey out of homelessness and into independent living and participation in society. This will require a review and modification of current dedicated capital and revenue funding mechanisms to ensure that future development can be commissioned and completed effectively and within an acceptable timeframe. The Homeless Agency will contribute to this work by meeting our commitment in Core Action 10 of *A Key to the Door*, namely:

‘Evaluate and review existing models of long-term housing supports and seek appropriate revenue funding streams for the implementation of best practice for people who have been homeless’

To further enable this step, the Homeless Agency will agree a classification of housing and accommodation types and care models to be developed across homeless services. This includes two major tasks. Firstly, charting the care pathways and accommodation and housing

options for service users from emergency accommodation into transitional, supported or sustained independent living. For example, one type of accommodation provider may deliver approaches to working with addiction such as harm reduction, stabilisation, detox, rehabilitation and step down, to cater for individuals with this specific support need.

Secondly, we will conduct a capacity audit of current homeless service provision taking into consideration the findings and recommendations made in the evaluations for individual services to include a detailed analysis of current spend.

This dedicated programme of investment to develop and deliver places of change for service users will also support the advancement of the Homeless Agency's core action on localising housing, accommodation and support services that respond to the needs of individuals and families within their locale and community. The role of local homeless forums will be important in this context

Lastly, this investment programme will require model development guidelines for both new build and renovation to ensure the resulting housing and accommodation types are fit for purpose.

Step Three Support programmes and mainstreaming service provision

As part of an individual's progression route out of homelessness, it is essential for best practice accommodation and care models to deliver holistic support packages accessible to individuals from their point of entry in particular into emergency services through transitional services and then onto supported and sustained independent living.

Holistic support packages are key to quality emergency and transitional service provision. Client centred programmes that deliver the care and supports that are required to successfully undertake a pathway to home. Support programmes integrate health, welfare, education, training and employment aspects for the service user. It is important to state here that all homeless service users should be able to access any type of mainstream service, including health, education, training etc no matter which type of accommodation they reside in. Again, *A Key to the Door* clearly states the Homeless Agency Partnership's commitment to achieving the delivery of care required to undertake a pathway out of homelessness. Core Action 4 commits to:

'Implement the Holistic Needs Assessment and Care and Case Management approach across homeless service's sector'

Within emergency services, support packages should focus on improving an individual's capacity to move away from crises and where necessary should also allow them to stabilise adequately so that they can proceed to the next stage of rehabilitation. Core life skills such as

literacy and numeracy, as well as vocational training and general aptitude skills that enhance personal development need to be delivered as part of an 'introduction to and exit from' the crises stage of homelessness and move on from emergency accommodation.

It is envisaged that emergency services will continue to deploy the Holistic Needs Assessment developed by the Homeless Agency. This is a basis for determining the appropriate accommodation pathway and care plan required by individual household's experiencing homelessness. Individuals moving into transitional accommodation services would be able to expect a support package tailored to their needs as indicated by their holistic needs assessment. Transitional providers would be responsible for reviewing assessments and modifying the care plan accordingly.

Successful care planning of the type envisaged will require the development of new links to mainstream services as well as the strengthening of existing links. This is to ensure access to, engagement with and referral to or from the following:

- Mainstream health services in particular the newly established HSE Primary Care Teams and Specialist Services (e.g. addiction services/mental health services)
- Mainstream training, education and employment services such as Business in the Community, FÁS, Local Employment Service networks, Community Employment schemes, etc
- Other relevant services including improving access to childcare facilities, the absence of which is a significant barrier for parents to fully utilise schemes such as the Ready for Work programme (Business in the Community) or other training, education and employment initiatives.

Further to this, transitional services would continue to take on the role of identifying and securing move on accommodation and social housing options through three main delivery mechanisms:

- Local authority accommodation
- Voluntary housing associations
- Private landlords via the rental accommodation scheme (RAS)

Overarching recommendations for emergency and transitional services

Note: each of the recommendations made in both overarching reports for emergency and transitional housing and support services have been grouped under each one of the three steps in *Pathways to home* previously outlined. Some selected recommendations are included under more than one of the three steps and are highlighted in red below.

Step One Quality standards for homeless services

Emergency services recommendations

- 1** All emergency homeless services should accept referrals (that fit clearly established criteria and priorities) from any agency, in particular, the Homeless Persons Unit, the Dublin City Council Night Bus, and the street outreach teams.
- 2** All emergency homeless services should accept self-referrals.
- 3** The referral process to an emergency homeless service should, as far as possible, be immediate and normally take no longer than 12 hours.
- 4** Emergency homeless services should maximise the periods of time when referrals will be accepted.
- 8** In order to ensure that all services meet current fire safety standards, all premises should be inspected by staff from Dublin City Council's fire prevention section.
- 11** The Homeless Agency should, in consultation with service providers and other relevant experts develop a guide to assist homeless services to respond appropriately to people with different disabilities, in accordance with the Disability Act 2005 and other relevant legislation and best practice guidelines.

- 12** In order to ensure compliance with health and safety standards the Homeless Agency should add the following to service level agreements:
- a) Evidence of current compliance with HACCP
 - b) Evidence of annual fire safety inspections and current compliance with *Fire Safety in Hostels*
 - c) Evidence of annual health and safety audits, including an assessment of compliance with health and safety at work requirements, carried out by a qualified person.
- 13** All new emergency accommodation services developed (including accommodation provided under the cold weather strategy) in the future, should always comply with minimum quality framework standards.
- 15** Each service should have a *guideline* maximum length of stay, which would depend on the type of housing that the resident is assessed as needing. This should be related to an intensive culture of settlement, regular reviews of progress towards settlement and flexibility to extend the period to facilitate effective work with clients towards settlement and prevent clients returning to street homelessness.
- 22** The Homeless Agency should produce a good practice guide for all homeless services (not just emergency services) that will outline ways of ensuring that services are genuinely welcoming and accessible to people of all ethnic and cultural groups.
- 23** The Homeless Agency should explore ways of ensuring that people from different ethnic backgrounds are made aware of homeless services and what they can offer.
- 25** The Homeless Agency should establish a benchmarking group, in which agencies would agree to identify areas for comparison and share examples of good practice (including policies and procedures with each other) in order to benefit from each other's work.
- 26** The Homeless Agency should develop a guidance document on developing a design brief for emergency accommodation and all the elements that need to be included to ensure it can successfully fulfil its objectives.
- 31** A consistent licensing system should be created for all voluntary, public and private supported accommodation for people who are homeless.
- 32** Future evaluations of homeless services should make use of the *Putting People First* standards segmented into minimum, good and best practice.

Transitional services recommendations

- 1 All Boards of Management of transitional services should contain, as a minimum, representatives with expertise in dealing with mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction problems. If possible, representatives from other services involved in the provision of a progression route for a homeless individual should be involved to create a continuum of care perspective in directing and managing each service.
- 2 All services should have strategic plans in place agreed by the Board of Management and approved by the Homeless Agency partners. This should define targets in relation to in-flow and out-flow to and from transitional services, and these should be monitored via annual reports.
- 6 A greater level of certainty must be generated with regard to the lengths of the transitional programmes, with individuals informed of the length of time remaining on a regular basis. An absolute maximum of 2 years within each service should be adhered to by each provider in order to implement appropriate transitional interventions effectively.
- 7 All transitional services must, as a minimum standard, provide facilities for clients to prepare their own meals and should, as far as possible, offer self-contained units for each individual or family with their own shower and toilet facilities.
- 9 Staff in transitional services should be given the opportunity to interact with their counterparts in other services to share ideas, discuss common concerns and highlight best practice, in a similar way to which managers meet via network meetings, but with the focus on frontline keyworking staff more directly involved in delivery.
- 15 The Homeless Agency partners should work together to ensure that the demand for good quality, long-term accommodation from the planned outflow from transitional services can be met from a range of options including long-term supported housing and facilitating the use of RAS schemes and private rented housing initiatives.
- 17 The *Putting People First* standards should be revised where appropriate in order to more accurately reflect the nature of transitional provision. There should be a closer link between defining, minimum, good and best practice in relation to a specific activity. Adherence to the minimum standards should be more formally monitored on an ongoing basis and linked to the allocation of funding. A recognition scheme acknowledging the adoption of good and best practice by providers in line with the standards should also be introduced.
- 18 A performance monitoring framework should be put in place that makes it a condition of funding, formalised via service-level agreements, that information in relation to output and outcome indicators including occupancy, move-on destinations, average length of stay, referral acceptance and skills acquisition by clients is consistently gathered by every service. Appropriate management information systems must be put in place in all services to accommodate this, with all record keeping systems also contributing to the LINK system.

Step Two Investment to build and finance places of change

Emergency services recommendations

- 7** Once Homeless Dublin is being operated by the same body as provides the freephone, service participation in Homeless Dublin should be a condition of funding received by emergency homeless services.
- 8** In order to ensure that all services meet current fire safety standards, all premises should be inspected by staff from Dublin City Council's fire prevention section.
- 9** In relation to those premises classified as 'poor', action should be taken as a matter of urgency to either source appropriate alternative accommodation, or where it is possible, to renovate existing premises to an acceptable standard.
- 10** In relation to premises classified as 'very poor', immediate action is required (action in relation to one of them has already been agreed).
- 13** All new emergency accommodation services developed (including accommodation provided under the cold weather strategy) in the future, should always comply with minimum quality framework standards.
- 17** All emergency accommodation services should employ dedicated night workers.
- 19** The Homeless Agency should, in consultation with emergency homeless services, further develop a value for money methodology.
- 20** The Homeless Agency should collect continuous and comprehensive information on referral outcomes and resident outcomes from all emergency services. As the LINK system becomes more widely and accurately used, collection of this information will become easier. The use of LINK also needs to be continuously monitored by the Homeless Agency.
- 21** The Homeless Agency (and its constituent members) should move away from the concept of nightshelters altogether, so that within 3 years all emergency accommodation has 24-hour access to a good standard of services in acceptable buildings.
- 26** The Homeless Agency should develop a guidance document on developing a design brief for emergency accommodation and all the elements that need to be included to ensure it can successfully fulfil its objectives.
- 29** The Homeless Agency should undertake a biannual survey of the housing needs of all residents in emergency accommodation through collection of data from the holistic common needs assessment and uses its influence to ensure that adequate long-term housing options are developed so that residents' length of stay in emergency accommodation can be reduced to an acceptable level.

- 30** All decisions in relation to the development and funding of emergency homeless services should be channelled through the Homeless Agency funding assessment panel and that the standard Homeless Agency Service Level Agreement should apply across the board. This would include services managed by voluntary, statutory and private sector bodies.
- 31** A consistent licensing system should be created for all voluntary, public and private supported accommodation for people who are homeless.

Transitional services recommendations

- 3** A re-categorisation of transitional services should be considered in terms of the way they are funded and assessed in recognition of the significant diversity that exists across services currently designated as transitional. The organisation of services in this manner should also seek to identify any existing gaps in terms of meeting the needs of all those individuals in need of some type of transitional intervention, with steps taken to ensure that transitional provision is fully inclusive of all relevant target groups. Funding of appropriate staff levels to facilitate such an inclusive approach must also be provided.
- 4** Mechanisms should be introduced that relate the funding allocated under the Homeless Agency arrangements to individual cost components incurred by transitional housing and support services. Performance should also be monitored on an ongoing basis in this regard in terms of the inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts of each service in relation to financial assistance received.
- 5** More formal transitional programmes should be put in place across all services that follow a developmental phased approach with clear outcomes and timeframes for completion of each phase and an ultimate goal of securing successful move-on accommodation.
- 10** Where services record occupancy rates of below 80% on an ongoing basis funding reviews of such services should be considered where there are no clear mitigating factors explaining such levels.
- 14** The local authorities should consider developing more formalised agreements with individual services to provide a certain number of permanent accommodation units for those completing each transitional programme in any given year. This will facilitate more effective planning by the service and will allow them to identify needs in terms of other sources of long-term accommodation.

Step Three **Support programmes and mainstreaming service provision**

Emergency services recommendations

- 18** The HSE should identify the barriers preventing access to mainstream services and endeavour to ensure that access to relevant services is improved over the life of the next Homeless Agency action plan.
- 28** The Homeless Agency should consider including the following in its training programme:
- a) How to assess lifeskills (an occupational therapy competency)
 - b) How to monitor nutritional intake
 - c) Accessibility for people with a range of disabilities (including sensory)
 - d) Leadership and management skills
 - e) How to carry out a training needs analysis regarding project and individual training requirements

Transitional services recommendations

- 8** Focus should be given to improving access to appropriate training opportunities, and providing additional training interventions where necessary, for staff of transitional services, particularly in relation to supporting those with mental health issues and drink and drug addiction. A pathway to further, more intensive training from the taster courses provided via Learning and Performance Programme modules should be facilitated, particularly if the target groups of services are to be expanded to incorporate those with higher support needs. Individual services should also ensure that recruitment policies encourage those applicants with technical expertise in dealing with mental health and addiction issues alongside generic project working skills to build an appropriate skills base in each provider.

Recommendations supported and underpinned by Core Actions 4 and 10 in *A Key to the Door, Action Plan to 2010*

Emergency services recommendations

- 1 All emergency homeless services should accept referrals (that fit clearly established criteria and priorities) from any agency, in particular, the Homeless Persons Unit, the Dublin City Council Night Bus, and the street outreach teams.
- 2 All emergency homeless services should accept self-referrals.
- 3 The referral process to an emergency homeless service should, as far as possible, be immediate and normally take no longer than 12 hours.
- 4 Emergency homeless services should maximise the periods of time when referrals will be accepted.
- 5 Each client who occupies a designated night bus bed should be allocated a key worker and they should remain in the night bus bed until a non-night bus vacancy occurs elsewhere in the service; or a referral is made to more appropriate emergency accommodation. This may result in fewer beds being available to the night bus and we recommend that the number of beds made available to the night bus should be increased. The impact of this recommendation should be monitored over a period of six months.
- 6 The Homeless Agency should ensure that the brief of existing settlement workers and outreach workers specifically includes ensuring that the needs of clients referred to private accommodation by the night bus are assessed and they are given assistance to move on to appropriate long term housing.
- 14 A mechanism for monitoring and analysing exclusions and evictions should be established and maintained by the Homeless Agency. Homeless emergency services would be required to provide the Homeless Agency with details of all exclusions and evictions, including the length of time and reason for barring or exclusion. Details of who had been excluded and why would not be available to other agencies.
- 15 Each service should have a *guideline* maximum length of stay, which would depend on the type of housing that the resident is assessed as needing. This should be related to an intensive culture of settlement, regular reviews of progress towards settlement and flexibility to extend the period to facilitate effective work with clients towards settlement and prevent clients returning to street homelessness.

- 16** The Homeless Agency should agree with each service each year the length of stay which when it is reached by an individual resident will trigger a report to more senior management within the organisation and the length of stay which when it is reached by an individual resident will trigger a report to the Homeless Agency. The Homeless Agency will need to agree a common format for reports and the procedure it will follow on receipt of a report.
- 20** The Homeless Agency should collect continuous and comprehensive information on referral outcomes and resident outcomes from all emergency services. As the LINK system becomes more widely and accurately used, collection of this information will become easier. The use of LINK also needs to be continuously monitored by the Homeless Agency.
- 24** Emergency homeless services should monitor the ethnic background of their clients, using a common template developed by the Homeless Agency.
- 27** The Homeless Agency partnership should explore ways of increasing the transparency and communication between emergency accommodation providers, as well as between emergency accommodation and other forms of provision, such as transitional housing.
- 29** The Homeless Agency should undertake a biannual survey of the housing needs of all residents in emergency accommodation through collection of data from the holistic common needs assessment and uses its influence to ensure that adequate long-term housing options are developed so that residents' length of stay in emergency accommodation can be reduced to an acceptable level.

Transitional services recommendations

- 11** A strategic review exercise involving the Homeless Agency, the Probation and Welfare Service, the funding organisations, representatives from transitional service providers and service users might be considered to find the most appropriate means of addressing the issue of sex and other potentially high risk ex-offenders moving forward.
- 12** A strategic approach to addressing the blockage to a progression route out of homelessness for those currently in emergency services with higher support needs (e.g. mental illness, active alcoholism, active drug addiction, learning disabilities) should be adopted by the Homeless Agency, with investment in services to help them expand their capacity to accept such target groups into their services where appropriate, and alternative interventions considered as pre-transitional services (e.g. via expansion of residential detox and addiction support services).

- 13** All services must now consider private rented accommodation and other long-term accommodation options such as those generated by the RAS scheme or the access of affordable housing as equally valid destinations for clients as local authority accommodation. The transitional programmes and resettlement services provided should be amended where appropriate when a provider needs to realign their approach in this regard.
- 16** Given the effective development of resettlement/tenancy sustainment services by Dublin City Council, Focus Ireland and Dublin Simon where support is provided once a client is in place within an independent living environment, consideration should be given to whether transitional providers should continue to provide these types of interventions, with the alternative being a consistent approach across the sector provided by the dedicated resettlement services. This would leave transitional providers concentrating only on preparation for independent living while the client is resident within their facilities.
- 19** An Implementation Group should be established in order to pursue the realisation of the recommendations proposed by the Evaluation of Transitional Housing and Support Services Funded Under the Homeless Agency Arrangements in the Dublin Area.

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