

**Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness**

**May 2014 to December 2016**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In February 2013, the Minister for Housing and Planning published the Government's Homelessness Policy Statement in which the aim to end long-term homelessness by the end of 2016 was outlined. The statement emphasises a housing-led approach which is about accessing permanent housing as the primary response to all forms of homelessness. The availability and supply of secure, affordable and adequate housing is essential in ensuring sustainable tenancies and ending long-term homelessness.
- 1.2 The Minister also established a Homelessness Oversight Group for the purposes of reviewing the progress of the approach being advocated in the statement, identifying obstacles and proposing solutions.
- 1.3 The First Report of the Homelessness Oversight Group was provided to the Minister for Housing and Planning in December 2013. The Group believes that the goals of ending long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough can be achieved by 2016. It also believes that those objectives can be achieved within the existing envelope of available resources, though that will require a much more efficient and complete use of those resources. The Group considers however that progress towards those goals has been limited so far. The report focuses on the major challenges that need to be overcome to speed up progress, and it identifies the major blockages that hamper progress towards the key goals, and recommends how those blockages might be overcome.
- 1.4 On 25 February 2014, the Government approved the establishment of a Homelessness Policy Implementation Team and a Central Implementation Unit. The team is tasked with implementing the Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report. The team is representative of the key State agencies dealing with homelessness, housing and related services. It is being led by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and it includes a senior official from the Department of Social Protection and the Health Service Executive as well as the Managers of Dublin City Council and Monaghan County Council representing local authorities. The implementation unit includes personnel from the relevant organisations (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, local authorities, the Health Service Executive and the Department of Social Protection) providing the necessary input to and subsequent delivery of the practical plan for the period of transition to 2016.

## 2. Implementation Plan

- 2.1 Implementing the Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report is being pursued through the preparation and publication of a structured, practical plan to make the transition from a shelter-led to a sustainable housing-led response to homelessness and to achieve the 2016 goals for homelessness. The plan covers the period to end December 2016.
- 2.2 This plan outlines how the State responds to homelessness to achieve the national objective of ending involuntary long-term homelessness by 2016 and it is a practically focused delivery plan so as to secure a ring-fenced supply of accommodation to house homeless households within the next three years and mobilise the necessary supports. It contains actions that are direct, immediate and solutions based. It addresses each of the recommendations contained in the Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report and identifies the necessary steps to deliver these recommendations. Responsibility for the various actions is assigned to the relevant stakeholders for delivery within specified timelines. Other actions that are considered necessary have also been included in the plan. A summary table of the actions is presented in section 6.
- 2.3 It is acknowledged that housing supply is critical in dealing with homelessness and in addressing the almost 90,000 households qualified as in need of social housing support.
- 2.4 The Homeless Oversight Group's view is that the 2016 objectives can be achieved within the existing envelope of resources. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Team consider that this will be particularly challenging in the current climate where numbers presenting as homeless have increased significantly over the past few months most notably in the Dublin region. Feedback from the NGO sector would seem to indicate that they are also being challenged by the level of funding available and they have indicated that they are now running services at a loss due to reductions in grant funding over the last number of years and a sharp decline in voluntary donations from the public in recent months.
- 2.5 The Government's Medium Term Economic Strategy referred to developing an overall strategic approach to housing supply and the forthcoming Construction Sector Strategy will develop this proposal further. A Social Housing Strategy is currently in preparation by DECLG in consultation with the Housing Agency and it is expected to be finalised before the end of 2014. This strategy will outline the Government's approach to housing, it will address housing demand and how supply can be delivered, as well as the role of the key stakeholders in this process. It will consider the funding aspects in delivering housing supply including the sources of such funding - private sector and the wider public sector as well as funding provided through Approved Housing Bodies. It will identify the capital and current investment required to advance the range of redevelopment, renewal and acquisition options to

boost the supply of social housing units. It will also feature the utilisation of lands in the ownership of local authorities and the Housing Agency to support housing policy. The strategy will encapsulate housing supply measures identified in the Construction Sector Strategy such as establishing a housing supply coordination task force for Dublin with an immediate focus on addressing supply/demand imbalances. In addition, the strategy will address difficulties in securing accommodation for social housing households including homeless households and it will identify measures to incentivise private landlords to provide accommodation for social housing clients.

- 2.6 This Implementation Plan focuses solely on delivering housing solutions for homeless households and the Social Housing Strategy, to be published later in 2014 will deal with housing supply for all social housing households. While this plan will focus on the current homeless population in the period to 2016, the Social Housing Strategy will deal with the provision of housing for all social housing households including homeless households in the same period and beyond. This plan responds to the housing needs of homeless households who are deemed to be vulnerable and the approach being adopted, especially with regard to the housing Allocations Scheme will assist other vulnerable groups. The utilisation of housing stock across the country both in State and other ownership will assist in addressing the needs of all social housing households.
- 2.7 Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation for homeless persons rests with housing authorities. The purposes for which housing authorities may incur expenditure in addressing homelessness are prescribed in Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988.
- 2.8 Housing authorities, the NGO sector, Approved Housing Bodies, Government Departments, the Health Service Executive and agencies will be involved in implementing the actions specified in the plan. Existing structures such as the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness, the National Homelessness Consultative Committee, the County and City Managers' Association, the housing authorities' Directors of Housing Services, homelessness statutory management groups, regional homelessness consultative fora, and local homelessness action teams will have roles to play in the implementation of this plan.
- 2.9 Individual County and City Managers of the 31 housing authorities along with their Directors of Housing will be required to take specific responsibility for those actions relating to the statutory provision of accommodation for homeless households at local level. The responsibility of other actions rests with other agencies as well as with DECLG.

- 2.10 The Implementation Team is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the delivery of the actions specified in the plan and it is the Team that is accountable to the Cabinet Committee on the plan's implementation. Where difficulties/blockages are encountered in the progress reports, these will be identified as well as the corrective action required and this may in some cases necessitate direction from the Minister for Housing and Planning or otherwise.
- 2.11 The successful delivery of the plan and achievement of the 2016 objectives will require enhanced co-operation, greater flexibility, joined-up thinking and real commitment from all stakeholders to ensure the "partnership model" delivers. Creativity and innovation in terms of a multi-agency response will be critical to ensure successful implementation. The Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee will be important players in this regard.
- 2.12 It is noted that regional Homelessness Action Plans have already been adopted across the country in each of the 9 regions (for further details about these regions see paragraph 5.17.2) and these will be reviewed in light of the actions being taken in this plan. In addition, previous actions identified in the *2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan* will also be reviewed. Further actions may need to be specified arising from these reviews.

### **3. Targets**

- 3.1 The homeless cohort may be simplistically categorised as rough sleepers, those that are in emergency accommodation for long periods of time on a consecutive basis and those that use emergency accommodation on a short-term or a long-term basis and for sporadic, non-consecutive periods. Within this cohort, there are singles, couples, and families including children. Long-term homeless are considered to be those in emergency accommodation for a period of longer than 6 months on a consecutive basis.
- 3.2 It is estimated that there are at least **2,663** homeless persons in Ireland based on the most recent data available. The breakdown of this figure is set out in the table below.

Rough Sleepers	In excess of 185; based on the November 2013 rough sleeper count, there are a minimum of 139 rough sleepers in Dublin; and a further 46 rough sleepers were identified by lead housing authorities across the country in their end year performance reports for 2013. The Spring 2014 rough sleeper count was conducted on the night of 8 April 2014 and the count reveals that there were 127 individuals identified as rough sleepers; this represents a decrease of 12 from the Winter 2013 rough sleeper count.
Homeless in emergency accommodation	<p>2,478; within this group a number of homeless persons have been in emergency accommodation for consecutive periods of greater than 6 months and these constitute the "long-term homeless". A detailed breakdown of the 2,478 homeless persons across the country is set out in paragraph 5.14.5 below.</p> <p>In Dublin, 1,551 persons are in emergency accommodation and of these 596 have been residing in emergency accommodation for consecutive periods of greater than 6 months (as at 13 April 2014). Similar data on long-term homelessness is not readily available for the rest of the country.</p>

- 3.3 The Homelessness Oversight Group estimate that in the region of 1,500 to 2,000 units need to be delivered over the next three years. However, since that report was published the number of families presenting as homeless has grown to unsustainable levels. Currently there are 184 families residing in emergency accommodation in the Dublin region (as at 29 April 2014).
- 3.4 The number of units to be provided in each year of this plan having regard to the 2,000 units considered by the Homelessness Oversight Group and a potential 700 additional homeless households over the next 2 and half years is estimated to be 2,700:

Year	Number of Units	How delivered?
2014	900	<p>To be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ensuring that vacant properties are brought into productive use as quickly as possible - such vacant properties include those in the ownership of local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies and these will be prioritised for homeless households;</li> <li>- amending the housing Allocation Schemes adopted by housing authorities to ensure that all vulnerable groups including homeless households are prioritised for housing; this will necessitate amending transfer policies;</li> <li>- ensuring that other suitable vacant residential properties in State ownership are brought into productive use as quickly as possible;</li> <li>- ensuring that NAMA units and other properties being purchased, acquired or refurbished by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies with State assistance are prioritised for homeless households;</li> <li>- ensuring that amendments to the leasing payment and availability arrangements to facilitate the use and accessibility of these properties by homeless households;</li> <li>- ensuring that a supply of accommodation for use by housing authorities and the NGO sector are identified and readily accessible through a social housing rental service in the Dublin region or similar approaches in the other regions.</li> </ul>
2015	900	
2016	900	

3.5 The number of units required will be kept under review and having regard to the data available on the numbers presenting as homeless outlined in section 5.14 on Indicators/PASS.

3.6 A number of actions have been prioritised in the plan to achieve the targets and these are:

- (i) accommodating rough sleepers and therefore eliminating the need to sleep rough (see section 5.1);
- (ii) managing the escalating number of homeless families in the Dublin region (see section 5.2);
- (iii) vacant properties (see section 5.3);
- (iv) housing allocations (see section 5.4); and
- (v) NAMA units (see section 5.5).



## **4. Monitoring and Review**

- 4.1 At its meeting on 28 April 2014, the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy considered the Implementation Plan and agreed that it should be formally submitted to Government for approval. It also agreed that Dublin City Council should identify a targeted programme of actions (the Dublin City Council Action Plan) by end June 2014 to support this Implementation Plan and with a particular focus on managing and addressing homelessness in the Dublin region.
- 4.2 The Government approved the Implementation Plan at its meeting on 20 May 2014. The plan is published on the Department's website, [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie). Engagement with all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation has commenced.
- 4.3 The Implementation Team will meet monthly to review progress and it will report quarterly to the Cabinet Committee on progress with the plan. It is envisaged that such reports will outline details of delivery of the various actions as well as identifying new and subsequent actions that may arise. The plan will be evolving and as actions are progressed, additional actions may be required and details of such amendments will be provided to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy on a quarterly basis by the Implementation Team. Impediments to progress, along with proposed corrective action, will also be identified and notified.
- 4.4 The Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee will also consider and discuss the quarterly reports of progress with the plan. This will provide an opportunity for feedback from and dialogue with the homelessness sector as well as allowing for further suggestions which could expedite policy execution through the sector.
- 4.5 The Homelessness Oversight Group will also maintain a role in overseeing implementation generally and will undertake a review of progress bi-annually.

## 5. Actions/Recommendations

### 5.1 Rough Sleepers

5.1.1 The number of rough sleepers in the Dublin region is a minimum of 139 based on data collected on a night in November 2013. The Spring 2014 rough sleeper count was conducted on the night of 8 April 2014 and the count reveals that there were 127 individuals identified as rough sleepers; this represents a decrease of 12 from the Winter 2013 rough sleeper count.

5.1.2 The profile of the 139 persons confirmed sleeping rough in November 2013 is as follows:

Male	111 (80%)
Female	20 (14%)
Unknown	8 (6%)

Irish	73 (53%)
Non-Irish	39 (28%)
Unknown	27 (19%)

Aged 18-30 yrs	34 (24%)
Aged 31-40 yrs	37 (27%)
Aged 41-50 yrs	31 (22%)
Aged 51-60 yrs	12 (9%)
Aged 61+ yrs	3 (2%)
Unknown	22 (16%)

5.1.3 The official Dublin Rough Sleeper Count is conducted twice each year and it captures the number of persons sleeping rough on a given night. The count relies on the discovery of persons who are sleeping rough by teams of homeless service workers and volunteers.

5.1.4 While the recent figure recorded in Dublin represents an increase on the figures recorded between Winter 2009 (60) and Spring 2011 (59) they are still significantly downward on the high levels recorded in the early 2000s (e.g. 312 individuals in 2002 or 185 individuals in 2005).

5.1.5 Dublin City Council is preparing a tender for the provision of a new Housing First service. This service, expected to be in place before the end of 2014, will target persons in Dublin who experience enduring and habitual rough sleeping and who manifest chronic mental ill health and/or substance misuse and addiction. The Housing First service will include the integration of established contact and outreach functions and services for the rough sleeping population and these are considered critical to the successful intake role of Housing First. The target set for service providers under the forthcoming tender is to deliver a minimum of 100 households to independent living with support over the period to 2016.

5.1.6 Additional approaches will be required to ensure that rough sleepers are provided with immediate accommodation pending the tendering and delivery of the Housing First service.

5.1.7 The number of rough sleepers outside of Dublin is not easily quantifiable as similar counts to those conducted in Dublin are not performed outside Dublin City. Based on

the end year performance reports for 2013 provided by the 8 lead housing authorities outside of Dublin, the number of rough sleepers per region ranged from 1 to 24, giving a total of 46.

5.1.8 There is an urgent need to provide housing for the cohort of rough sleepers in Dublin. There is a need to ascertain the up-to-date count of rough sleepers outside of Dublin and to put in place plans to house this cohort and provide the appropriate supports as a matter of urgency. It is acknowledged that some rough sleepers have in the past refused assistance and they may have chosen to voluntarily sleep rough.

5.1.9 Currently there is a cohort of homeless persons (EU nationals) who do not satisfy habitual residence conditions and who are rough sleeping. There may also be a number of non-EU rough sleepers who have expired status in the State and as such they have no permission to remain in the State. Equally there are amongst this cohort, non-EU nationals who do have the right to reside but due to their status or the particular stamp they acquire from the INIS (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service), they are not entitled to avail of public funds (an example of this may be students on stamp 2 visas or stamp 2a visas). Permission to remain in the State for non EU citizens is decided through INIS and cards are awarded/renewed through the GNIB (Garda National Immigration Bureau). There has been engagement with the Department of Justice and Equality and the INIS on the issue of implications of the immigration status of such persons and these discussions need to be taken forward. There is also an urgent need to put in place arrangements to provide accommodation for these persons, as appropriate.

5.1.10 It is noted that some repatriation of homeless persons already takes place. This is facilitated for EU Accession State citizens through the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) on an agency basis for the Department of Social Protection. When a person presents to the New Communities Unit in the Department of Social Protection and is determined destitute (i.e. without the means to support oneself and provide the daily essentials such as shelter, food and clothing), RIA is contacted and a customer may voluntarily repatriate to an Accession State. In such circumstances a customer is accommodated for perhaps a night or two before they are returned to their country of origin by RIA in a location in Dublin City centre. This is a voluntary arrangement and often this service is refused by customers, even though they are aware they have no entitlement to social welfare payments.

5.1.11 In addition, a further initiative known as the Barka initiative also deals with repatriation of homeless persons. Barka is a Polish organisation (though not exclusive to Polish Nationals) who work in conjunction with Dublin City Council and NGOs and the DSP to facilitate the voluntary return of Polish citizens and those from accession States such as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. There have been a number of successes to date using this organisation which not only works with homeless people in Dublin but provides assistance by way of education, work placement and housing upon their return to their country of origin.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1	We will provide accommodation for rough sleepers as quickly as possible pending the tendering and delivery of the <i>Housing First</i> service in Dublin.	Q2 and Q3 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG
2	We will support the planned establishment of a <i>Housing First</i> service in Dublin for the rough sleeping cohort with a view to delivering a minimum of 100 households to independent living with support over the period to 2016.	commencing in Q3 2014 and to end in Q4 2016	DCC (Lead), DECLG
3	We will identify the number of rough sleepers outside of Dublin, put in place arrangements to house these persons, provide the appropriate supports, and the Housing First model will be considered in this context.	Q2 and Q3 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), DCC, Lead Local Authorities
4	We will engage with the Department of Justice and Equality and its agencies on the cohort of rough sleepers who have residency issues.	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), DJE, DSP, DCC
5	We will put in place arrangements to provide accommodation for these persons, as appropriate in consultation with key stakeholders	Q2 and Q3 2014	DCC and Local Authorities (Lead), DJE, DSP, DECLG

## 5.2 Managing Homeless Families

5.2.1 While not unique to Dublin, there is a particular problem with the number of families presenting as homeless. Homeless families in Dublin was not a significant issue when the Homelessness Oversight Group reported in December 2013 but since then, the numbers presented have dramatically increased. In addressing this emergency crisis, a number of options including those identified by the Homelessness Oversight Group are being explored.

### *Background*

5.2.2 The number of homeless families presenting has dramatically increased since the Homelessness Oversight Group reported in December 2013. In the period to December 2013, an average of 15 to 20 families were presenting as homeless in Dublin each month. However, the trend since then has been 42 families presenting to Dublin homeless services in January 2014, 25 families in February 2014, 28 families in March 2014, and 26 in April 2014.

5.2.3 With the volume of new presentations, it is becoming increasingly challenging to provide appropriate and suitable accommodation for these families particularly in light of significant supply issues in the Dublin area. Therefore, the use of hotel accommodation for recently homeless families has escalated rapidly and Dublin City Council has advised that, on 29 April 2014, 184 families are being accommodated in hotel accommodation, with 16 commercial hotels being used for this purpose.

5.2.4 Accommodating homeless families in hotel accommodation poses particular difficulties and risks for the families and agencies supporting them. Many of the families currently being accommodated will have to be transferred from their existing accommodation to other venues due to pre-booking of hotel rooms at peak periods. This will become increasingly problematic as the peak summer tourist period approaches and will result in considerable disruption for the families involved and also increased costs for the State in providing alternative accommodation. Furthermore, recent negative media coverage is also impacting on the willingness of hotels to engage in this service due to alleged anti-social behaviour and disruptive behaviour by some clients.

### *Reasons for families presenting as homeless*

5.2.5 The evidence suggests that the reasons for these families becoming homeless include a combination of factors such as falling economic resilience due to unemployment and income inadequacy combined with the current and ongoing general decline in the supply of available, accessible and affordable rentals particularly in the Dublin region. Trigger events for homelessness originating from private rentals include lack of awareness and understanding of tenant's rights and landlord responsibility, missed rental payments and rent arrears, irregular and large rent increases, landlords requiring vacant possession for onward selling of the rented property, and the impact of foreclosure actions on highly leveraged landlords that have led to an increased number of landlords entering receivership. This has combined with other known trigger issues such as relationship breakdown and domestic violence to impact most severely on economically vulnerable households. It should also be

noted that of the families currently presenting as homeless in Dublin, a small number have come to Dublin from other parts of the country, the reasons for this are unknown in some cases.

5.2.6 DCC consider it to be beneficial, for processing purposes, if families could be located in one central location with inter-agency services being provided at that location and for a short-term basis until more sustainable housing accommodation is provided to such families.

#### *Utilisation of NAMA Units*

5.2.7 DCC and DECLG are engaging with NAMA with a view to fast tracking units in the Dublin area which could be brought into social housing use within the next 3 months and that a number of units are ring-fenced for homeless households.

5.2.8 In order to ensure that such units are delivered into use as quickly as possible, it is recommended that DCC lease these units directly from the receiver, where practical, while the NAMA Special Purpose Vehicle process continues in parallel, as the latter process can take several months to complete.

5.2.9 In addition, units which were previously deemed to be unsuitable for social housing use due to: the quality and finish of developments; the application of sustainable communities criteria to ensure an income mix of residents that avoids undue social segregation and over-concentration of low-income households; and issues relating to financing of the stock as social rentals are also being examined across the Dublin region. DECLG has requested NAMA to determine how many of these units are still available and, while the number of units is not thought to be considerable at this stage, there is likely to be some limited availability. NAMA has stressed that it does not have a significant portfolio of loans secured on vacant residential property and as such NAMA solutions to the housing supply problem are very much limited.

5.2.10 A large concentration of social housing tenants in any single development presents challenges under good practice in estate management and sustainable community development and also presents financial challenges to the social landlord's ability to finance the leasing arrangements required to bring the properties into use. Therefore the option of allowing the social housing landlord a mix of private and social rental needs to be considered.

5.2.11 Overall it remains the case that accommodating Dublin homeless families on a temporary letting basis is however more desirable and cost effective than the current solution of hotels and other forms of private emergency accommodation.

5.2.12 NAMA has also indicated that there are no hotels in the Dublin or neighbouring region which are within its remit and which would be suitable for accommodating families who are homeless.

5.2.13 DCC is in discussions with financial institutions with a view to accessing some of its residential portfolio. The Department of the Taoiseach will provide assistance as appropriate in this regard.

#### *Social Housing Vacancies*

5.2.14 A number of social housing units are currently vacant across the Dublin region and, while they do not meet the standard required for long-term social lettings, these units could, after some remedial work, potentially be ring-fenced for allocation to accommodate homeless households and could be deemed as a form of "emergency accommodation". There is concern that such temporary solutions could become permanent. Obviously any units would be required to comply with fire and other regulations. These may present a better option than the hotels and other private emergency accommodation. There are understandable concerns about providing short-term lettings in local authority dwellings to households who have recently presented as homeless while other families remain for extended periods on the housing list. However, it is considered that households who have been homeless for longer periods (and who may be accommodated in existing private emergency accommodation such as houses/apartment blocks rather than commercial hotels) could be provided with the local authority dwelling and the new presenting homeless family could move into the other vacated emergency accommodation, thus preserving to some degree, the housing waiting lists.

5.2.15 The Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report contained recommendations relating to vacant properties and allocations and solutions relating to these recommendations will be of critical relevance in the use of any vacant properties across the Dublin region as well as how the allocations are to be made. These recommendations and actions are dealt with separately in this plan.

#### *Other Accommodation Solutions*

5.2.16 DECLG is also engaging with other Departments and agencies to identify potential emergency accommodation solutions.

- Reception and Integration Agency, Department of Justice and Equality: A number of purpose built and other designated centres are being used to accommodate asylum seekers in Dublin and in other regions throughout the country. Utilising this accommodation has been explored but it presents many difficulties which are insurmountable. The Department of Justice and Equality considered that there are a number of potential landlords who would be useful to contact with a view to accessing some suitable vacant accommodation and it also agreed to share details of the process and contracts for direct provision of accommodation in the event that DCC or others seek to explore such options and to replicate the RIA approach. DCC has been in contact with these landlords to source additional accommodation.
- Department of Defence: A number of living quarters outside army barracks are currently being occupied and there may be potential for properties to become available in the future. However, there is nothing available in the short or medium term. The identification of potential properties that may be suitable for housing purposes in Dublin and in the rest of the country needs further consideration and this is explored in paragraph 5.3.13.

- Office of Public Works: A number of Garda Stations are vacant throughout the country and previously contacts were made with the relevant local authorities about the sale of these properties. This process has not so far yielded suitable properties for social housing purposes on a cost effective basis. Some Garda stations were auctioned recently and further are expected in the coming months. DCC is also liaising with the OPW on providing appropriate long-term accommodation on a site in North Dublin but this will not be available until later in 2014. OPW is also reviewing other residential units that may be suitable for housing purposes in the Dublin region. The identification of potential properties that may be suitable for housing purposes in Dublin and in the rest of the country needs further consideration and this is explored in paragraph 5.3.13.
- Health Service Executive: A number of former hospitals, homes and care centres are vacant throughout the country and the HSE is compiling a list of potential properties. The identification of potential properties that may be suitable for housing purposes in Dublin and in the rest of the country needs further consideration and this is explored in paragraph 5.3.13.

5.2.17 DCC has also consulted with other organisations such as religious orders to determine whether there is any capacity within properties under their ownership as an emergency option.

5.2.18 There does not appear to be any source of suitable accommodation available through the major emergency planning system which could be accessed for use by homeless families.

5.2.19 DCC is examining the utilisation of some residential properties owned by the Council and the other 3 Dublin authorities which are currently vacant with a view to bringing these properties into use as social lettings as quickly as possible.

#### *Rent Limits and Arrears*

5.2.20 The issue of missed and partial rental payments in the private rented sector leading to rent arrears is a recurring trigger event for families presenting to homeless accommodation and issues such as the control of rents, market rent levels, and the availability of rental deposits are matters which have been raised as part of the development of the plan. In the case of rent supplement, increasing levels on a universal basis is not being considered by DSP, because there is already provision for maximum rent limits to be exceeded where there are special housing needs related to exceptional circumstances, including dealing with homeless households. Further details in relation to rent supplement and related issues are outlined in section 5.6.

#### *Prevention*

5.2.21 Prevention measures are critical and essential to ensure that families and indeed all individuals do not become homeless. In the immediate term, Dublin local authorities are instituting a major public awareness campaign aimed at private renters and landlords which will focus on tenant rights and homeless prevention. As part of this campaign, Threshold



has been contracted to deal with tenants experiencing particular difficulties with their tenancies. The campaign is being finalised in consultation with DECLG, Department of Social Protection and Threshold. This campaign is detailed under section 5.16 on Advocacy and Prevention.

5.2.22 The Council has also expanded its 'new presenters team' which specifically targets families residing in hotels with the objective of moving them on to other housing options, primarily the private rented sector as quickly as possible.

5.2.23 The actions necessary to deal with the homeless families in Dublin are outlined under section 5.3 on Vacant Properties, section 5.4 on Housing Allocations, and under section 5.5 on NAMA Units.

## 5.3 Vacant Properties

**HOG Recommendation:** *All lead local authorities would prepare an inventory of voids in their region. This stock would be made available to be provided to AHBs or Sector NGOs by way of transfer, or at a nominal annual lease (for example, €1) with secure tenure for a minimum of ten years. In order to avail of a particular property, the relevant body must provide evidence that it has access to sufficient funding to return the property to an appropriate operational standard AND provide a guarantee that the property would be used to provide accommodation to homeless persons. Where void properties are to be leased to an AHB/sector NGO, rather than transferred, we consider that the local authority should assign the property as security for borrowings to refurbish the property. (Addressing Supply, pg 17)*

### *Local Authority Housing Stock*

5.3.1 The total housing stock held by local authorities is 131,005 units and 2.8% (average) or 3,668 units are empty. The percentage of empty units *available for letting* is 21% (770 units) and the percentage of units *unavailable for letting* is 79%. The average time taken to complete repairs that are deemed necessary to re-let a dwelling is 18 weeks while the number of weeks that it takes to re-let a dwelling is 5.3 weeks on average, giving an overall average time from the date of vacation of the property to the date of the first rent debit is 23.3 weeks or almost 6 months. (Source: LGMA's *Service Indicators in Local Authorities 2012*).

### *Inventory*

5.3.2 It is noted that local authorities have different distinct categories of vacant properties or voids. There appears to be different definitions for what constitutes a long-term void across local authorities. There may be properties which are: vacant for refurbishment, vacant for re-letting, vacant for de-tenanting or regeneration; vacant for demolition; or vacant because of low demand or for cost reasons. Simplistically though, if a local authority dwelling does not have a tenant, it is vacant. It is not clear if the current data on vacant dwellings reflects the accurate status of all dwellings in local authority ownership which are currently without a tenant. As recommended by the Homelessness Oversight Group, all lead local authorities should prepare an inventory of voids in their regions. This exercise should seek to clarify the various types of voids, so that a consistent and common understanding of voids can be obtained. It will also provide an opportunity to ascertain other stock in local authority ownership that may have been previously purchased/acquired for social housing purposes but which is not being currently used for such purposes.

### *Bringing vacant units back into productive use*

5.3.3 In mid April 2014, the Minister for Housing and Planning announced details of a €15 million investment programme and the allocations to local authorities to bring long-term vacant local authority housing units back into use. The key objective is to return targeted vacant stock to a lettable, energy-efficient condition at a reasonable cost. Local authorities had been invited to submit proposals to DECLG. Approximately 66% of this funding is earmarked for those 12 authorities which rank highest in terms of numbers of families on

housing waiting list. This investment programme will return some 950 vacant properties to productive use. Local authorities will be requested to give priority consideration to homeless families when considering housing allocations. A further €20 million investment programme for vacant units was announced by the Minister for Housing and Planning on 13 May 2014. This investment, in turning long-term vacant units into high quality family homes, will produce approximately 1,000 homes. The allocations to local authorities for this additional investment will be announced before the end of June 2014.

5.3.4 Due to constrained public finances, this investment programme targets over 50% of current vacant units, and so there is a need to consider other vacant local authority housing units and how these can be brought back into use and re-let as efficiently as possible. Based on the data available, the average time taken by local authorities for conducting repairs varies from 6 weeks to 49.2 weeks and the time taken to re-let a dwelling varies from 0.3 weeks to 40 weeks and there may be reasonable explanations for these varied results. It is acknowledged that some vacant properties are in low demand areas or in areas perceived as undesirable locations and the time taken to re-let a dwelling is affected by applicants being allowed a number of refusals of accommodation offers. It is also acknowledged that some local authorities have insufficient funding to undertake maintenance and refurbishment works to return some of these properties to productive use.

5.3.5 It is noted that some properties are vacant pending development decisions/approvals. For example a flat complex may be partially occupied while awaiting redevelopment works which may be planned to occur within a defined period of time but often does not occur for some time after and in some case, it can take years. There are many examples of such properties and it is clear that with minimal expenditure, these properties could be made available for housing on a licence or non-tenancy basis for a short period of time. A licensing arrangement could be pursued for this purpose initially on a pilot basis. Allowing vacant properties to be occupied on a short-term basis (3 to 6 months) would equate to a form of emergency accommodation but it is different in that the household would be in a home rather than in a hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation. The costs associated with providing emergency accommodation for homeless households are far greater than the costs associated with bringing certain vacant properties back into use. It is critical that such properties be re-let on a temporary/emergency basis for short periods of time with minimum amount of work. Where access to funding is an issue for local authorities, it is considered that avenues of funding should be explored through Approved Housing Bodies. Where difficulties present to housing authorities in housing households in such temporary accommodation, it is acknowledged that all emergency accommodation including bed and breakfast accommodation and hotels is also temporary and housing licensed households rather than tenanted households should not present legal difficulties for local authorities.

5.3.6 A proposal has been submitted under the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 for the deep retrofitting of some 2,000 local authority apartments and flats in Dublin, Cork and Limerick at an estimated cost of €100 million; some of these properties are vacant. It is proposed that 25% of the cost would be met by way of a grant from the European Regional Development Fund with a further 50% of the cost to be

met by way of loan finance from the European Investment Bank. The balance of funding would be provided from DECLG's social housing budget. The Partnership Agreement, setting out Ireland's proposed programmes under the EU Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 has been submitted to the European Commission for approval. A decision is expected in May 2014 or in the Autumn 2014. While the programme of work involved here covers the time frame to 2020, some aspects will be completed by the end of 2016. It is intended that the retrofitting works would be undertaken by a number of AHBs who would subsequently manage and maintain the properties on behalf of the local authority. Further social housing proposals of this nature and involving the EIB and the AHBs will be considered in the context of the outcome of this proposal.

5.3.7 An insight into the management of voids was provided in 2010 following the completion of a VFM Study on the Management and Maintenance of vacant dwellings. This VFM study was undertaken by the Local Government Audit Service covering the period 2007 and 2008 and it involved 8 local authorities. That report made a number of recommendations to improve the time take to carry-out repairs as well as timely re-lettings and these recommendations are being implemented in consultation with the City and County Managers' Association. The results have been positive to date and there is evidence of good practice across local authorities.

5.3.8 There is an urgent need for a more pro-active role in re-letting vacant dwellings particularly in light of the 2016 target and more general housing needs. The re-letting of vacant properties by local authorities through the application of the local authority Allocation Schemes and the prioritisation of homeless families in this context is discussed separately under section 5.4 on Housing Allocations.

5.3.9 A further study is required on the identification and management of vacant properties across local authorities and this will be informed by the inventory referred to earlier. It is necessary to investigate further the difficulties in securing timely and efficient re-letting of dwellings and whether appropriate directions to local authorities are necessary so as to ensure that vacant dwellings can be re-let as efficiently as possible. The financial requirements also need to be considered and identified.

5.3.10 The future approach to the management of local authority vacant properties requires detailed analysis to radically minimise the delays in bringing vacant units back into productive use and to ensure that such units are not left vacant particularly at a time where there is such an urgent demand for housing from both homeless and other households. The inventory, research and analysis of this issue as well as the appropriate way forward will need to be explored in consultation with local authorities and other stakeholders. There may be a specific role for the Housing Agency in the future management of local authority stock. Ministerial directions to local authorities may also be required.

#### *Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs)*

5.3.11 AHBs had 776 voids throughout 2013. This figure represents voids that occurred throughout 2013 and it should be noted in conjunction with the figure of 655 re-lets in the sector in the same period. The average void period was 11.7 weeks. (Source: *HAPM 2013*)

*Results Summary*). The top 3 reasons explaining the void period are delays in nominations from local authorities or inappropriate nominations; refurbishment of property; and no suitable tenant/nominations available. Some other reasons that were frequently given related to delays in receiving estate management checks on potential tenants and lack of HSE funding. Some of these reasons are extremely worrying particularly with such a high demand for social housing right across the country. The nominations process is dealt with under section 5.4 on Housing Allocations.

5.3.12 As recommended by the Homelessness Oversight Group, there is a role for Approved Housing Bodies with a potential transfer or lease of vacant properties to AHBs. There may be issues for local authorities in transferring stock to AHBs and similarly there may be issues for AHBs in leasing stock from local authorities. Financial considerations also need to be factored in as the AHBs will require funding to bring the stock into productive use; security will be a requirement for AHBs and leasing of stock may not be a sufficient option for this purpose and where a transfer of stock is not secured, alternative options need to be considered and a licensing arrangement may be one such option. These issues will need to be fully explored with the parties involved as well as with the Housing Finance Agency. The arrangements for transferring/leasing/licensing these properties will need to be formalised. These properties should be prioritised for homeless purposes. The allocation process for these properties is dealt with separately.

#### *Properties in State Ownership*

5.3.13 A number of properties across the country may be vacant and in State ownership and such properties may have potential use for housing purposes as well as meeting the needs of homeless persons. Such properties may include former Garda Stations, army living quarters, former hospitals or care centres or other properties. This process has not so far yielded suitable properties for social housing purposes on a cost effective basis. Other State and related agencies may have previously purchased properties for particular projects which subsequently did not materialise and such agencies may be interested in selling or making such properties available for defined periods.

5.3.14 It is noted that as part of the Property Asset Management Delivery Plan, published in July 2013, a Steering Group on Property Asset Management has been established involving a number of Departments and agencies including local authorities. One of the key aspect of that Plan is the development of a web-based mapping register of all properties, with office accommodation being prioritised. Social housing properties are not included in this property register on the grounds of volume, relevance and confidentiality.

5.3.15 It is acknowledged that local authorities do not have the capital monies available nor can local authorities borrow funding to secure the acquisition of suitable properties coming on the market despite the fact that some of these properties may be considered as exceptional value for money. In addition, local authorities may not have the financial resources available to refurbish and bring such properties back into productive use. There is scope for AHBs to play a role in this regard, but AHBs require commitments at local and national level that where such a property is purchased, that funding through the various schemes will be available in due course. The identification of potential properties, including

vacant properties that would be suitable for housing purposes, and in State ownership across the country needs to be ascertained. The difficulties facing local authorities and AHBs in successfully securing properties and bringing them into use need to be fully explored with a view to putting in place appropriate arrangements so as to facilitate the timely purchase/leasing or otherwise of suitable and available properties.

5.3.16 The simplest and quickest route would seem to be for AHBs to acquire the vacant properties (as this will eliminate any issues relating to transfer/lease/licence) with the cost of the property including the refurbishment costs being funded directly by the State or indirectly through leasing arrangements. An arrangement would be necessary to ensure that these properties would be available for social housing purpose for a defined period of time. The management and ongoing maintenance of these social housing units would have to be funded by the rents received and this may necessitate a private-social mix so as to address any financial issues for the AHB concerned.

*Closure of Temporary Emergency Units*

5.3.17 The Homelessness Oversight Group envisaged that the implementation plan would manage the closure of temporary emergency units in a timely fashion, so that continued short-term access to such accommodation would be available for those who need it and thereby to ensure that the need to sleep rough would be eliminated. This is extremely challenging in the context of the current numbers presenting as homeless and the shortage of housing supply. However, it is an issue which is fundamental to the financial merits of the Government's Social Impact Investing pilot project involving homeless families and it will also be a critical issue in this plan. Emergency accommodation costs account for over 50% of the national homeless budget (i.e. DECLG's and housing authorities' funding).

*Summary*

5.3.18 In summary there are significant vacant properties across the country in AHB, local authority and other State ownership. Bringing the majority of such properties into productive use could alleviate the serious pressures facing local authorities in providing accommodation for these households. It would save money on emergency accommodation but more importantly, it would provide homeless households with a home. It is critical that urgent action is taken to bring as many of these properties into use without delay.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
6	We will establish an inventory of "voids" across all local authority areas so as to identify all dwellings that are currently without a tenant; and identify other properties that may have been previously purchased / acquired for social housing purposes but not yet brought into use.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
7	We will bring more than 1,950 long-term vacant local authority housing units back into use; and allocate these to homeless households and other vulnerable groups in accordance with the appropriate priority.	Q4 2014 (1,800 units) Q2 2015 (150)	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
8	We will refurbish and retrofit some of the 2,000 local authority apartments and flats in Dublin, Cork and Limerick; in the case of vacant units, once refurbished, consideration will be given to making these units available to homeless households and other vulnerable groups in accordance with the appropriate priority.	Q3 2014 to Q4 2016	DECLG and Local Authorities in Dublin, Cork and Limerick (Lead)
9	We will instruct local authorities to bring into use as a matter of urgency those vacant properties that are vacant pending development decisions/approvals and which would only require a minimum amount of work, and to let such properties on a temporary/emergency basis for short periods of time and licensing arrangements rather than tenancy arrangements should be pursued for this purpose.	Q2 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
10	We will undertake a further study, with a view to improving the data on vacant properties and identifying any management issues as well as financial requirements for bringing such properties into productive use.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead); Housing Agency
11	We will identify issues including financial requirements relating to re-letting of dwellings and issue appropriate directions to local authorities so as to ensure that vacant dwellings can be re-let as efficiently as possible.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities; Housing Agency
12	We will identify an appropriate approach to the future management of local authority vacant properties including a role for the Housing Agency in this regard. Ministerial Directions may also be required.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities, Housing Agency

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
13	We will identify as a matter of urgency appropriate vacant properties across all local authority areas to be transferred/leased or by other appropriate mechanisms such as licensing, to Approved Housing Bodies so as to ensure that such properties are brought into productive use as quickly as possible.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead); AHBs
14	We will make arrangements for the transfer or lease or licence, as appropriate of vacant properties to Approved Housing Bodies, having regard to the views of local authorities, AHBs and the Housing Finance Agency; and provide that these units are allocated to homeless households.	Q1 2015	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead); AHBs; Housing Agency, Housing Finance Agency
15	We will establish a working group involving the key stakeholders including property owners from the State and related agencies to identify potential properties including vacant properties that would be suitable for housing purposes and in State ownership across the country having regard to the terms of reference and views of the Steering Group on Property Asset Management.	Q2 2014	DECLG and OPW (Lead), HSE, Department of Defence, other State agencies, local authorities
16	We will identify the various issues relating to the acquisition or otherwise of potential State properties including vacant properties and put in place arrangements to facilitate the timely purchase/lease or otherwise of suitable and available properties.	Q3 2014	DECLG and OPW (Lead), OPW, HSE, Housing Agency, Housing Finance Agency, Local Authorities, AHBs
17	We will put in place arrangements to manage the closure of temporary emergency units in a timely fashion.	Q4 2014 to Q4 2016	DECLG (Lead); DCC, Lead Local Authorities, HSE



## 5.4 Housing Allocations

**HOG Recommendation:** *Approved Housing Bodies and Local Authorities would be requested by the Department of the Environment to provide a statement of dedicated allocations of housing to the homeless sector indicating how many units will be available in each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, the transition period identified earlier in our report. (Addressing Supply, pg 17)*

### *Current Allocations by Local Authorities*

5.4.1 Local authorities operate an *Allocations Scheme* when allocating dwellings to households on the housing waiting list. The scheme is also used to re-let vacant dwellings. The purpose of the Allocations Scheme is to set out the basis for prioritising the allocation of housing support in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and Regulations thereunder. The making of an Allocation Scheme is a reserved function of a housing authority. Homeless households are generally awarded a priority status in the Allocations Scheme.

5.4.2 In the Dublin region, the 4 Dublin local authorities have different Allocations Schemes and homeless households are prioritised on all 4 schemes. In Dublin City Council, the allocation policy for homeless includes a target that one in three new lettings (excluding lettings to the transfer list) are made to households experiencing homelessness. The practical application of these schemes is somewhat different and the results of the 2013 allocations demonstrate this more clearly.

5.4.3 Giving priority to transfers of existing tenants in some local authorities can mitigate against the allocation of housing to homeless households. It is noted that the transfer arrangements cause additional difficulties in that the local authority owned properties that have been vacated by these households are now deemed as vacant properties and there are issues in relation to refurbishment and re-letting of such properties. These properties fall into the general management of vacant properties which was discussed under section 5.3 on Vacant Properties.

2013		DCC	DLRCC	FCC	SDCC
Number allocations made to families/persons on the Transfer List only (i.e. transferring from a social housing tenancy to another social housing tenancy - these properties subsequently become vacant properties)		528	84	77	74
By tenancy type:	Local Authority	507	84	77	74
	AHB	21	0	0	0
	RAS	0	0	0	0
Number of allocations made to families/persons on the Housing List but who were NOT on the Transfer List or the Homeless List		589	179	294	315
By tenancy type:	Local Authority	433	79	190	179
	AHB	65	47	71	45
	RAS	91	53	33	91
Number of allocations made to families/persons on the Housing List AND on the Homeless List		114 <sup>1</sup>	12 <sup>2</sup>	32 <sup>3</sup>	38 <sup>4</sup>
By tenancy type:	Local Authority	73	2	15	32
	AHB	41	7	17	6
	RAS	0	3	0	0
<b>Total number of allocations to all social lettings (includes local authority, AHB and RAS tenancies)</b>		<b>1,231</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>427</b>
<sup>1</sup> 26 families and 88 single households <sup>2</sup> 5 families and 7 single households <sup>3</sup> 15 families and 17 single households <sup>4</sup> 20 families and 18 single households					

5.4.4 It is clear that homeless households are prioritised in the Allocations Scheme but that does not translate into actual allocations to this group. It is acknowledged that homeless households are amongst a number of households in the broad category of vulnerable groups and singling out homeless from this group could result in other households being marginalised as well as creating an unintended perverse incentive.

5.4.5 There is a need to review the Allocation Schemes for all local authorities across the country and it is envisaged that these schemes will be similar in design with similar practical issues also arising. An urgent review of the schemes for all authorities as well as the detailed breakdown of their 2013 allocations is required because the practical application

differs significantly from what is intended in the schemes approved by the Council members in individual local authorities.

#### *Ministerial Directions*

5.4.6 Section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides the Minister with powers to direct a housing authority to amend an Allocation Scheme or issue directions regarding the operation of an Allocation Scheme. In effect, the Minister for Housing and Planning could direct all housing authorities to amend their Allocation Schemes so that homeless households are prioritised in such a way that would ensure actual prioritisation in practical terms and housing authorities would be obliged to amend their Allocation Schemes to reflect this.

5.4.7 It is acknowledged that directing authorities to ensure that homeless households are prioritised could result in the displacement of all others on the housing waiting list, including other groups deemed to be high priority such as people with a disability and Travellers. It could also result in an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless as the view may be taken that in order to access social housing, a person needs to declare oneself as homeless. This approach could be seen also as an erosion of local authority powers.

5.4.8 Any Ministerial Directions will need to have regard to the existing Allocations Schemes and the practical application of the scheme as evidenced by the 2013 allocations.

#### *Nominations to Approved Housing Bodies*

5.4.9 In November 2011, a *Protocol for Social Housing Nominations within the Dublin Region* was agreed between the members of the Irish Council for Social Housing and the 4 Dublin local authorities. The purpose of this Protocol is to maximise the number of units for homeless households through a streamlined and efficient nominations process. Based on the information provided by the local authorities in the Dublin region, the practical application of this process is set out in the table below. It is noted that the local authorities provide the nominations to AHBs and the AHBs cannot influence who is nominated.

<b>2013</b>	<b>DCC</b>	<b>DLRCC</b>	<b>FCC</b>	<b>SDCC</b>
Number of allocations by Approved Housing Bodies	127	54	88	51
Number of these allocations that were made to homeless households	41	7	17	6

5.4.10 It is also noted that under the leasing Payment and Availability agreement, AHBs incur penalties for units which become vacant for periods in excess of 3 months. This presents obvious difficulties for AHBs who have no control over the nomination process and particularly where there are delays in local authorities providing nominations to the AHBs. The P&A agreement and its review is considered separately under section 5.9 on

Leasing/Availability Agreement. The penalties provision could be included as part of the review.

5.4.11 It is clear that, as in the case of the Allocations Schemes, the practical application of the Protocol is somewhat different. There is an urgent need to look at the nominations process in the Dublin region and indeed in all other regions and to investigate how these processes link in with the Councils' Allocations Schemes. It is critical that homeless households and other social housing households are treated equally under the Allocations Schemes and nominations Protocol. It would seem prudent that the Allocations Scheme be used as the sole mechanism in allocating local authority owned and AHB owned housing to all social housing households.

5.4.12 As recommended by the Homelessness Oversight Group, AHBs and local authorities would be requested to provide a statement of dedicated allocations to the homeless sector indicating the number of units to be made available in the 3 year period 2014 to 2016.

#### *Summary*

5.4.13 In summary, successfully tackling homelessness may demand that a higher priority be afforded to homeless households. There is an urgent need to deal with this situation without delay as failure to do this will lead, not just to a continuation of the problem but to a significant deterioration of the problem.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
18	We will establish details of the 2013 allocations (including re-letting of vacant dwellings and NAMA units) to homeless households and other vulnerable groups across all local authorities including allocations by AHBs; and how these relate to the priorities afforded in the Allocations Schemes and in the nominations protocol arrangements with the AHB sector.	Q2 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
19	We will establish details of the proposed allocations to homeless households and other vulnerable groups by local authorities and by AHBs for the period 2014 to 2016.	Q3 2014	DECLG, Local Authorities and AHBs (Lead)
20	We will instruct local authorities on the operation of the Allocation Schemes so as to ensure that homeless households and other vulnerable groups are allocated housing in accordance with the appropriate priority and such instruction will also deal with transfers.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
21	We will instruct local authorities to put in place procedures as a matter of urgency to ensure that nominations to AHB properties are in accordance with their Allocation Schemes and supplemented by nomination protocols, where necessary and appropriate; and to ensure that there are no delays in the nomination process.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead)

## 5.5 NAMA Units

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that the Department of the Environment, the DCC and the Homelessness Policy Implementation Unit would continue engagement with NAMA and other relevant financial institutions to secure access to suitable properties during 2014. (Addressing Supply, pg 17)*

**HOG Recommendation:** *We request that NAMA identify appropriate single or smaller groups of properties that are currently vacant or will become vacant in the period to 2016, which could be put to use in the challenge of homelessness. We would also suggest that any properties made available by NAMA be ring-fenced for the use of the homelessness sector. (Addressing Supply, pg 18)*

### *Progress to date*

5.5.1 The DECLG, Housing Agency and NAMA continue to work together with housing authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in identifying suitable NAMA housing units and bringing them into social housing use.

5.5.2 By the end of March 2014, 4,653 units have been identified by NAMA as being potentially suitable for social housing and of these some 1,849 units have been confirmed by local authorities as being suitable for social housing. Completed housing unit transfers stand at 518, with a further 166 units contracted and with completion work ongoing. This brings the overall total delivery of social housing from NAMA-sourced units to 684 (completed or contracted) since the process began. These 684 units were brought into social housing use through existing delivery mechanisms including the Social Housing Investment Programme, the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Social Housing Leasing Initiative. The breakdown by local authority of the units identified and with demand confirmed is provided below.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Identified</b>	<b>Demand Confirmed</b>	<b>Complete/ Contracted</b>
Carlow Co. Co.	137	82	55
Cavan Co. Co.	49	17	
Clare Co. Co.	169	19	7
Cork City	419	97	53
Cork Co. Co.	471	148	55
Donegal Co. Co.	118	68	
Drogheda Borough Council	27	27	27
Dublin City	753	247	163
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Co.	305	114	77
Fingal Co. Co.	203	56	44
Galway City	152	152	60
Galway Co. Co.	98	40	
Kerry Co. Co.	114	54	15
Kildare Co. Co.	243	85	64

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Identified</b>	<b>Demand Confirmed</b>	<b>Complete/ Contracted</b>
Kilkenny Co. Co.	167	87	5
Laois Co. Co.	98	6	
Leitrim Co. Co.	35		
Limerick Co. Co.	128	71	9
Longford Co. Co.	31	11	
Mayo Co. Co.	66	58	
Meath Co. Co.	215	37	
Monaghan Co. Co.	42	42	
North Tipperary Co. Co.	13		
Offaly Co. Co.	79	58	
Roscommon Co. Co.	91		
Sligo Co. Co.	46	16	
South Dublin Co. Co.	60	42	40
South Tipperary Co. Co.	34	13	
Waterford City	7	7	
Waterford Co. Co.	65	39	
Westmeath Co. Co.	64	47	8
Wexford Co. Co.	118	102	2
Wicklow Co. Co.	36	7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,653</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>684</b>

*Units not deemed suitable for social housing use*

5.5.3 2,702 of the 4,653 units originally identified as being potentially suitable for social housing use are no longer under consideration. 1,091 units have been sold or let privately and are no longer available. 1,611 were deemed unsuitable due to the application of sustainable communities criteria which seeks to ensure an income mix of residents to avoid undue social segregation and over concentration of low income households; lack of demand in the areas in which they were located, and issues relating to financing of the stock as social rental.

5.5.4 NAMA are examining how many of these units previously deemed unsuitable are still available and, following this process, local authorities will reconsider their suitability for private and social housing purposes. While the number of units is not thought to be considerable at this stage, there is likely to be some limited availability. DECLG will explore the potential for use of these properties for homeless and other social housing households.

5.5.5 While significant progress has been made to date in terms of delivering units for social housing purposes, it is fair to say that such progress was not initially achieved at the rate originally envisaged. This was due in the main to the complexities of getting agreement from multiple parties operating within an environment subject to a range of legal and financial constraints. However, it should be noted that significant progress has been made in respect of delivery and in particular with the introduction of the National Asset Residential

Property Services Limited (NARPSL) Special Purpose Vehicle. The purpose of the SPV is to acquire properties from developers or receivers in NAMA's portfolio of loans and to make these available to local authorities and AHBs by way of a long-term lease. In this way, a number of legal complexities around the securing of properties can be addressed and the process can move more quickly. The Steering Group process is now working well as evidenced by the increased rate of delivery in the last 12 months.

5.5.6 It is also open to local authorities to lease units directly, on a short-term basis, from the receiver in tandem with the progressing of the Special Purpose Vehicle. This can allow for units to be made available for letting much more quickly.

#### *Dublin NAMA Units*

5.5.7 In the Dublin region, 225 NAMA units from an initial list of 1,196 units have been considered suitable and the leasing of further units is currently being explored. In the Dublin City Council area alone, NAMA has identified 753 units as being potentially suitable for social housing. Of these, 247 units were available for consideration and confirmed as suitable by Dublin City Council. At the end of March 2014, the number of these units delivered for social housing use was 163. Approximately 40 units earmarked for homeless use have been delivered in Q1 2014, with 150 more units to be fast tracked within the coming months for social housing use with a view to ring-fencing a proportion of these units for homeless households.

5.5.8 In order to ensure that these units are delivered into use as quickly as possible, it is recommended that local authorities lease these units directly from the receiver while the NAMA Special Purpose Vehicle process continues in parallel, when appropriate. Management of the schemes would then be assigned to an Approved Housing Body.

5.5.9 A large concentration of social housing tenants in any single development may present financial challenges to the social landlord's ability to finance the leasing arrangements required to bring the properties into use. It may be appropriate to consider a mix of social and private rentals to address this issue for new projects coming on stream. This should assist in dealing with any sustainable communities issues as well as highlighting any further deficiencies in the financial arrangements. This approach is currently being progressed in appropriate locations in Dublin.

5.5.10 In light of the Government's 2016 targets of ending long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough, combined with the emerging crisis for families in the Dublin region, it is recommended that a significant proportion of NAMA units, that are being delivered in 2014 and in future years, should be ring fenced by local authorities in their Allocation Schemes to meet the needs of homeless households.

#### *Rural Resettlement*

5.5.11 As part of a broader framework to addressing homelessness nationally, consideration should be given to the implementation of a pilot scheme to facilitate resettlement of households who have moved to Dublin from other parts of the country to



access homeless services or to facilitate resettlement of households who may wish to move from Dublin.

5.5.12 The pilot should build on previous programmes of this nature and be implemented at local level by identified local authorities. The development of the pilot should, as far as possible, utilise existing NAMA properties outside of the Dublin area and which could be made available reasonably quickly. Homeless households who wish to be involved in the pilot should have a robust support plan in place to ensure that they can access support services in the new location including supports to maintain tenancies. Consideration will need to be given in the first instance to the housing needs in the various locations. Other concerns such as ensuring that the households have employment prospects will also need to be considered.

*Other Housing Projects in Dublin*

5.5.13 In addition to securing NAMA units, DCC has engaged with mainstream banking institutions with a view to identifying properties suitable for leasing which will also increase housing provision for homeless households. A number of additional projects are being pursued by DCC through the Capital Assistance Scheme and other capital funding options to increase the supply of housing in Dublin, homeless households will need to feature in such schemes particularly in light of the current demand for homeless services.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
22	We will seek to ensure that NAMA units deemed ready and available are secured and utilised as quickly as possible, through direct leasing, if practical; and that at least 15% of units are made available to meet the needs of homeless households and other vulnerable groups.	Q3 2014	DECLG, NAMA, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)
23	We will ring fence at least 15% of the NAMA units expected to be delivered in 2014 and in 2015 for homeless households and other vulnerable groups through local authority allocations.	2014 and 2015	DECLG, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)
24	We will review previously rejected NAMA units across the country in consultation with local authorities and reconsider if such units could be deemed suitable for a private and social housing mix, with a focus on meeting homeless needs.	Ongoing	DECLG, NAMA, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
25	We will continue engagement with financial institutions with a view to securing suitable properties for homeless and other social housing households.	Ongoing	DCC (Lead); DECLG
26	We will examine the scope for a targeted pilot scheme to support homeless households in Dublin to move to other parts of the country and to provide for the resettlement of other rural households who present to homeless services in Dublin	Q3 2015	DECLG (Lead), DCC, HSE, DSP, Housing Agency

## 5.6 Rent Supplement and Related Issues

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that the scheme of provision of rental support be amended where two or more persons elect to share accommodation. At present, we understand that rent supplement payable for tenants in voluntary housing developments (funded through the capital assistance scheme) is capped at €55 per week for a single person and €60 per week for a couple. We understand that these limits are applied also when individuals share tenancies (for example in a two or three bed apartment or house) the limit is also applied – that is a single payment of €55 is made, rather than per person. We recommend that this system be re-examined and that a specific provision be considered for previously homeless persons agreeing to share tenancies, which would attach a rent supplement to the person rather than the property. (Additional Measures, pg 23)*

### *Rent Supplement Scheme*

5.6.1 The Rent Supplement Scheme, administered by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) provides short-term support to people living in private rented accommodation who are unable to meet their accommodation needs from their own resources and where no long-term housing solution is immediately available. While the Scheme is not designed to be a long-term housing support, it is a critical element in ensuring pathways out of homelessness and reducing the risk of homelessness occurring. More broadly, the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme assists people in the private rented sector through the provision of once-off payments to assist with items such as household appliances and assistance towards rental deposits. It is noted that over €2 million was paid in rent deposits and €24,000 in rent advances for rent supplement tenancies in 2013.

5.6.2 Approximately 20% of payments under the Rent Supplement Scheme are made directly to the landlord at the request of the recipient and the agreement of DSP. Under the Rent Supplement Scheme, recipients are required to make a minimum personal contribution (€30 for a single person and €40 for a couple) directly to the Landlord. Under the forthcoming Housing Assistance Payment Scheme, all payments will be made directly to the landlords of the scheme.

5.6.3 All prospective tenants, including those seeking to access rent supplement, are now finding it increasingly difficult to secure appropriate accommodation due to the reduced availability of rental properties particularly in Dublin. The DSP continues to monitor trends in the private rental market to determine the impact on rent supplement recipients. The maximum rent limits can be exceeded where there are special housing needs related to exceptional circumstances including dealing with homeless persons. DSP officials administering the Rent Supplement Scheme have considerable experience in dealing with customers of the scheme and will continue to make every effort to ensure that their accommodation needs are met.

5.6.4 As part of the prevention campaign due to be launched in early May 2014 by DCC in conjunction with Threshold, a protocol is being developed between DCC, Threshold and the DSP so that families at risk of losing existing private rented accommodation can

have more timely and appropriate interventions made on their behalf. Further details of this campaign are outlined under section 5.16 on Advocacy and Prevention. Families already experiencing homelessness can avail of the Rent Supplement Initiative currently in place.

#### *Rent Supplement Initiative*

5.6.5 The Rent Supplement Initiative, which commenced in October 2012, provides a response to assist the long-term homeless in the Dublin region to move to more sustainable housing solutions. This Initiative is targeted at homeless households in the Dublin region, it involves the identification of individuals by DCC and service providers, the fast-tracking and awarding of rent supplement by DSP; and the sourcing of accommodation by DCC and service providers.

5.6.6 Of the 217 long-term homeless individuals identified by DCC for inclusion in the initial phase of the scheme, some 52 individuals were assisted in exiting long-term homelessness, 38 of whom transferred to the private rented sector. The second phase of the Initiative commenced in October 2013 and to date 35 individuals have been awarded rent supplement with 23 of these individuals also receiving assistance with a rental deposit.

5.6.7 The Initiative allows faster processing and access to rent supplements and more flexibility concerning deposits and rent ceilings where clients are engaged with service providers and have a support plan in place. The structured support framework is a critical element in securing access to the private rented sector, particularly where demand for rented properties is high. The Rent Supplement Initiative is also available for homeless families, however, very few families have been put forward to date by the referrers i.e. various NGOs. Given the significant increase in the number of families presenting as homeless in Dublin, it is recommended that information should be disseminated by Dublin City Council directing service providers to specifically target families in this regard.

#### *Preventing Homelessness*

5.6.8 As part of the Rent Supplement Initiative, the payment of rent supplement directly to landlords can be facilitated where requested by the tenant in agreement with DSP and the provision of assistance, in specific cases, where rent levels are above agreed limits. There is potentially scope to fund higher rent levels under the initiative through DECLG Section 10 funding, however, this approach should only be undertaken in the context of a more medium term approach on control of rent levels generally, particularly in the Dublin area. It is critical that this approach would not result in further increases in rental costs for all persons renting, particularly those on low incomes. In this regard, the PRTB is carrying out a focussed piece of research that will explore options to address the difficulties being experienced in segments of the private rented sector and to produce a report with policy recommendations for the Minister for Housing and Planning before end June 2014. In view of the demand on the Section 10 budget for 2014, it is unlikely that lead housing authorities will have any scope to accommodate costs of funding higher rent levels during 2014.

5.6.9 The support plan for families involved in the Rent Supplement Initiative should also provide for engagement with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service through the utilisation of special accounts, thereby ensuring that the personal rent contribution, which

must be made by all clients, is deducted at source. This would have the benefit of mitigating the chances of households falling into rental arrears. Synergies with other initiatives such as the implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment pilots and the development of a rental deposit protection scheme should be explored in the context of any possible extension of the Initiative to areas outside Dublin. Families presenting as homeless should be referred to both MABS and to Threshold to assist with issues such as rent arrears, evictions and tenant rights.

5.6.10 The role of the DSP Community Welfare Service in enabling people to access the private rented sector is critical, including the unique discretionary powers available to support the most vulnerable households. Guidelines issued to staff administering rent supplement in June 2013 advising details of the revised rent limits and the circumstances under which they may be exceeded.

#### *Rent supplement limits for sharing accommodation*

5.6.11 The Homelessness Oversight Group made a number of recommendations concerning rent supplement levels for homeless people who opt to share accommodation. There are currently approximately 8,000 persons in receipt of rent supplement in shared accommodation, this includes both CAS (Capital Assistance Scheme) and non-CAS properties. There are no current maximum rent limits for shared accommodation which has been acquired by an AHB through CAS. The current limits in place for shared accommodation offered are those set for non-CAS funded properties which are benchmarked against market rates.

5.6.12 The CAS interaction with rent supplement occurs as persons enter CAS accommodation and are eligible for rent supplement. The limits of €55 for single persons and €60 for couples are set with the understanding that the property has been substantially financed by the HFA, is a self-contained unit and providing the necessary funding required for the ongoing maintenance of the CAS property managed by the AHB. It is essential that all CAS funded rent supplement tenancies should be transferred to the Rental Accommodation Scheme as soon as possible and any outstanding issues to facilitate this should be resolved as a matter of urgency. The DSP generally provide temporary rent supplement support while this transfer to RAS is taking place.

5.6.13 CAS rates established in May 2007 took account of AHBs commitments for upkeep, maintenance and other requirements including the establishment of sinking funds. Current shared rates set for rent supplement are benchmarked against market rates, these would not be appropriate for CAS funded shared accommodation. Under the forthcoming HAP scheme, it is proposed that persons presenting from homelessness will enter HAP directly and therefore will not require rent supplement support.

5.6.14 The Homelessness Oversight Group's recommendation should be incorporated into the development of the Housing Assistance Payment and that CAS funded units are fully supported by the Housing Assistance Payment from the outset with no interim support required from rent supplement.

5.6.15 Following an extensive review of the private rental market revised maximum rent limits were introduced from Monday 17 June 2013 until 31 December 2014. Despite the overall pressures on the social protection budget, there were increases in the rent limits in some areas including Dublin and Galway, including the shared maximum rent limits in place for single persons and couples in non-CAS funded accommodation. In Dublin, the single shared rate increased by €50 per month and the couple rate by between €20 and €30. The maximum shared rates are associated with the person(s) and the location of the property and therefore the rates vary by region in line with market conditions. The current maximum rent limits are in place until December 2014 and will be reviewed at this time.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
27	We will continue to adopt a flexible approach in the use of discretionary powers including in relation to CAS funded accommodation in facilitating homeless households.	Ongoing	DSP (Lead)
28	We will ensure that the Rent Supplement Initiative has a specific focus on targeting homeless families as well as single households in Dublin including through the development and dissemination of information to service providers.	Q2 2014	NGOs and DCC (Lead), DSP
29	We will transfer all CAS funded rent supplement tenancies to the Rental Accommodation Scheme as soon as possible and any outstanding issues to facilitate this should be resolved as a matter of urgency.	Q3 2014	DECLG and DSP (Lead), Local Authorities
30	We will examine scope to utilise Section 10 funding on a pilot basis to provide for targeted higher rent levels for homeless families under the Rent Supplement Initiative.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, DSP
31	We will ensure that tenants who are at risk of homelessness and who wish to have rent supplement paid directly to the landlord will be facilitated by DSP.	Immediately, where it is not already in place	DSP (Lead)
32	We will recirculate guidance reminding front line staff of the discretionary powers available to support the most vulnerable and as part of the DCC prevention campaign.	Q2 2014	DSP (Lead)

## 5.7 Support Services

**HOG Recommendation:** *Support services for the homeless succeed in re-orienting their work towards settling, supporting and sustaining the homeless in permanent housing in place of the current focus on shelter-based services. (Overall Findings, pg 4, 13)*

5.7.1 This action is central to the success of achieving the 2016 key objectives and involves all stakeholders. It is core to moving away from a heavily resourced and seriously under pressure emergency/shelter type accommodation model to successfully implementing a housing-led approach where housing is in short supply or nearly non-existent in some areas based on current access criteria.

5.7.2 An integrated model of service provision for homeless services has already been developed. This is evidenced through the existing structures of the statutory management groups involving housing authorities in the provision of accommodation, and the Health Service Executive in the provision of care and supports. Housing authorities and the HSE representatives have been encouraged to work jointly on issues of common concern including funding arrangements. Service level agreements with service providers in each region involving both the housing authorities and the HSE facilitate this. However, the practical application may be somewhat different across the 9 homeless regions. Further structures in the form of the regional homelessness consultative fora and the homelessness action teams support this model. These structures seek to ensure close working relationships between the key stakeholders including the housing authorities, HSE representatives and service providers as well as Department of Social Protection employees dealing with community welfare services. Representatives from the newly appointed Child and Family Agency, Tusla being involved in these structures will be essential in the coming year and beyond and arrangements have been made with Tusla to ensure that it is represented appropriately across the regions. Tusla will have a particular interest and involvement in the specific service level agreements involving refuges and it is liaising with lead housing authorities in the development of a common service level agreement which meets the needs of all concerned. The focus on these structures is to ensure the resettling and sustaining of homeless persons in secure long-term accommodation.

5.7.3 Furthermore, the *National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2016* puts an increased focus on groups such as homeless people who may be at greater risk of drug misuse or are homeless as a consequence of drug misuse. Under the Treatment and Rehabilitation Pillar, one of the key actions, led by the HSE, is to develop a comprehensive integrated national treatment and rehabilitation service for all substance users using a 4-tier model approach. This includes the ongoing development of a range of treatment services, the recommendations of the *Report of the Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation*, the recommendations of the *Report of the HSE Working Group on Residential Treatment & Rehabilitation (Substance Abuse)* and the provision of access to substance misuse treatment within one month of assessment. The Department of Health envisage that the National Drug Rehabilitation Implementation Committee (NDRIC), which is chaired by the HSE, has a key role to play in the delivery of the recommendations of the 2 reports outlined.

5.7.4 DECLG also has responsibility for the implementation of a number of commitments in relation to the access and maintenance of appropriate housing for recovering drug misusers under the *Report of the Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation* which is being overseen by NDRIC. The implementation of these actions at housing authority and regional level will be further examined in consultation with the statutory management groups involving housing authorities and the HSE.

5.7.5 Progress on the implementation of the Rehabilitation housing commitments are reported on a regular basis through NDRIC to the Oversight Forum on Drugs which is the high level group chaired by the Minister of State for Primary Care that monitors progress on the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy. In addition, where further issues arise, these may also be progressed through the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness.

*Social Workers for Travellers*

5.7.6 Social workers are employed by local authorities to work with Travellers on accommodation related issues.

5.7.7 DECLG recoups to the local authorities 90% of the salary and expenses of these social workers; the local authorities fund the remaining 10%. In 2013, DECLG provided €2.3 million in respect of 58 social workers across 32 local authorities.

5.7.8 It is considered that there is scope to expand the role of these social workers to include a specific focus on homelessness and for non-Travellers. In particular, re-orienting the role of the social workers would assist in supporting a broader homelessness prevention framework and would be a significant additional resource at local authority level.

5.7.9 A review of the role of local authority social workers should be undertaken with a view to the reorientation of the role to address homelessness.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
33	We will undertake a review of the role of local authority social workers funded by DECLG with a view to expanding the role to address homelessness issues.	Q1 2015	National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (Lead) reporting to DECLG



	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
34	We will ensure that the existing structures are maximised so as to ensure full engagement with all stakeholders to secure agreement to effect the necessary change required and to monitor and support progress during the transition period by collecting data in relation to the meetings of the various structures.	Ongoing	DECLG (Lead), HSE, Lead Local Authorities
35	We will ensure that an integrated model of service provision for homeless services is developed and implemented successfully across all areas with the focus clearly on resettling and sustaining persons in secure long-term accommodation.	Ongoing	Local Authorities (Lead), HSE,
36	We will ensure that Service Level Agreements are in place for all services funded through Section 10 to deliver greater efficiencies, better performance, better outcomes in pursuing the objectives of a housing-led approach.	Q4 2014	Local Authorities (Lead), HSE, DECLG
37	We will continue to ensure that the recommendations of the Working Group Report on Rehabilitation on housing for recovering drug misusers, including homeless drug misusers are implemented appropriately.	Ongoing	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, HSE

## 5.8 Mental Health

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that the HSE would continue to establish multi-disciplinary Community Mental Health Teams as provided for in the “Vision for Change” plan. (Additional Measures, pg 23)*

5.8.1 The national policy on Mental Health, *A Vision for Change*, sets out a comprehensive change programme for mental health services which is currently being implemented by the HSE. A central aspect of this policy has been the development of Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) and the adoption of an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach. The policy specifically highlights the mental health difficulties experienced by homeless people and strongly recommends that a Community Mental Health Team with responsibility for the homeless population in each catchment area be clearly identified and that it should also be equipped to offer and provide effective outreach. Dedicated funding has been provided to support the resourcing of CMHTs in recent years with €35 million provided in 2012, a further €35 million in 2013 and €20 million in 2014.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
38	We will continue to develop and adequately resource our CMHTs to ensure that the needs of homeless persons and/or those at risk of homelessness are being adequately met across all Integrated Service Areas (ISAs).	Ongoing	HSE (Lead), D/Health, CMHTs.
39	We will ensure that each Homelessness Action Team (HATs) will have access to and is being supported by a member of the CMHT.	Q4 2014	HSE (Lead), HATs, CMHTs.
40	We will endeavour to provide a dedicated Community Mental Health Nurse in each ISA area to support the needs of homeless persons and/or persons at risk of homelessness.	Q4 2015	HSE (Lead)

## 5.9 Leasing/Availability Agreement

**HOG Recommendation:** *The leasing/availability agreement should be enhanced and a working group comprising one representative member from each of; the Department of the Environment, the local authorities, NAMA, the non-Government sector participants, the Approved Housing Bodies, representatives of the Landlord community, the Housing Finance Agency and the banking community should be convened, to report to the Minister within 3 months on amendments to render the leasing scheme optimal. (Addressing Supply, pg. 17)*

### *Social Housing Leasing Initiative*

5.9.1 The Social Housing Leasing Initiative allows housing authorities to lease properties on a long-term basis from the private sector and allows for the direct provision of dwellings by Approved Housing Bodies. Approved Housing Bodies are in a position to procure units themselves, either directly from a private owner or by purchasing/constructing units using private finance, which AHBs then make available under the leasing programme to persons in need of social housing support. The lease payment, in both cases, will be equivalent to what would be paid under the other leasing delivery mechanisms, as payments will again be determined by reference to local market rents.

5.9.2 At the end of February 2014, 59 housing authorities and 35 AHBs had been issued with approval from DECLG to proceed with leasing projects. These encompass over 7,200 units. The current overall average annual cost of leased units is around €6,026 (or €502 per month). Private lease agreements set rent at a discount from market rent. The main types of leasing that are now in place include:

- Housing authorities leasing vacant accommodation from developers/property owners under long-term leases for periods of between 10 and 20 years;
- AHBs leasing properties from developers or undertaking acquisition/build to lease projects;
- Housing authorities using unsold affordables for medium term lettings [5 to 10 years] with AHBs managing the properties;
- Landlords with single or small numbers of housing units, new or previously occupied, who may lease to the housing authority;
- The Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) which combines capital funding and leasing and provides for the State providing an equity stake in projects advanced by AHBs;
- Build-to-Lease on local authority lands; and
- NAMA Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) which can acquire the property and a local authority or AHB can lease the property directly from the SPV.

### *Payment and Availability (P&A) Agreement*

5.9.3 The leasing P&A agreement is a type of legal agreement between a local authority and either an AHB or private property owner to provide a housing unit for a fixed term for use as social housing. It was originally used to acquire units under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and then adapted for use under leasing. Under a P&A

agreement, the landlord responsibilities are retained by the property owner or the AHB. The payment under a P&A agreement is related to market rent and subject to varying vacancy conditions. For a private property owner the risk on vacancies is retained by the local authority and for an AHB the allowed vacancy is up to 4 months per tenancy.

5.9.4 The Housing Agency will establish and chair a working group to implement this recommendation concerning the payment and availability agreement. The working group will report to the Minister for Housing and Planning with recommendations within 3 months of establishment. The Terms of Reference of the working group should be prepared in consultation with DECLG and include an opportunity for relevant stakeholders to make submissions in relation to the operation of the scheme.

5.9.5 This will necessitate a review of the various types of leasing arrangements currently in place, the role of the scheme in addressing the housing needs of vulnerable groups, including homeless households, the accessibility and suitability of the scheme for AHBs, links between the P&A agreement and market rents and/or loan amounts, the suitability of the scheme to facilitate sourcing of properties from other institutions such as mainstream banks, any financing issues, the penalty clause for AHBs having vacant units, as well as reviewing existing arrangements for the processing of applications across 59 (soon to be 31) housing authorities with a view to ensuring efficient, effective and consistent scrutiny of such applications and with a view to having only one organisation to centrally manage this process.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
41	We will establish a working group to implement this recommendation and members of the group will be those detailed in the recommendation above.	Q3 2014 [for reporting to the Minister for Housing and Planning]	Housing Agency (Lead)
42	We will implement the working group's report and recommendations	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Housing Agency, Local Authorities

## 5.10 Social Housing Rental Service

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend replacing the multiple accommodation-search activities that exist at present among homeless agencies with a single integrated Social Housing Rental Service in major urban centres. (Addressing Supply, pg. 18)*

### *Background*

5.10.1 A number of service providers are currently involved in trying to secure private rented accommodation for homeless clients. These service providers are competing with each other for the same rental properties. In addition some landlords are unwilling to rent properties to tenants who may have been homeless previously or indeed to social housing tenants generally and this further constricts supply.

5.10.2 A Social Housing Rental Service (SHRS) would be a single point of contact for landlords, homeless clients and local authorities. The SHRS would have close links with the Department of Social Protection to facilitate timely payment of rent supplement for its clients and also with local authorities for the purposes of Rental Accommodation Scheme and particularly in the context of the implementation of Housing Assistance Payment. The SHRS would replace the accommodation search activities of multiple service providers with a single unit which would be tasked with identifying and managing accommodation sourced in the private rented sector. The SHRS would deal directly with landlords and would hold the contractual relationship with them. The SHRS would ensure the payment of deposits, guarantee rent payments, cover voids and undertake all landlord and tenant interactions/relations. The SHRS would then place homeless clients in the accommodation which they have sourced and would ensure they had the appropriate tenancy supports to sustain a tenancy.

5.10.3 In pursuing the SHRS approach, the perceived or actual risk for a landlord in renting to a homeless household or social housing tenant is removed and absorbed by the SHRS which guarantees rent payments and assumes the risk for damage to the property. It is envisaged that this would encourage landlords to rent accommodation thus increasing housing supply for the particular cohort. The SHRS would have to engage with landlords who do not already provide accommodation to homeless households in an effort to maximise the available supply of rental accommodation. The SHRS would also lead to efficiencies by replacing the multiple search activities of a number of service providers.

5.10.4 The SHRS could operate from within existing staff and office resources but would require a small level of start-up funding to enable the payment of deposits and the coverage of voids. Any resources required in this regard would need to be determined at an early stage. Rents for properties would be payable by the client from rent supplement payments from the Department of Social Protection and the standard personal contribution. The introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment scheme will have implications for any SHRS and any such service should be reviewed on the introduction of this scheme.

### *Analysis of such a Service*

5.10.5 The provision of such a service agrees with the overarching aims outlined in *Ending Homelessness – A Housing Led Approach* i.e. improving timely access to mainstream housing and a housing-led focus to the problem of homelessness. This report states that *ensuring a level playing field across all forms of rental housing in terms of security of occupancy, dispute resolution, regulation, standards etc. are core to preventing and ending homelessness and creating perverse incentives that can distort housing need in Ireland.* Ensuring secure occupancy in rental housing with requisite supports for all is not only a moral imperative, but is it demonstrably more cost effective than the current range of services that manage homelessness in Ireland.

5.10.6 Focus Ireland has undertaken a study, *Feasibility Study on a Social Rentals Initiative in Dublin*, conducted by TSA Consultancy, on the establishment of such a service in Dublin. This study notes that the model is not without its risks and recommends piloting such a scheme *in order to test the responses amongst the private rented sector, and monitor outcomes.* The study specifically proposes that the pilot should proceed in South Dublin and proposes that it should be NGO-led while engaging with other partners. The study recommends direct payments of rent supplement by DSP to the SHRS and it also envisages direct contacts with the Irish Property Owners Association (IPOA) and recommends to source accommodation only from those landlords not currently engaging with homeless households.

5.10.7 The study states that a number of service providers (Focus, Cork Simon, Threshold, St Vincent de Paul) entered into a partnership in December 2012 and undertook a small pilot *Cork Rentals and Housing Support Partnership* to source apartments in the private rental sector and to lease them directly to people experiencing homelessness in the Cork region. 14 households were accommodated in 14 tenancies with a total of 19 individuals involved and 7 different landlords. The units are rented to people within the rent supplement thresholds in Cork and the partnership covers the difference in rent. Housing support is also provided to maintain tenancies and move people on from homelessness. This pilot operates generally in the same manner as the SHRS proposed above with the partnership taking out the leases with the landlords directly. Although at an early stage of development and a small pilot, the feasibility study notes that 11 of the original 14 tenancies were still in place after 1 year. It should be noted that 50% of the cohort had been long-term homeless prior to their tenancy and had medium to high support needs. The Cork pilot covered the difference in rent between the rent supplement payable and the actual rent and it estimated that the subsidised costs of this were approximately €500 per unit per annum. All other costs including staff time and premises were absorbed by the organisations involved from within their existing resources. The study notes that sustainability of a similar scheme in Dublin would be dependent on the flexibility of the Rent Supplement Initiative to exceed rent supplement limits for families moving out of homelessness. The scheme has the potential for large savings as expensive emergency accommodation is replaced by rented accommodation, albeit possibly at a higher rent supplement limit.

5.10.8 Dublin City Council is developing a Social Housing Rental Service for operation in the Dublin region as part of its overall pilot Housing Assistance Payment project and detailed in section 5.13. The service will involve DCC and a number of service providers. As part of developing the proposed service, DCC are considering the various aspects of the service including the financial arrangements, links with existing rental/leasing schemes as well as rent supplement and related issues.

5.10.9 A SHRS may not be appropriate in all regions and it may take time to deliver. In the immediate term, a pooling together of AHBs and local authorities at regional level to identify ways of sourcing accommodation could be pursued and the regional homelessness consultative fora could be used for this purpose. This action could be progressed in the first instance through the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
43	We will establish a pilot Social Housing Rental Service in the Dublin region with an initial focus on homeless households and this will be part of Dublin's overall pilot Housing Assistance Payment project.	Q4 2014	DCC (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP
44	We will review the progress with the pilot with a view to having similar arrangements in other major urban centres.	Q4 2015	DCC (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP, Local Authorities
45	We will put in place a regional approach to sourcing accommodation in light of discussions at the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee and other relevant developments.	Q4 2015	Local Authorities (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP

## 5.11 Medical Cards

**HOG Recommendation:** *We suggest that the HSE provide for expansion of a scheme of medical cards to attach to specific facilities dedicated to the delivery of services to homeless persons. Where such cards currently are in place we believe that they are an effective example of a flexible approach that delivers service to vulnerable individuals and urge that they are maintained. We recommend that the Homelessness Policy Implementation Unit prepare a schedule of homeless facilities to which such a card should attach. (Additional Measures, pg 23)*

5.11.1 A generic medical card is a medical card which has been issued to a named homeless hostel/facility to enable emergency medical care to be provided to homeless persons who present at the hostel and do not have a medical card and require to be seen urgently by a doctor and/or requires prescribed medication. The use of the generic card is strictly for emergency situations only. The HSE does not see the 'expansion of the generic medical card' approach as necessary as adequate fast track systems are already in place to ensure access to primary care services where required.

5.11.2 In addition to the generic medical card model referred to above the HSE also part-funds the Safetynet Primary Care Network for Homeless Health Services (Safetynet). Safetynet is a networking organisation for nurses, doctors and voluntary agencies providing primary health care to homeless people in Dublin, Cork and Galway and it was established in May 2007. The overall aim of Safetynet is to deliver the highest possible standards of health care to homeless people and to provide a professional support mechanism for health professionals in the homeless sector who are often professionally isolated. Safetynet has four main objectives: to provide a seamless, coordinated and comprehensive primary health care service to homeless people in Dublin, Cork and Galway; to develop good practice clinical standards among Safetynet members; to engage patients in health services that are not in contact with health services; and to improve the health and well-being of patients. Safetynet oversees a number of projects designed to ensure that these objectives are achieved.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
46	We will prepare a schedule of hostels and facilities where generic medical cards are in place.	Q2 2014	HSE (Lead)
47	We will ensure that arrangements are in place and working effectively to ensure homeless persons have immediate access to primary care services where required.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead)



	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
48	We will ensure that homeless persons without 'legal status' e.g. not habitually resident, have access to emergency medical care where required.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead), D/Health
49	We will continue to support the Safetynet initiative for homeless people.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead)

## 5.12 Housing Finance Agency

**HOG recommendation:** *The Housing Finance Agency should be mandated to suggest and provide a limited range of products for new development, refurbishment and acquisitions which can be used by AHBs and Local Authorities in funding development projects demonstrably ring-fenced for the use of the Homeless population, such products to be available for projects commencing by the end of June 2014. We also request that the HFA would work with prospective borrowers, without lowering credit standards, to assist them in achieving eligible status thus increasing the chances that the resources available are drawn down by the sector. (Addressing Supply, pg 17)*

5.12.1 In February 2014, the Housing Finance Agency hosted a seminar involving key stakeholders to discuss the challenges associated with delivering finance for social housing purposes. It is envisaged that the Agency will develop further proposals in seeking to maximise the funding available to, and its draw down by, Approved Housing Bodies for housing purposes.

5.12.2 The implementation of these recommendations will necessitate discussions with the Housing Finance Agency as well as with Approved Housing Bodies. It will be essential to identify the difficulties for AHBs in drawing down funding as well barriers to the AHBs in securing eligible status from the Agency.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
50	We will engage with the HFA and AHBs on the implementation of this recommendation.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead)

### 5.13 Housing Assistance Payment

It is considered appropriate that a Housing Assistance Payment pilot project is put in place in Dublin City Council with a specific focus on homeless households.

#### *Background*

5.13.1 On 18 July 2013 the Government approved the introduction of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). HAP is being designed so as to bring all of the social housing services provided by the State together under the local authority system, with local authorities being responsible for all households with an established housing need and ensuring significant efficiencies in the provision of rental assistance. HAP will provide a new framework for the provision of rental assistance, and will, in as much as it can, facilitate the removal of existing barriers to employment by allowing HAP recipients to remain in the scheme if they gain full-time employment. Under the new scheme applicants will source their own accommodation within the private rented market (as currently happens with rent supplement) and the tenancy agreement will be between the HAP recipient and the private landlord. The local authority will pay the new assistance payment on the tenant's behalf directly to the landlord. The tenant will pay a rental contribution to the local authority based on the differential rent scheme for the relevant local authority.

5.13.2 DECLG is working closely with DSP and other key stakeholders in overseeing plans for the implementation of HAP. Limerick City and County Council has initiated a pilot project to test HAP. Subject to the required legislation being in place, the full HAP scheme will then roll out to 6 other local authorities on a pilot basis. These authorities are Cork, South Dublin, Monaghan, Kilkenny, Louth and Waterford and these were identified for participation in the first phase of HAP.

5.13.3 An additional HAP pilot, targeted specifically at homeless households is proposed for the Dublin region during 2014. It is critical that the Dublin HAP pilot and its terms of reference are agreed and incorporated in the overall implementation plan for HAP.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
51	We will develop and implement a specific HAP pilot targeted at homeless households in the Dublin area.	Q4 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG, DSP

## 5.14 Indicators/PASS

**HOG Recommendation:** *That the implementation of PASS be continued in a structured and timely fashion, with a focus on useful indicators of outcomes. (Data, pg 21)*

**HOG Recommendation:** *The Data Workshop Group convened by the CDT/NHCC should continue its work and agree by the end of January 2014 the definitions and characteristics of the monitoring indicators identified in the Minister's policy statement. This should include reporting timelines, who should get data and who is responsible for responding to indicators. (Data, pg 21)*

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that the indicator for "Number of persons in emergency accommodation for longer than 6 months" should be amended to represent the episodic nature of long-term homelessness – that is, to capture persons leaving and returning to the system. The definition might, for example, refer to "persons consecutively in emergency accommodation for longer than 6 months OR for more than 6 months (non-consecutive) in the previous twelve months." (Data, pg 21)*

### *Number of Homeless Persons*

5.14.1 The homeless cohort may be simplistically categorised as rough sleepers, those that are in emergency accommodation for long periods of time on a consecutive basis and those that use emergency accommodation on a short-term or a long-term basis and for sporadic, non-consecutive periods. Within this cohort, there are singles, couples, and families including children. Long-term homeless are considered to be those in emergency accommodation for a period of longer than 6 months on a consecutive basis or those in emergency accommodation for a period of more than 6 months on a non-consecutive basis in the previous 12 month period.

5.14.2 It is estimated that there are at least **2,663** homeless persons in Ireland based on the most recent data available. The breakdown of this figure is set out in the table below.

Rough Sleepers	In excess of 185; based on the November 2013 rough sleeper count, there are a minimum of 139 rough sleepers in Dublin; and a further 46 rough sleepers were identified by lead housing authorities across the country in their end year performance reports for 2013. The Spring 2014 rough sleeper count was conducted on the night of 8 April 2014 and the count reveals that there were 127 individuals identified as rough sleepers; this represents a decrease of 12 from the Winter 2013 rough sleeper count.
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Homeless in emergency accommodation	<p>2,478; within this group a number of homeless persons have been in emergency accommodation for consecutive periods of greater than 6 months and these constitute the "long-term homeless". A detailed breakdown of the 2,478 homeless persons across the country is set out in paragraph 5.14.5 below.</p> <p>In Dublin, 1,551 persons are in emergency accommodation and of these 596 have been residing in emergency accommodation for consecutive periods of greater than 6 months (as at 13 April 2014). Similar data is not readily available for the rest of the country.</p>
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5.14.3 Previously, the Central Statistics Office published a special Census report, *Homeless Persons in Ireland* on 6 September 2012. This report indicated that a total of 64 individuals (of which 59 were in Dublin) were sleeping rough on Census night, 10 April 2011, while identifying a further 3,744 people (of which 2,316 were in Dublin) as housed in accommodation defined as emergency, transitional or long-term. Of these 992 homeless persons were deemed to be in long-term accommodation (see paragraph 5.20.10 for further details on long-term accommodation) resulting in a total of 2,752 in emergency accommodation (including transitional).

5.14.4 The Census report also noted that 249 families (including couples and parents with children) were deemed homeless on the night of 10 April 2011. 133 of these families were in the Dublin region with the remaining 116 families in the rest of the country and such families resided in various accommodation including emergency as well as long-term accommodation.

5.14.5 Lead housing authorities recently compiled data on the numbers of persons in emergency accommodation over a one week period from 7 to 13 April 2014 and this indicated that **2,478** persons were residing in emergency accommodation across the country, details are outlined in the table below. The number of families in emergency accommodation (i.e. a subset of this cohort) is not readily available.

<b>Breakdown of Homeless Persons in Emergency Accommodation during the week 7 to 13 April 2014</b>							
<b>Region</b>	<b>Total Homeless in Region</b>	<b>Gender</b>		<b>Age Group</b>			
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>18 - 24</i>	<i>25 - 44</i>	<i>45 - 64</i>	<i>65+</i>
Dublin	1,551	976	575	285	969	278	19
Mid West	245	158	87	38	115	69	23
South West	225	160	65	40	123	58	4
South East	142	110	31	32	69	36	5
West	137	109	28				
Mid East	79	65	14	16	36	22	5
Midlands	41	22	19	13	15	12	1
North West	39	28	11	6	15	12	6
North East	19	16	3	6	11	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,478</b>	<b>1,644</b>	<b>833</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>1,353</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>63</b>

5.14.6 The number of families (i.e. households with dependent children) in all emergency accommodation, including hotels, in Dublin over a one week period from 7 to 13 April 2014 is set out in the table below. It includes those families involved in the Social Impact Investing project, details of which are set out in paragraph 5.14.7 below. This summary relates specifically to those people residing in emergency accommodation when booked in as a couple with dependent children, or booked in as individuals with dependent children. It is noted that a further 106 adults were booked into emergency accommodation as couples with no dependent children and such couples could potentially be viewed as a family when verified by the housing authority. For the purposes of this aspect of the report, only those booked in with dependent children are included below.

<b>Household type</b>	<b>No. of Adults</b>	<b>No. of Dependents</b>
Individuals with dependent children	104	208
Couples with dependent children	96	134
	<b>200</b>	<b>342</b>

5.14.7 On 15 October 2013, the Government agreed to the establishment of a Social Impact Investing project dealing with homeless families in the Dublin region. It also agreed to appointing Clann Credo for the purpose of securing the private sector investment and to oversee management and delivery of this project; and to appointing Focus Ireland as the service provider for the project. The project involves a defined cohort of 136 families, including over 250 children, who are homeless in the Dublin region. These families have been accommodated in private emergency accommodation for at least 6 months. The project will result in the cohort of 136 family households moving out of private emergency accommodation into suitable long-term accommodation by: sourcing appropriate accommodation; providing intensive support to help such households settle into their new accommodation and integrate into the local community and sustain their new tenancies.

5.14.8 By end March 2014, over 60 of the 136 identified families in the Social Impact Investing project have been engaged with by Focus Ireland. Suitable alternative accommodation has been provided for this first group of families and work is ongoing to sustain them in their new tenancies. The remaining families will be moved during the course of the project which is scheduled for completion by end October 2015.

5.14.9 The Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS) was extended nationally in 2013 and is now operational nationwide. PASS will assist housing authorities to report on the dynamics of homelessness as it is addressed and 2014 will be the first year for which PASS will produce composite national data.

5.14.10 It is critical to ascertain the level of homelessness across the country and to provide a detailed breakdown of this cohort. PASS should be able to facilitate this data return. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Team will review the data provided by lead housing authorities on the number of homeless households as well as the data on the indicators. In its quarterly progress reports to the Cabinet Committee, the Implementation Team will provide details of appropriate data.

#### *Indicators*

5.14.11 A set of indicators is being used to demonstrate the dynamics of homelessness as it is addressed. These indicators will give a clearer picture of homelessness in Ireland: the rate of entry, duration and exits, together with the type and nature of accommodation. The indicators publicised at the launch of the Homelessness Policy Statement are:

1. Number of new presentations on a daily basis
2. Number of persons in emergency accommodation for longer than 6 months
3. Number of persons leaving emergency accommodation
4. Occupancy rate in emergency accommodation
5. Number of persons moving on into independent living with support
6. Number of persons moving on into independent living without support
7. Number of persons sleeping rough voluntarily and involuntarily.

5.14.12 The new delegated funding arrangements provide for overall homelessness funding allocations to be aligned to specific categories of expenditure to reflect housing-led approaches and to ensure that prevention, sustainment and resettlement are the underlying imperatives in service delivery.

5.14.13 Performance reports have been incorporated within the new arrangements and these have been designed so as to facilitate the lead housing authority providing details about the actions being taken in addressing homelessness in the region, including the actions being taken to implement the housing-led approach and to meet the target for ending long-term homelessness, and to provide details on the indicators.

5.14.14 A revised performance reporting template incorporates the new interpretation on the indicators as agreed and discussed at the joint meeting of the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee meeting held on

3 December 2013 and as recommended by the Homelessness Oversight Group. This template will issue with the 2014 funding protocol arrangements to the 9 lead housing authorities.

5.14.15 A further data workshop on performance reports will be convened when the first set of performance reports using the new template are received from the lead housing authorities. The purpose of this workshop will be to ensure that there are no further interpretational issues arising and to recommend further reporting timelines, who should get the data, who is responsible for responding to the indicators as well as deciding on whether any further changes to the reporting template are required.

5.14.16 At a data workshop held in early April 2014, it was agreed that establishing a baseline figure for homelessness in Ireland should be progressed with a view to implementing a survey type methodology that would provide such a baseline figure. A report on the proposed approach will be submitted to the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee at their May meeting.

5.14.17 Based on the data available from PASS, other useful indicators of outcome may be identified, including health outcomes. The reporting capacity in PASS to support care and case management needs to be investigated with a view to such information being captured.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
52	We will issue the new performance reporting template with the 2014 funding protocol arrangements to the 9 lead housing authorities	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities
53	We will host a data workshop on performance reports following receipt of the first set of reports using the new template with a view to enhancing the reporting arrangements.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
54	We will provide reports on the numbers of homeless households in each region.	Quarterly in 2014, 2015 and 2016	Local Authorities (Lead), DECLG,
55	We will review the data provided by lead housing authorities on the number of homeless households as well as the data on the indicators and we will provide details of appropriate data on homelessness.	Quarterly in 2014, 2015 and 2016	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
56	We will continue the national implementation of PASS and we will identify other useful indicators of outcome	Ongoing in 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG,



	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
57	We will ensure that the PASS System is being implemented and operating effectively in each region.	Ongoing	Local Authorities (Lead)
58	We will investigate the reporting capacity in PASS to support care and case management with a view to such information being captured	Q3 2014	HSE (Lead), DCC
59	We will implement a survey type methodology that will provide a baseline figure for homelessness in Ireland.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities.

## 5.15 Value for Money

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that in the longer term consideration be given by the Homelessness Policy Implementation Unit to developing a comprehensive model to express the full cost of provision of accommodation and services to homeless persons to support the assessment of value for money. (Data, pg 21)*

5.15.1 A focused policy assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Public Spending Code. That Code contains the comprehensive set of expenditure appraisal, Value for Money requirements and related guidance covering all public expenditure. It is designed to ensure that the State gets the best possible value for the resources at its disposal. The requirements in the Code are based on employing good practices at all stages of the expenditure life cycle. This assessment will address the specific issues of policy configuration, value for money and delivery within the homeless sector. The provisions of the assessment will also provide for an evaluation of cross cutting issues which are relevant to more than one Department - this is particularly relevant given that funding and services for the homeless sector are delivered through a range of Departments and agencies. The assessment will also have regard to expenditure review principles as well as the approach adopted in value for money studies. The proposed model will be put in place in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
60	We will put in place a model to express the full cost of provision of accommodation and related services to homeless persons in consultation with relevant stakeholders and having regard to the outcome of a focused policy assessment in accordance with the provisions of the Public Spending Code.	Q4 2016	DECLG (Lead), DPER, HSE, DSP, DCC, Local Authorities.

## 5.16 Advocacy and Prevention

**HOG Recommendation:** *Advocacy and the provision of information appear to offer a significant opportunity to prevent individuals becoming homeless. We would welcome the extension of funding available under Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 to advocacy and information services. (Additional Measures, pg 23)*

5.16.1 Prevention measures are critical and essential to ensure that all individuals do not become homeless. The provision of information and advocacy is key in facilitating equality of access to appropriate housing and can be a significant support in the maintenance of tenancies and prevention of homelessness. In the 2014 Section 10 funding arrangements, housing authorities have been encouraged to have a greater focus on prevention services in 2014.

5.16.2 A number of organisations provide advocacy and information services to homeless households or those at risk of homelessness. Some of these organisations already receive Section 10 funding from housing authorities for services they provide, most notably in the Dublin region.

5.16.3 The *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016* contains a commitment to develop specific housing advice centres in each local authority area. The purpose of these centres is to ensure that information and advocacy services are delivered in an integrated manner and are accessible for people with disabilities. As part of the development process for these centres, it is recommended that there be a strong focus on supporting tenancies, to include a framework to assist households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

5.16.4 Cork City Council under the aegis of the local Housing and Disability Steering Group has established a Task Group to develop the implementation of a pilot advice centre. The Task Group is chaired by Focus Ireland who is also represented on the Steering Group. Agencies such as Disability Federation of Ireland, Citizens Information Board and the Advocacy Service of Ireland have been invited to participate on the Task Group. The Group will undertake initial work on a mapping framework which will assist in determining what a housing advice centre should be, including:

- the type of information which should be available in order for an individual to make an informed decision;
- whether the information is already available and where;
- compiling all relevant information; and
- ensuring that the information is available in accessible formats.

5.16.5 The specific needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness will be kept under review in the context of the work being undertaken by the Cork City Council Task Group.

5.16.6 The escalating number of families presenting as homeless in Dublin has necessitated an immediate focus on and concerted effort in preventing homelessness.

5.16.7 DCC on behalf of the 4 Dublin local authorities is instituting a major public awareness campaign aimed at private renters and landlords which will focus on tenant rights and homeless prevention.

5.16.8 DCC has convened a working group of key players and agencies to develop and deliver a Dublin region wide public awareness campaign targeting households in the private rented sector who may be at risk of homelessness, specifically families with children. The planned process involves a number of statutory and non-statutory agencies including Threshold, Focus Ireland, Dublin Simon and the Citizens Information Board as well as the PRTB, DECLG and DSP. Threshold is being given a clear role in dealing with tenants experiencing particular difficulties with their tenancies.

5.16.9 Full details of the campaign and the specified suite of service responses will be agreed shortly with the activation of the campaign and the reconfigured service response due to commence in early May 2014.

5.16.10 The campaign and service response being planned for Dublin offers the basis of a campaign that could be scaled up and rolled-out nationally.

5.16.11 The use of the Family Resource Centre network as another locus for the dissemination of tenants' rights information will be explored as a further prevention measure.

5.16.12 In order to ensure that young people leaving care do not experience homelessness, a protocol on meeting the housing and support needs of young people leaving care is under development. This protocol is about managing young people leaving care and putting in place appropriate arrangements to facilitate this. The key stakeholders involved in formulating the protocol are Tusla, housing authorities, DCYA and DECLG.

5.16.13 Section 10 funding is delegated to lead housing authorities across 9 regions and the approach being adopted by authorities in 2014 with respect to funding prevention services will be analysed. This will inform whether there is a need to further encourage or instruct housing authorities to fund prevention services including advocacy and information services from 2015 onwards.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
61	We will ensure that in the development of pilot local authority housing advice centres, there is a strong focus on supporting households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	Q4 2014	Housing Agency and Local Authorities (Lead), DECLG.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
62	We will launch a prevention campaign to assist in stemming the flow of individuals and families becoming homeless.	Q2 2014	DCC (Lead), DSP, DECLG, NGOs
63	We will examine the outcomes from the DCC prevention campaign with a view to developing a campaign to be rolled-out nationally.	Q4 2014	DCC and DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
64	We will finalise the protocol arrangements for meeting the housing and support needs of young people leaving care.	Q3 2014	Tusla (Lead), DCYA, DECLG and Local Authorities
65	We will analyse prevention initiatives and approaches across the 9 homeless regions as evidenced in the 2014 homelessness expenditure programmes for each region with a view to considering additional actions in relation to prevention services including advocacy and information services.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities

## 5.17 Homelessness Action Teams and Related Structures

**HOG Recommendation:** We recommend that Homeless Action Teams be implemented in all areas as a matter of urgency. This approach seems to enhance significantly the delivery of services and the prospect of finding solutions to challenging issues and cases. (Additional Measures, pg 23)

5.17.1 Structures are already in place across the 9 homeless regions to deliver homeless services. The regional approach is considered more appropriate as it helps to bring a more strategic perspective to bear on action to address homelessness, including avoidance of over-concentration of homelessness services in certain centres and promoting appropriate regional availability of services, consistent with need.

### *Homeless Statutory Management Groups*

5.17.2 The management groups were given a statutory footing in accordance with Sections 38 and 39 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. There are 9 statutory management groups to cover the 9 homeless regions and each region is headed up by a lead housing authority, these are as follows:

Region	Lead Housing Authority	Housing Authorities in the Region
Dublin	Dublin City Council	Dublin City Council
		Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
		Fingal County Council
		South Dublin County Council
South East	Waterford City Council	Waterford City Council
		Waterford County Council
		Tipperary S.R. County Council
		Kilkenny County Council
		Wexford County Council
		Carlow County Council
North East	Louth County Council	Louth County Council
		Cavan County Council
		Monaghan County Council
South West	Cork City Council	Cork City Council
		Cork County Council
		Kerry County Council
Mid West	Limerick City Council	Limerick City Council
		Limerick County Council
		Clare County Council
		Tipperary N.R. County Council
West	Galway City Council	Galway City Council
		Galway County Council
		Mayo County Council
		Roscommon County Council

Region	Lead Housing Authority	Housing Authorities in the Region
Mid East	Kildare County Council	Kildare County Council
		Meath County Council
		Wicklow County Council
Midlands	Westmeath County Council	Westmeath County Council
		Laois County Council
		Longford County Council
		Offaly County Council
North West	Sligo County Council	Sligo County Council
		Donegal County Council
		Leitrim County Council

5.17.3 Since 2013 arrangements have been put in place providing for the delegation of Section 10 homelessness funding to the lead housing authority in each of the 9 regions. Essentially, the lead housing authority is responsible for managing the regions' relationship with DECLG and the Minister for Housing and Planning with respect to funding of accommodation and related services in the region. The regional approach is considered more appropriate as it helps to bring a more strategic perspective to bear on action to address homelessness, including avoidance of over-concentration of homelessness services in certain centres and promoting appropriate regional availability of services, consistent with need.

5.17.4 Protocols are put in place to facilitate these arrangements. Under these arrangements responsibility for the rigorous assessment, appraisal and decision making in relation to proposals and funding of particular homeless services, within the available allocations, rests with the statutory management groups led by the lead housing authority in each of the 9 regions. The Directors of Housing Services from each of the housing authorities in the region as well as the regional HSE representative comprise the statutory management group.

#### *Regional Homelessness Consultative Fora*

5.17.5 In accordance with Section 38 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, statutory homelessness consultative fora were established in each region. These fora include representatives of housing authorities, the HSE, DSP, Tusla, other relevant statutory bodies and voluntary organisations working in homelessness in the region including organisations or service providers working with victims of domestic violence, as appropriate. These fora provide a platform for the various stakeholders to have input into the organisation of local services and the development of regional homelessness action plans.

#### *Homelessness Action Teams*

5.17.6 Homelessness action teams have been established across the 9 homeless regions. The protocols governing the delegation of Section 10 funding emphasises the importance of such structures. These homelessness action teams comprise the local, decision making expertise available to people who are homeless in the specific locality and sector and includes health, housing, temporary accommodation and addiction professionals

as well as the professionals providing the emergency, transitional or long-term residential accommodation. Any issues relating to the effective working of the homelessness action teams should be resolved within the existing structures.

5.17.7 The practical arrangements concerning the operational aspects of the statutory management groups, homelessness consultative fora and homelessness action teams are being monitored by DECLG in the context of the Section 10 Performance Reports.

5.17.8 As noted in the introductory part of this plan, regional Homelessness Action Plans have already been adopted across the 9 homeless regions and these will be reviewed in light of the actions being taken in this plan. In addition, previous actions identified in the *2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan* will also be reviewed. Further actions may need to be specified arising from these reviews.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
66	We will ensure that homelessness action teams are established in each region, where they do not exist.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), HSE
67	We will ensure that all homelessness action teams adopt a care and case management approach and their remit would extend to all people accessing homeless services.	Ongoing	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), HSE
68	We will review regional Homelessness Action Plans in light of the actions being taken in this plan and identify further actions arising.	Q3 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
69	We will review the <i>2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan</i> and identify further actions arising.	Q2 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, HSE and other stakeholders



## 5.18 Domestic Violence Refuges

**HOG Recommendation:** *We note that Domestic Violence refuges are included in the funding and reporting by Local Authorities. This situation appears to have arisen historically because the Department of the Environment has supported the provision of accommodation, while the health services provided support for the service element. Accordingly, a distinct funding stream has not existed for the provision of accommodation to persons in need consequent to issues relating to domestic violence. It appears to us that the refuges are primarily concerned with the provision of a service to a specific population - those suffering from or at risk of domestic violence - who may also become homeless temporarily as a consequence. We are strongly of the view that such refuges are not homeless emergency accommodation and would prefer to see both a discrete funding stream and separate reporting for the provision of State support to the accommodation needs of persons experiencing domestic violence. This would seem to appropriately reside within the scope of the recently established Child and Family Agency (CFA). We recommend therefore that existing funding arrangements for the provision of refuge accommodation and services would be transferred to the Child and Family Agency. (Additional Measures, pg. 23).*

5.18.1 As part of the 2014 funding arrangements, leading housing authorities will identify in their financial reports, the amount of money being provided to domestic violence refuges in each of the 9 regions. Service level agreements involving refuge service providers, the lead housing authority and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency will assist in clarifying the roles of the key stakeholders as well as the funding arrangements.

5.18.2 In notifying housing authorities of the 2014 provisional homeless funding allocations, the Minister for Housing and Planning sought to encourage them to target their homelessness spending on certain categories of expenditure and indicative national targets were identified to guide authorities in framing their homeless budgets. A national expenditure target of 4.4% (or €2.2 million) was identified for domestic violence refuges in 2014.

5.18.3 The implementation of this recommendation will necessitate discussions and close liaison with the Child and Family Agency. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as well as the Department of Children and Youth Affairs will also need to be involved in this process. Such discussions should take place as part of the 2015 Estimates process which is expected to commence in mid-2014.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
70	During the 2015 Estimates process, we will engage with D/PER, Tusla and DCYA on the transfer of relevant funding to Tusla in respect of refuge accommodation and related services.	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), DCYA, Tusla, DPER

## 5.19 Institutional Settings/Evictions

**HOG Recommendation:** *Housing providers and social support services do more to prevent homelessness among vulnerable persons who are exiting institutional settings (especially prisons and care institutions) or who are at risk of eviction from current housing. (Overall Findings, pg 5, 13)*

5.19.1 The prevention of homelessness for individuals leaving childcare, hospital and prison services along with persons homeless or at risk of homelessness due to anti-social behaviour or non-payment of rent must be a key focus within the plan. Having appropriate and effective discharge protocols and policies in place which identify housing needs and supports is critical. The imperative should be that no person is discharged into homelessness from the care of the State.

5.19.2 The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is currently preparing legislation to provide a statutory basis for the provision of aftercare plans with respect to children leaving care. Tusla, the new Child and Family Agency also has a key role in this regard. A draft aftercare protocol involving Tusla and housing authorities was prepared in consultation with housing authorities, DECLG and DCYA. That protocol is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. This will set in train the administrative procedures to deal with young people leaving care and to ensure that such young people do not end up becoming homeless.

5.19.3 In relation to the discharge of convicted sex offenders from the prison services, arrangements are in place to manage these individuals in the community. The national SORAM Office (Sex Offenders Risk Assessment and Management) supported by the National SORAM Committee and local SORAM committees throughout the country is used for this purpose. Providing accommodation for convicted sex offenders is a major issue in managing offenders in the community. The strengthening of the existing arrangements and providing for appropriate liaison with housing authorities to ensure that convicted sex offenders, eligible for social housing do not become homeless is considered necessary. The assignment/designation of a Sex Offender Liaison Officer within each of the 9 homeless regions would ensure that accommodation needs for this cohort are dealt with appropriately. It is envisaged that the SORAM local committees are already represented on the regional homelessness consultative fora. It is considered essential that housing authorities are represented on the National SORAM Committee and that a nominee from the Dublin housing authorities is appointed to the national SORAM Office to work with the co-located team.

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
71	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively in line with new national Integrated Discharge Policies for homeless people being discharged from acute hospitals and mental health facilities	Q4 2014	HSE (Lead)
72	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for young persons leaving care/aftercare facilities	Ongoing	Tusla (Lead)
73	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for people being released from prisons or on temporary release.	Ongoing	Prison Services (Lead)
74	We will ensure that the accommodation arrangements for convicted sex offenders is strengthened by providing: a designated Sex Offender Liaison Officer within each of the 9 homeless regions; a representative from the housing authorities on the National SORAM Committee; and by appointing a nominee from the Dublin housing authorities to the national SORAM Office to work with the co-located team.	Q3 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), DJE, Prison Services
75	We will ensure that local authorities and AHBs review their existing policies governing evictions from non-payment of rent and anti-social behaviour.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, AHBs,

## 5.20 Funding/Budgetary Data

**HOG Recommendation:** *We recommend that the budgeted State funding for the sector, from the Department of Environment, Department of Health, Department of Social Protection and Local Authorities, be maintained at the 2013 level for the three years of the transition plan to 2016. (Finances, pg 19)*

**HOG Recommendation:** *We suggest that budgetary data for the following year be provided to the participants in the sector –State Agencies and Non-Government organisations - in the final quarter of each year with, if necessary, an identified contingent amount. (Finances, pg 17)*

5.20.1 The Homeless Oversight Group's view is that the 2016 objectives can be achieved within the existing envelope of resources. The Homelessness Policy Implementation Team consider that this will be particularly challenging in the current climate where numbers presenting as homeless have increased significantly in the period to April 2014. Feedback from the NGO sector would seem to indicate that they are also being challenged by the level of funding available and they have indicated that they are now running services at a loss due to reductions in grant funding over the last number of years and a very sharp decline in voluntary donations from the public in recent months.

5.20.2 There are funding issues concerning the provision of social housing generally and these are best dealt with in the forthcoming Social Housing Strategy. There are funding issues specific to this plan with respect to providing the accommodation for homeless households and these are discussed below.

5.20.3 Accommodation costs for low income families is primarily sourced from DECLG/DSP where such families are on rent supplement or from DECLG/local authorities where such families are homeless. The Rent Supplement Scheme was intended as a short term income support but in reality it has become a housing support. The implementation of the Housing Assistance Payment, which will transfer responsibility for rent supplement recipients with a housing need from DSP to the local authorities on a phased basis will address this issue in the longer term.

### *Department of Social Protection*

5.20.4 The DSP's role with regard to persons who are homeless is mainly income maintenance and support. Under the social welfare system, homeless people have entitlements to the full range of social welfare schemes, including associated supplements such as rent supplement and Exceptional Needs Payments, subject to the normal qualifying conditions. Social welfare payments to those who are homeless represent a small amount of the overall DSP programme expenditure. Programme expenditure is approved by Government in the context of the annual budgetary process. The amount provided for the Rent Supplement Scheme in 2014 is €344.1 million which funds approximately 78,000 rent supplement recipients.

5.20.5 It should also be noted that Government has approved that funding will be provided to local authorities to cover the costs of accommodating Housing Assistance Payment claimants by way of a funding transfer, in the first instance, of resources from the DSP's Rent Supplement Scheme to the DECLG in so far as the expenditure relates to persons transferring from rent supplement having regard to the necessity to ensure that sufficient funding is available for the ongoing expenditure for the Rent Supplement Scheme and the planned phased introduction of Housing Assistance Payment.

*Health Service Executive*

5.20.6 Funding of approximately €30 million is being provided in 2014 and this has been allocated to the HSE regions as follows:

<b>Region</b>	<b>2014 Allocation</b>	<b>Local Authorities in the Region</b>
HSE Dublin Mid Leinster	€10 million	Westmeath County Council, Laois County Council, Longford County Council, Offaly County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dublin City Council,
HSE Dublin North East	€6.9 million	Louth County Council, Cavan County Council, Monaghan County Council, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council,
HSE South	€5.8 million	Waterford City Council, Waterford County Council, Tipperary S.R. County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Wexford County Council, Carlow County Council, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Kerry County Council.
HSE West	€7 million	Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council, Clare County Council, Tipperary N.R. County Council, Galway City Council, Galway County Council, Mayo County Council, Roscommon County Council, Sligo County Council, Donegal County Council, Leitrim County Council.
<b>Total</b>	<b>€29.7 million</b>	

*Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government*

5.20.7 Funding of €45 million is being provided in 2014 and this has been provisionally allocated to the 9 lead housing authorities for homeless accommodation and related services and details are as follows:

<b>Region</b>	<b>2014 Allocation</b>	<b>Local (Housing) Authorities in the Region</b>
Dublin	€31,322,223	Dublin City Council (Lead), Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council
South East	€1,787,469	Waterford City Council (Lead), Waterford County Council, Tipperary S.R. County Council, Kilkenny County Council, Wexford County Council, Carlow County Council
North East	€879,963	Louth County Council (Lead), Cavan County Council, Monaghan County Council
South West	€4,272,197	Cork City Council (Lead), Cork County Council, Kerry County Council
Mid West	€3,399,336	Limerick City Council (Lead), Limerick County Council, Clare County Council, Tipperary N.R. County Council
West	€1,528,951	Galway City Council (Lead), Galway County Council, Mayo County Council, Roscommon County Council
Mid East	€811,275	Kildare County Council (Lead), Meath County Council, Wicklow County Council
Midlands	€649,707	Westmeath County Council (Lead), Laois County Council, Longford County Council, Offaly County Council
North West	€348,879	Sligo County Council (Lead), Donegal County Council, Leitrim County Council
<b>Total</b>	<b>€45,000,000</b>	

5.20.8 Lead housing authorities through their statutory management groups have identified their 2014 homeless programme expenditure. Protocol arrangements will be concluded with these authorities to complete the formal allocation process within the coming weeks.

5.20.9 Under the delegated funding arrangements, responsibility for rigorous assessment, appraisal and decision making in relation to proposals and funding of particular services within the available allocations rests with the statutory management group in each region led by the lead housing authority. Service level agreements for all services, in receipt of Section 10 funding, should be put in place by the housing authorities in consultation with the HSE, the service providers and any other stakeholders. These agreements should be updated on a regular basis to ensure that they reflect maximum efficiency and value for money.

5.20.10 In excess of €10 million is provided through Section 10 homelessness budgets to fund long-term supported accommodation. This accommodation is provided by housing authorities, Approved Housing Bodies or homeless service providers where support is provided onsite on a permanent or semi-permanent basis. The properties are owned and operated by these groups and the costs of acquiring some of these properties may have been funded through State investment programmes.

5.20.11 It may be argued that the residents in this type of accommodation are not deemed "homeless" because they are enjoying a "tenancy"; they are obliged to pay differential rent; their long-term housing need has been met; and they are housed in a form of social housing and as such they are no longer on the housing waiting list. While it is acknowledged that these residents may have high support needs and are at risk of homelessness, they are very different to those residents in other homeless accommodation whose housing need has not been met and who are equally at risk of homelessness. Support costs may be associated with this type of accommodation for some or all of the residents/tenants.

5.20.12 There is a need to investigate the costs associated with this type of accommodation and to put in place arrangements for funding the appropriate support and other costs involved.

#### *Housing Authorities*

5.20.13 Section 10 funding provided by DECLG may not exceed 90% of local authority expenditure on accommodation for homeless persons. Accordingly, in addition to the €45 million in Section 10 funding provided by DECLG, local authorities will provide additional Section 10 funding of at least €5 million from their own resources in 2014.

5.20.14 Dublin City Council is currently incurring significant unforeseen costs accommodating homeless families in private emergency accommodation. While every effort is being made to secure more suitable accommodation, unfortunately the shortage of local authority housing and private rental properties in the Dublin region is exacerbating the situation. Efforts are being made to stem the flow of families becoming homeless. At 29 April 2014 a total of 184 households with child dependents were residing in 16 commercial hotels in Dublin. The full year estimate in 2014 for hotel use in Dublin is expected to be over €4 million. Additional families will inevitably present as homeless during the course of 2014 and as such these emergency accommodation costs will be quite significant unless immediate intervention is taken to provide alternative housing solutions for these families. Providing additional current funding is not sustainable.

#### *Other Departments and Agencies*

5.20.15 Tusla, the new Child and Family Agency and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs provide funding towards homeless services in the context of families and other homeless having regard to their responsibilities with respect to children and families, domestic violence/refuges, youth homeless as well as aftercare. The level of this funding, and the services being funded, need to be investigated further. This will be extended to other Government Departments and agencies, as appropriate.

#### *Pooling of Resources*

5.20.16 A pooling of budgetary resources across Government Departments and agencies involved in homelessness services would not be achievable within the timeframe of this plan. However, the level and extent of this funding will be ascertained with a view to this issue being explored further.



	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
76	We will ensure that a detailed breakdown of the funding allocated by the HSE and DECLG to each region is provided to the participants in the sector	Annually	HSE and DECLG (Lead)
77	We will examine potential for a multi-annual funding stream for homelessness to support the implementation plan (demand-led in the case of DSP).	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER
78	We will ensure a multi-agency approach is adopted in the determination of funding for homelessness in the context of the annual Estimates process (demand-led in the case of DSP) and with a view to maintaining the budgeted State funding for the sector, from the DECLG, HSE, DSP (demand-led in the case of DSP) and local authorities, at the 2013 level for the three years of the transition plan to 2016.	Annually	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER and Local Authorities
	We will ensure that Service Level Agreements are in place for all services funded through Section 10 to deliver greater efficiencies, better performance, better outcomes in pursuing the objectives of a housing-led approach. (This action is a repeat of action 36 under section 5.7.)	Q4 2014	Local Authorities (Lead), HSE, DECLG
79	We will ensure that budgetary data for the following year is provided to the participants in the sector in the final quarter of each year.	Annually	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER
80	We will investigate the level of funding as well as the details of the services being funded by Tusla, DCYA and other Government Departments and agencies.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), key stakeholders

## 6. Summary of Actions

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
1	We will provide accommodation for rough sleepers as quickly as possible pending the tendering and delivery of the <i>Housing First</i> service in Dublin.	Q2 and Q3 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG
2	We will support the planned establishment of a <i>Housing First</i> service in Dublin for the rough sleeping cohort with a view to delivering a minimum of 100 households to independent living with support over the period to 2016.	commencing in Q3 2014 and to end in Q4 2016	DCC (Lead), DECLG
3	We will identify the number of rough sleepers outside of Dublin, put in place arrangements to house these persons, provide the appropriate supports, and the <i>Housing First</i> model will be considered in this context.	Q2 and Q3 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), DCC, Lead Local Authorities
4	We will engage with the Department of Justice and Equality and its agencies on the cohort of rough sleepers who have residency issues.	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), DJE, DSP, DCC
5	We will put in place arrangements to provide accommodation for these persons, as appropriate in consultation with key stakeholders	Q2 and Q3 2014	DCC and Local Authorities (Lead), DJE, DSP, DECLG
6	We will establish an inventory of "voids" across all local authority areas so as to identify all dwellings that are currently without a tenant; and identify other properties that may have been previously purchased / acquired for social housing purposes but not yet brought into use.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
7	We will bring more than 1,950 long-term vacant local authority housing units back into use; and allocate these to homeless households and other vulnerable groups in accordance with the appropriate priority.	Q4 2014 (1,800 units) Q2 2015 (150)	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
8	We will refurbish and retrofit some of the 2,000 local authority apartments and flats in Dublin, Cork and Limerick; in the case of vacant units, once refurbished, consideration will be given to making these units available to homeless households and other vulnerable groups in accordance with the appropriate priority.	Q3 2014 to Q4 2016	DECLG and Local Authorities in Dublin, Cork and Limerick (Lead)
9	We will instruct local authorities to bring into use as a matter of urgency those vacant properties that are vacant pending development decisions/approvals and which would only require a minimum amount of work, and to let such properties on a temporary letting/emergency basis for short periods of time and licensing arrangements rather than tenancy arrangements should be pursued for this purpose.	Q2 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
10	We will undertake a further study, with a view to improving the data on vacant properties and identifying any management issues as well as financial requirements for bringing such properties into productive use.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead); Housing Agency
11	We will identify issues including financial requirements relating to re-letting of dwellings and issue appropriate directions to local authorities so as to ensure that vacant dwellings can be re-let as efficiently as possible.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities; Housing Agency
12	We will identify an appropriate approach to the future management of local authority vacant properties including a role for the Housing Agency in this regard. Ministerial Directions may also be required.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities, Housing Agency
13	We will identify as a matter of urgency appropriate vacant properties across all local authority areas to be transferred/leased or by other appropriate mechanisms such as licensing, to Approved Housing Bodies so as to ensure that such properties are brought into productive use as quickly as possible.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead); AHBs

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
14	We will make arrangements for the transfer or lease or licence, as appropriate of vacant properties to Approved Housing Bodies, having regard to the views of local authorities, AHBs and the Housing Finance Agency; and provide that these units are allocated to homeless households.	Q1 2015	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead); AHBs; Housing Agency, Housing Finance Agency
15	We will establish a working group involving the key stakeholders including property owners from the State and related agencies to identify potential properties including vacant properties that would be suitable for housing purposes and in State ownership across the country having regard to the terms of reference and views of the Steering Group on Property Asset Management.	Q2 2014	DECLG and OPW (Lead), HSE, Department of Defence, other State agencies, local authorities
16	We will identify the various issues relating to the acquisition or otherwise of potential State properties including vacant properties and put in place arrangements to facilitate the timely purchase/lease or otherwise of suitable and available properties.	Q3 2014	DECLG and OPW (Lead), OPW, HSE, Housing Agency, Housing Finance Agency, Local Authorities, AHBs
17	We will put in place arrangements to manage the closure of temporary emergency units in a timely fashion.	Q4 2014 to Q4 2016	DECLG (Lead); DCC, Lead Local Authorities, HSE
18	We will establish details of the 2013 allocations (including re-letting of vacant dwellings and NAMA units) to homeless households and other vulnerable groups across all local authorities including allocations by AHBs; and how these relate to the priorities afforded in the Allocations Schemes and in the nominations protocol arrangements with the AHB sector.	Q2 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead)
19	We will establish details of the proposed allocations to homeless households and other vulnerable groups by local authorities and by AHBs for the period 2014 to 2016.	Q3 2014	DECLG, Local Authorities and AHBs (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
20	We will instruct local authorities on the operation of the Allocation Schemes so as to ensure that homeless households and other vulnerable groups are allocated housing in accordance with the appropriate priority and such instruction will also deal with transfers.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead)
21	We will instruct local authorities to put in place procedures as a matter of urgency to ensure that nominations to AHB properties are in accordance with their Allocation Schemes and supplemented by nomination protocols, where necessary and appropriate; and to ensure that there are no delays in the nomination process.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead)
22	We will seek to ensure that NAMA units deemed ready and available are secured and utilised as quickly as possible, through direct leasing, if practical; and that at least 15% of units are made available to meet the needs of homeless households and other vulnerable groups.	Q3 2014	DECLG, NAMA, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)
23	We will ring fence at least 15% of the NAMA units expected to be delivered in 2014 and in 2015 for homeless households and other vulnerable groups through local authority allocations.	2014 and 2015	DECLG, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)
24	We will review previously rejected NAMA units across the country in consultation with local authorities and reconsider if such units could be deemed suitable for a private and social housing mix, with a focus on meeting homeless needs.	Ongoing	DECLG, NAMA, Local Authorities and Housing Agency (Lead)
25	We will continue engagement with financial institutions with a view to securing suitable properties for homeless and other social housing households.	Ongoing	DCC (Lead); DECLG
26	We will examine the scope for a targeted pilot scheme to support homeless households in Dublin to move to other parts of the country and to provide for the resettlement of other rural households who present to homeless services in Dublin	Q3 2015	DECLG (Lead), DCC, HSE, DSP, Housing Agency

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
27	We will continue to adopt a flexible approach in the use of discretionary powers including in relation to CAS funded accommodation in facilitating homeless households.	Ongoing	DSP (Lead)
28	We will ensure that the Rent Supplement Initiative has a specific focus on targeting homeless families as well as single households in Dublin including through the development and dissemination of information to service providers.	Q2 2014	NGOs and DCC (Lead), DSP
29	We will transfer all CAS funded rent supplement tenancies to the Rental Accommodation Scheme as soon as possible and any outstanding issues to facilitate this should be resolved as a matter of urgency.	Q3 2014	DECLG and DSP (Lead), Local Authorities
30	We will examine scope to utilise Section 10 funding on a pilot basis to provide for targeted higher rent levels for homeless families under the Rent Supplement Initiative.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, DSP
31	We will ensure that tenants who are at risk of homelessness and who wish to have rent supplement paid directly to the landlord will be facilitated by DSP.	Immediately, where it is not already in place	DSP (Lead)
32	We will recirculate guidance reminding front line staff of the discretionary powers available to support the most vulnerable and as part of the DCC prevention campaign.	Q2 2014	DSP (Lead)
33	We will undertake a review of the role of local authority social workers funded by DECLG with a view to expanding the role to address homelessness issues.	Q1 2015	National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (Lead) reporting to DECLG
34	We will ensure that the existing structures are maximised so as to ensure full engagement with all stakeholders to secure agreement to effect the necessary change required and to monitor and support progress during the transition period by collecting data in relation to the meetings of the various structures.	Ongoing	DECLG (Lead), HSE, Lead Local Authorities

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
35	We will ensure that an integrated model of service provision for homeless services is developed and implemented successfully across all areas with the focus clearly on resettling and sustaining persons in secure long-term accommodation.	Ongoing	Local Authorities (Lead), HSE,
36	We will ensure that Service Level Agreements are in place for all services funded through Section 10 to deliver greater efficiencies, better performance, better outcomes in pursuing the objectives of a housing-led approach.	Q4 2014	Local Authorities (Lead), HSE, DECLG
37	We will continue to ensure that the recommendations of the Working Group Report on Rehabilitation on housing for recovering drug misusers, including homeless drug misusers are implemented appropriately.	Ongoing	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, HSE
38	We will continue to develop and adequately resource our CMHTs to ensure that the needs of homeless persons and/or those at risk of homelessness are being adequately met across all Integrated Service Areas (ISAs).	Ongoing	HSE (Lead), D/Health, CMHTs.
39	We will ensure that each Homelessness Action Team (HATs) will have access to and is being supported by a member of the CMHT.	Q4 2014	HSE (Lead), HATs, CMHTs.
40	We will endeavour to provide a dedicated Community Mental Health Nurse in each ISA area to support the needs of homeless persons and/or persons at risk of homelessness.	Q4 2015	HSE (Lead)
41	We will establish a working group to implement this recommendation and members of the group will be those detailed in the recommendation above.	Q3 2014 [for reporting to the Minister for Housing and Planning]	Housing Agency (Lead)
42	We will implement the working group's report and recommendations	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Housing Agency, Local Authorities

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
43	We will establish a pilot Social Housing Rental Service in the Dublin region with an initial focus on homeless households and this will be part of Dublin's overall pilot Housing Assistance Payment project.	Q4 2014	DCC (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP
44	We will review the progress with the pilot with a view to having similar arrangements in other major urban centres.	Q4 2015	DCC (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP, Local Authorities
45	We will put in place a regional approach to sourcing accommodation in light of discussions at the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee and other relevant developments.	Q4 2015	Local Authorities (Lead); NGOs; DECLG; DSP
46	We will prepare a schedule of hostels and facilities where generic medical cards are in place.	Q2 2014	HSE (Lead)
47	We will ensure that arrangements are in place and working effectively to ensure homeless persons have immediate access to primary care services where required.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead)
48	We will ensure that homeless persons without 'legal status' e.g. not habitually resident, have access to emergency medical care where required.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead), D/Health
49	We will continue to support the Safetynet initiative for homeless people.	Ongoing	HSE (Lead)
50	We will engage with the HFA and AHBs on the implementation of this recommendation.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead)
51	We will develop and implement a specific HAP pilot targeted at homeless households in the Dublin area.	Q4 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG, DSP
52	We will issue the new performance reporting template with the 2014 funding protocol arrangements to the 9 lead housing authorities	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead); Local Authorities
53	We will host a data workshop on performance reports following receipt of the first set of reports using the new template with a view to enhancing the reporting arrangements.	Q2 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities



	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
54	We will provide reports on the numbers of homeless households in each region.	Quarterly in 2014, 2015 and 2016	Local Authorities (Lead), DECLG,
55	We will review the data provided by lead housing authorities on the number of homeless households as well as the data on the indicators and we will provide details of appropriate data on homelessness.	Quarterly in 2014, 2015 and 2016	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
56	We will continue the national implementation of PASS and we will identify other useful indicators of outcome	Ongoing in 2014	DCC (Lead), DECLG,
57	We will ensure that the PASS System is being implemented and operating effectively in each region.	Ongoing	Local Authorities (Lead)
58	We will investigate the reporting capacity in PASS to support care and case management with a view to such information being captured	Q3 2014	HSE (Lead), DCC
59	We will implement a survey type methodology that will provide a baseline figure for homelessness in Ireland.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities.
60	We will put in place a model to express the full cost of provision of accommodation and related services to homeless persons in consultation with relevant stakeholders and having regard to the outcome of a focused policy assessment in accordance with the provisions of the Public Spending Code.	Q4 2016	DECLG (Lead), DPER, HSE, DSP, DCC, Local Authorities.
61	We will ensure that in the development of pilot local authority housing advice centres, there is a strong focus on supporting households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	Q4 2014	Housing Agency and Local Authorities (Lead), DECLG.
62	We will launch a prevention campaign to assist in stemming the flow of individuals and families becoming homeless.	Q2 2014	DCC (Lead), DSP, DECLG, NGOs
63	We will examine the outcomes from the DCC prevention campaign with a view to developing a campaign to be rolled-out nationally.	Q4 2014	DCC and DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
64	We will finalise the protocol arrangements for meeting the housing and support needs of young people leaving care.	Q3 2014	Tusla (Lead), DCYA, DECLG and Local Authorities
65	We will analyse prevention initiatives and approaches across the 9 homeless regions as evidenced in the 2014 homelessness expenditure programmes for each region with a view to considering additional actions in relation to prevention services including advocacy and information services.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
66	We will ensure that homelessness action teams are established in each region, where they do not exist.	Q4 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), HSE
67	We will ensure that all homelessness action teams adopt a care and case management approach and their remit would extend to all people accessing homeless services.	Ongoing	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), HSE
68	We will review regional Homelessness Action Plans in light of the actions being taken in this plan and identify further actions arising.	Q3 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities
69	We will review the <i>2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan</i> and identify further actions arising.	Q2 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, HSE and other stakeholders
70	During the 2015 Estimates process, we will engage with D/PER, Tusla and DCYA on the transfer of relevant funding to Tusla in respect of refuge accommodation and related services.	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), DCYA, Tusla, DPER
71	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively in line with new national Integrated Discharge Policies for homeless people being discharged from acute hospitals and mental health facilities	Q4 2014	HSE (Lead)
72	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for young persons leaving care/aftercare facilities	Ongoing	Tusla (Lead)

	<b>Actions necessary for delivery</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Agency</b>
73	We will ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for people being released from prisons or on temporary release.	Ongoing	Prison Services (Lead)
74	We will ensure that the accommodation arrangements for convicted sex offenders is strengthened by providing: a designated Sex Offender Liaison Officer within each of the 9 homeless regions; a representative from the housing authorities on the National SORAM Committee; and by appointing a nominee from the Dublin housing authorities to the national SORAM Office to work with the co-located team.	Q3 2014	DECLG and Local Authorities (Lead), DJE, Prison Services
75	We will ensure that local authorities and AHBs review their existing policies governing evictions from non-payment of rent and anti-social behaviour.	Q1 2015	DECLG (Lead), Local Authorities, AHBs,
76	We will ensure that a detailed breakdown of the funding allocated by the HSE and DECLG to each region is provided to the participants in the sector	Annually	HSE and DECLG (Lead)
77	We will examine potential for a multi-annual funding stream for homelessness to support the implementation plan (demand-led in the case of DSP).	Q3 2014	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER
78	We will ensure a multi-agency approach is adopted in the determination of funding for homelessness in the context of the annual Estimates process (demand-led in the case of DSP) and with a view to maintaining the budgeted State funding for the sector, from the DECLG, HSE, DSP (demand-led in the case of DSP) and local authorities, at the 2013 level for the three years of the transition plan to 2016.	Annually	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER and Local Authorities
79	We will ensure that budgetary data for the following year is provided to the participants in the sector in the final quarter of each year.	Annually	DECLG (Lead), HSE, DSP, DPER
80	We will investigate the level of funding as well as the details of the services being funded by Tusla, DCYA and other Government Departments and agencies.	Q4 2014	DECLG (Lead), key stakeholders

## 7. Glossary

AHB	Approved Housing Body which has approved status under Section 6(6) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992
CAS	Capital Assistance Scheme which funds housing to meet the accommodation needs of older people, people with a disability, returning emigrants or persons exiting temporary homeless accommodation
CCMA	County and City Managers' Association
CDT	Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness - this team, chaired by DECLG was set up to provide an all-of-Government response to homelessness and includes representation across policy areas including Health, Welfare and Social Protection, Finance, Prison, Probation Services and Education
CMHT	Community Mental Health Team
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CWO	Community Welfare Officer who is an employee of the Department of Social Protection
DCC	Dublin City Council
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DECLG	Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
DJE	Department of Justice and Equality
DLRCC	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
FCC	Fingal County Council
HATs	Homelessness Action Teams - these are local teams comprising the local decision making expertise available to people who are homeless in that particular locality and sector and includes health, housing, temporary accommodation and addiction professionals as well as the professionals providing the emergency, transitional or long term residential accommodation
HFA	Housing Finance Agency
HOG	Homelessness Oversight Group - a high-level three-person oversight group was established by the Minister for Housing and Planning in February 2013 for the purpose of reviewing the approach being advocated in the homelessness policy statement. The oversight group comprises three individuals from the field of business/industry, public sector and academia; these are: Mark Kennedy (Chair), Sylva Langford and Professor Tony Fahey.
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICSH	Irish Council for Social Housing

Lead Authorities	Lead authorities are those local (housing) authorities which head up each of the 9 homeless regions; details are set out on pages 61 and 63 of the plan.
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
NAMA	National Asset Management Agency
NARPSL SPV	National Asset Residential Property Services Limited Special Purpose Vehicle – a mechanism established by NAMA to address the legal complexities involved in the securing of properties and to facilitate properties being made available to local authorities and AHBs as quickly as possible.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHCC	National Homelessness Consultative Committee - a committee including representatives from the various national and local providers of homeless services allowing the NGO sector to have formal input into the development of Government policy
OPW	Office of Public Works
PASS	Pathway Accommodation and Support System is a data collection system on homelessness
PRTB	Private Residential Tenancies Board
RAS	Rental Accommodation Scheme
Regional Homelessness Consultative Fora	Established in each region under the auspices of local authorities and include representatives of voluntary and statutory homeless service providers. They provide a platform for the various stakeholders to have input into the organisation of local services and the development of regional homeless action plans.
SDCC	South Dublin County Council
Section 10	Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 provides the legislative basis for the provision of funding by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (delegated to the Minister for Housing and Planning) to local authorities for homeless accommodation and related services.
Social Impact Investing	Social Impact Investing is a new model of funding interventions aimed at tackling social problems; it finances public projects which can yield both a social and financial return for the State. Private risk capital is willing to fund these interventions up-front because the State agrees to pay only if the agreed outcomes are achieved. The risk associated with funding the interventions and the achievement of the social outcomes is therefore transferred from the State to the private investors.
Statutory Management Groups	These groups are responsible for decision making in relation to homelessness services and are led by the lead housing authority in each region
VFM	Value for Money