

# HOMELESSNESS

## IN BRAY



Profile of the problem, identification of  
service gaps and recommendations

July 2003

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## CONTRADICTIONS OF ENDURANCE

Balanced precariously  
On the knife-edge of a rock,  
The climber's endurance  
Is severely tested.  
Likewise the explorer  
Who travels to remote places  
Surviving moments of terror,  
Of deprivation,  
Of cold, hunger and fear  
When they return  
We praise them,  
Look with amazement  
At their achievements.

The man or woman  
Without a house,  
Someone to love them,  
Enough money for food and warmth,  
Is scorned -  
Blamed for their own state  
Of misery.

What kind of world is this  
That rewards deliberate tasks  
Of endurance,  
Yet ignores the daily distress  
Of those outside the mainstream,  
Struggling to stay alive  
So that someday their gifts  
May be recognised?

*Joan Jennings*

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## DEDICATION

At the request of a number of people from the town,  
this report is dedicated to the memory of Philip Lee,  
who was one of the homeless individuals included in the  
homeless count and who died in June 2003.

## HOMELESSNESS IN BRAY

*Profile of the problem, identification of service gaps and recommendations*

July 2003

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	Page 2
<b>SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION</b>	Page 4
1.1 Contents	Page 4
1.2 Acknowledgements	Page 4
<b>SECTION 2 - DEFINITIONS, RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY</b>	Page 6
2.1 Rationale for a separate homeless survey count	Page 6
2.2 Definitions	Page 7
2.3 Methodology	Page 7
2.4 Information and support	Page 9
2.5 The Questionnaire	Page 9
<b>SECTION 3 - COUNT RESULTS</b>	Page 10
3.1 Survey forms	Page 10
3.2 Number of homeless people, including children	Page 10
3.3 Typology of homeless households	Page 10
3.4 Gender	Page 10
3.5 Age	Page 11
3.6 Type of Homelessness	Page 11
3.7 Length of time Homeless	Page 12
3.8 Registered on local authority list as homeless	Page 13
3.9 Originating from Bray	Page 14
3.10 Type of accommodation before becoming homeless	Page 14
<b>SECTION 4 - A PROFILE OF THE SERVICES PRESENTLY AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS PEOPLE IN BRAY</b>	Page 16
4.1 Profile of Bray, Co Wicklow	Page 16
4.1.1 Population	Page 16
4.1.2 Employment	Page 16
4.1.3 Educational Profile	Page 16
4.1.4 Disadvantaged Women	Page 16
4.1.5 Travellers	Page 17
4.1.6 Substance Abusers	Page 17
4.2.1 Statutory Agencies	Page 17
4.2.2 Voluntary and Community Organisations and other Groups	Page 20
<b>SECTION 5 - GAPS AND DEFICIENCIES IN THE EXISTING SERVICES AND WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN BE ADDRESSED</b>	Page 23
5.1 Housing	Page 23
5.1.1 Emergency Accommodation	Page 23
5.1.2 Transitional Housing	Page 25
5.1.3 Long-term housing access	Page 27
5.2 The Community Welfare Service and Access to Private Rented Accommodation	Page 30
5.3 Support Services	Page 31
5.4 Prevention and Education	Page 34
5.5 Strategy and Finance	Page 35
<b>SECTION 6 – CONCLUSION</b>	Page 38
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	Page 39
<b>APPENDICES</b>	Page 40
1. List of contributors	Page 40
2. Survey Instructions	Page 41
3. Existing local authority scheme of lettings in Bray	Page 42
4. Survey on homelessness in Bray	Page 42

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The growth in the number of people homeless in recent years and the extent to which this growth has put pressure on existing social services to respond to sometimes complex needs has become a issue of concern in many towns and cities in Ireland.

In Bray statutory and voluntary organisations have acknowledged the serious problem that exists. However very little was known about those experiencing homelessness, their numbers, ages, gender, etc. and the main issues affecting them. In addition, although the (then) Homeless Initiative drew up a draft Action Plan for the Bray area in 2000, and later, Wicklow County Council drew up its Homeless Action Plan 2001, a meaningful strategy that addresses the full range of needs of homeless people from Bray, has not yet been implemented.

This research attempts to address these two gaps. For the first time, it sets out the full extent and profile of people homeless from Bray, using a variety of methods to ensure the most accurate findings. In addition it sets out a detailed description of the type of existing services available to homeless people in Bray; if and where there are gaps in services; and what is needed to provide a more effective service to those people who become homeless to help them settle again in the community.

### Homeless Count

The first part of the research was the undertaking of a homeless count.

The research finds that by any chosen measure, Bray has a relatively large-scale homeless problem for a town of its size. 87 households from Bray were met and verified as homeless, amounting to 119 people, including 24 children.

A high proportion, almost one third, of this group is female. There are also a high proportion of single person households, with 85% living alone.

Homeless people in Bray are using a wide variety of accommodation options. The most common is staying with friends (33%), then a hostel (29%), sleeping rough (14%), B&B (11%), a women's refuge (5%) and other options (8%) including caravan trailers.

The age profile is broad, with 21% of heads of households aged under 25, 36% aged between 26 - 40 years and 42% aged between 41 – 65 years.

The proportion of households homeless for 1 year or more is high compared to Dublin, where in Bray 72% are homeless for more than 1 year compared to 51% in Dublin.

As an ethnic group, Travellers made up a significant minority of the homeless population, with 5 households consisting of 9 adults and 10 children found to be homeless during the week.

Another significant finding is that there are a sizeable number of people from Bray homeless in Dublin. 6 households were recorded by the Homeless Agency and included in the count. This is almost certainly an underestimate considering that the Dublin based Homeless Persons Unit met with 24 households from Bray during the years 2001-2. It is clear that part of Bray's homeless problem is being exported into Dublin City rather than being addressed locally.

A majority (52%) of people homeless from Bray during the week of the count is not registered with a local authority as homeless. Of the 34 households who think they are registered with Bray Town Council, a majority (20 households or 59%) could not be verified as being on the housing list section referring to homeless people. These 20 households may be on the general housing list but this could not be verified. Obviously they should be on the homeless list if they are homeless. One of the reasons they may not be on this general list could be that they never informed the council when they became homeless.

### Recommendations to address problem

The second part of the research profiles existing services, identifies the main gaps in services and makes recommendations on how existing problems can be addressed.

Since homeless people interviewed identified accommodation as their number one priority in nearly all cases, the research examines accommodation options in some depth. Existing accommodation options are particularly limited in Bray. Allocation of local authority accommodation is never immediately available and for single homeless people, waits of five years or more are typical. The local private rented accommodation market has become very difficult to access in recent years and rent levels as well as some operational Supplementary Welfare Allowance

matters make it particularly difficult for homeless people to access.

For someone in need of emergency accommodation this leaves B&B accommodation (which is only sometimes offered) and/or referral to the privately operated, County Council funded Rathdrum Hostel or the Bray Women's Refuge if this is available and applicable. If none of these options are available or suitable then the individual/ family is offered the Homeless free phone number based in Dublin City where accommodation can sometimes be accessed.

Recommendations to address accommodation deficiencies include the provision of an emergency direct access hostel in Bray as one of the major priorities for any plan to address homelessness. In addition clear guidelines on who, when, where and for how long people who are homeless can access Bed and Breakfast accommodation should be set out and greater flexibility in the allocation of B&B accommodation considered.

There are also recommendations on increasing the capacity of the Bray Women's Refuge; the use of the property situated on the boundary of the Shanganagh site for transitional accommodation; the setting of a target by Bray Town Council on the number of homeless households that are housed from its waiting list during the period 2003-2006; the housing of 3 or 4 single homeless people in shared local authority housing; the provision of accommodation to Travellers experiencing homelessness to be addressed in conjunction with the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy; and recommendations on the administration of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance private rented accommodation sector, including greater flexibility for homeless people in the administration of deposits, the payment of higher rent levels and the use of the "Housing Access Unit".

Of course homelessness is about more than just a roof over one's head. Other needs, including addiction and mental health difficulties, need to be addressed if people are to be enabled to live more independently.

While there is not the same deficiency in the area of support services compared to accommodation, indeed there is a good existing network of support

services in Bray, they have not yet been tailored to the needs of homeless people and therefore homeless people are can be excluded.

In this area a number of recommendations are made including the rebalancing between Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council of the Outreach Settlement Worker's workload to reflect the relative levels of homelessness between Bray and the rest of the county; the East Coast Area Health Board to consider apportioning additional staffing roles to the social inclusion section within the Health Board to help co-ordinate the different organisations and staffing roles that are working to support homeless people in the region; existing mental health services explicitly identifying the needs of homeless people and the services they are using; the Community Addiction Team and the Health Board Drug and Aids Outreach Workers to liaise more directly with other homeless services, including the local authority, in developing a key worker system for homeless drug users; and any emergency hostel developed to keep in focus the need to accommodate homeless alcoholics who are one of the most excluded groups and more likely to sleep rough.

Implementation is clearly key to the effectiveness of any strategy. In particular in this case, if the consideration and work involved in previous and present strategies to address homeless (including this research) are not to be lost, then the support of both voluntary and statutory organisations is needed. To this end it is recommended that the existing Bray Homeless Forum should be re-constituted under Bray Town Council with Bray Partnership maintaining its best practice support role. In addition the Bray Homeless Forum should agree a vision for their work with measurable targets for their next three years work.

Although many of the recommendations flowing from the research are cost neutral, there are some additional funding implications. In the short term, the research finds that the main sources of funding for new services will be the Department of the Environment/ Local Authority, the Health Board and some voluntary funding-raising.

# SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Following the Cross-Departmental Review "Homelessness- An integrated strategy" of May 2000 and the Local Authority/ Health Board Homeless Action Plans, a new set of priorities and a new policy direction is developing to address the problem of homelessness in local areas. Under the guidance of Wicklow County Council, a Homeless Forum has been set up for the Wicklow local authority area.

In response to the particular circumstances in Bray,

- ▶ where much of the area's responsibility to manage and allocate housing lies with Bray Town Council rather than directly under the remit of Wicklow County Council, and
- ▶ where the greater proportion of homeless people in Wicklow are resident (because of its size, urban nature and proximity to Dublin),

a Homeless Forum for Bray, with membership from Bray Partnership, the East Coast Area Health Board (including Public Health Nurse and Environmental Health Officer), Probation and Welfare Service, Bray Partnership Citizens Information Centre, Little Bray Family Resource Centre, the INOU, Bray Town Council, Bray Local Employment Service Network, Mental Health Services, Senior Community Welfare Officer and local voluntary and community groups including Cracked Pots and the Society of St Vincent de Paul, was formed in September 2002 to agree pragmatic and practical responses to the problem of homelessness in Bray. The Forum seeks to make recommendations that are backed by research; address identified needs, will be implemented and can be financed over the longer term.

## 1.1 Contents

*This research study is in two parts.*

**In part one**, the report quantifies the numbers of people from Bray who are homeless and records their demographic profile and other information. This includes a sound 'point in time' statistical estimate of the numbers of people from Bray who are homeless during a set week (the 24th to 30th March 2003).

- ▶ Section 2 explains the methodology of the count and the rationale for undertaking a homeless

survey count rather than relying exclusively on the local authority's housing list.

- ▶ Section 3 sets out and summarises the findings of the count.

**In part two**, existing services in Bray for homeless people are profiled, gaps are identified and through the inclusion of the views of homeless people and service providers, a number of practical recommendations for improving the delivery of services, closing service gaps and reducing the incidence of homelessness are made.

- ▶ Section 4 gives a profile of the services presently available to homeless people in Bray
- ▶ Section 5 identifies the gaps and deficiencies in the existing services and ways in which these problems can be addressed

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to all those who took part in the research, including all those people who helped with the homeless count, making time to be interviewed, attending the seminar in June and commenting on different draft versions of the report. For their guidance and support I would like to thank the members of the research group, in particular Davin Roche of Bray Partnership (who conceived and co-ordinated the research process), Leonie O'Neill of the East Coast Area Health Board, Eileen Byrnes of Bray Partnership and Naomi Roche of Bray Town Council. Thank you to the Signal Arts Centre, Bray, for the cover photographs and poetry from their exhibition "No Fixed Abode". Also thanks are due to Ann Booth of CASC. However any errors or admissions are the author's.

The research project has been funded through the generous assistance of the East Coast Area Health Board, the Combat Poverty Agency and the support of the Wicklow County Development Board. The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Combat Poverty Agency or the other sponsors or funders.

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## **PART 1**

**Quantifying the numbers of people from Bray who are homeless during the week 24th to 30th March 2003 and recording their demographic profile and other information.**



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## SECTION 2 - DEFINITIONS, RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

This part of the research provides a snapshot of homelessness in Bray in the last week of March 2003. The count is based on four sources:

1. A survey of homeless people, who were met directly by a number of service providers during the week of the count, 24th to 30th March 2003
2. Information made available through the local authority on households the local authority is maintaining in emergency accommodation<sup>1</sup>
3. A separate rough sleepers count
4. A count of homeless households from Bray living in Dublin, made available by the Homeless Agency and the Homeless Persons Unit.

### 2.1 Rationale for a separate homeless survey count

All statutory and voluntary organisations working with homeless people acknowledge that there is a lack of information on the numbers of people homeless in Bray and Wicklow<sup>2</sup>.

The rationale for undertaking a separate homeless survey count using agencies working directly with homeless people in Bray, rather than depending on the local authority housing list or previous local estimates, is evident on two counts:

#### 1. Local authority administrative records on homelessness tend to be lacking in detail and precision.

As previous exercises in measuring homelessness, both locally and nationally have shown, many people who are homeless and using homeless services are not on local authorities' homeless lists while conversely many people registered on local authority homeless waiting lists are not using homeless services and have not had their homelessness verified at the time of a count.

In the four local authority areas in Dublin it is now accepted that the accuracy of the local authority

homeless list cannot be relied on to give an accurate picture of the number of homeless people in the area. As James Williams and Shirley Gorby (2002) state in *Counted In 2002: report of the assessment of homelessness in Dublin*:

*"Generally, official assessments of homelessness in Ireland have relied on administrative records held by local authorities. Such assessments generated debate based on concern at their potential to underestimate the extent of homelessness."*

In December 2002, the Department of the Environment requested a new survey count of homeless people after some discrepancies, initially identified in 1999, were found again in 2002, between the ESRI/ Homeless Agency Counted In report and Dublin City Council's Homeless Waiting List. It was found that the majority of people returned by local authorities as homeless were not staying in emergency accommodation or using other services for homeless people. Conversely the majority of people in emergency accommodation or using other homeless services were not registered as homeless with a local authority<sup>3</sup>.

This problem was again found and addressed in this Bray count, where of the total of 52 households accepted by the local authority as homeless and on their administrative records, only 14 were actually using homeless services and thus counted in for the purposes of this count. (This point is discussed in greater detail in the next section.)

#### 2. The general difficulty in counting in homeless people, who by their very nature tend to be transient and hidden.

Undertaking a separate specialised homeless count (rather than depending on the census for example) is necessary because measuring the extent of homelessness is not a simple task and the incidence is generally underreported.

Specialised homeless counts involve addressing a series of major conceptual, methodological and operational issues. "By their very nature, people who are homeless are hidden within society and some have no fixed base, which makes it difficult to access them. Given these difficulties, there has generally

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that people accepted as homeless by the local authority (Bray Town Council) but not using an identified homeless service were not included if their present homelessness could not be verified.

<sup>2</sup> The last Homeless Agency/ ESRI assessment (2002) excluded Wicklow and Kildare but even if these two counties were included, without considerable preparatory work, it is unclear whether a good picture would be revealed. The 1999 ESRI count found a total of 20 persons to be homeless in the counties of Wicklow and Kildare compared to almost 2,900 persons in Dublin. This was almost certainly an underestimate.

<sup>3</sup> In Dublin 1,100 households were found to be homeless service users, 1090 households were on the local authority homeless list only and 370 households were on both lists. In effect there were two measures for homelessness, which only in a minority of cases converge.

been a dearth of available statistics, both nationally and internationally, on the number or characteristics of homeless persons.” (Williams and Gorby, 2002).

The methodology used in this report attempts to address these concerns.

The methodology provides a snapshot of the stock of homelessness at a single point in time and in doing so provides a base line against which trends in homelessness can be identified. It does not, and cannot, provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamic of homelessness. However, notwithstanding its limitations, the methodology used compares very favourably with the standard local authority tri-annual assessment and previous attempts to count in the number of people homeless in Bray.

## 2.2 Definitions

The Housing Act 1988 sets out a definition of homelessness in Section 2 of the Act, stating that a person is regarded as homeless by the relevant local authority if:

- a. there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
- b. he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a) and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.

In assessing the extent of homelessness in Bray, this report uses the legislative definition of homelessness. This includes people sleeping rough, in hostels, B&Bs and sleeping with friends or family when this is not reasonable. The term “not reasonable” is open to interpretation by the local authorities but has generally come to mean people sleeping on the floor of friends or family members’ houses. However this report follows an even higher threshold and for the purposes of the count excludes those known to be staying with parents, even if their sleeping conditions are not those associated with normal homelife. Also in common with practice in the ESRI/ Homeless Agency Counts in 1999 and 2002, people in hospitals, county homes and prisons are not included, since although they may be homeless on discharge, they are not actually homeless at the time of the assessment.

Many counts of this kind in Ireland do not include the experience of Travellers, who, because organisations undertaking the surveys rarely maintain ethnic disaggregated figures, find themselves hidden in any count. This occurs even when Travellers are homeless under the definition of the 1988 Housing Act, for example sleeping rough or sleeping with friends or family members when this is obviously inappropriate. To capture the experience of this often excluded group, a number of community groups working with Travellers were contacted for the Bray Count. Their returns included 2 households that are living in mobile homes without electricity, running water or any other basic services and 4 households who are staying with friends when this is, under the definition of the 1988 Housing Act, inappropriate.

The legal status of the 2 households living in mobile homes without services is unclear, but to exclude them from the research results would be to artificially deflate the numbers of people experiencing homelessness and make it less likely that the experience of travellers will be included when planning for new services. For this reason they are included in the count results.

## 2.3 Methodology

As explained briefly above, the count survey relied on four elements in the measurement of the number of homeless persons at a single point in time. They are:

1. **Questionnaire surveys completed in services either specifically targeting people who are homeless or likely to be used by people who are homeless.**

Each homeless service in the Bray area was asked to complete a questionnaire in respect of every individual or homeless household in contact with their service during the week of the assessment, 24-30th March 2003. Homeless services included all emergency accommodation, Health Board outreach workers, the Cracked Pots and Society of Saint Vincent de Paul’s voluntary run outreach day and food centres, advice and information centres, drug treatment and advice centres, medical centres, youth centres, a Traveller support network, the police station, parishes and the Bray Women’s Refuge. A total of 72 households were uniquely identified as homeless by filling in survey count forms by service providers.

**2. Questionnaire surveys were also included from Bray Town Council homeless list if the Council were presently maintaining the homeless person in emergency accommodation and if their homelessness could be verified.**

In other words, only people who were being maintained by the Council in emergency accommodation and in contact with them were included as homeless and part of the survey count. The rest of the people on the Council's housing/ homeless waiting list had forms filled in which were crosschecked against the homeless people captured by homeless service providers to examine the extent of correlation between the two lists.

What this meant in practice is that of the 53 households on the local authority's homeless list 9 households were included from the local authority list because they could be verified as homeless during the week of the count, 5 households were met on both lists (but were not included because they were previously met by other homeless service providers) and 39 households were exclusively on the local authority housing list. These 39 households were not included in the homeless count survey because their homelessness could not be verified during the week of the count.

**3. A rough sleeper's head count was undertaken in the Bray area during the morning of the 27th March between the hours of 6 and 8 am involving two teams of three people.**

With participation from Cracked Pots, East Coast Area Health Board, Gardai, Bray Community Addiction Team, and Bray Partnership, the count team searched for people bedded down in open buildings (sheds/ railway station, etc), parks/ green areas, in cars, etc. A total of 3 people were encountered sleeping rough. This number was not added to the overall figure of homelessness, as there was no way to be certain that these individuals were not counted elsewhere. However the number of people identified is important to help estimate the extent of rough sleeping in the town.

**4. Information on people from Bray homeless in Dublin was gathered from agencies based in Dublin.**

Assistance was kindly received from the Homeless

Agency and the Homeless Persons Unit (operated by the Northern Area Health Board).

The information received was in the case of the Homeless Agency, from their most recent count in January 2003. In that count they found 6 households who identified themselves as from Bray homeless in Dublin. This number was added to the total number of homeless households identified in Bray during the week of the count.

Of course there is a real research difficulty in counting in those people from Bray who are homeless in places other than Bray. Adding in those people homeless in Dublin captured by the Homeless Agency's survey count who volunteer the information that they are from Bray gives a more complete picture of the total amount of people homeless from Bray<sup>4</sup>. It is however still a partial picture, since homeless people from Bray who decide to leave the town do not necessarily move to Dublin.

To verify the numbers of people from Bray becoming homeless in Dublin, a request was placed with the Homeless Persons Unit, managed by the South Western Area Health Board, for the number of people becoming newly homeless (thereby presenting themselves to the Unit) during the years 2001/2. A total of 25 households from Bray, containing 27 adults and 8 children, presented themselves as newly homeless and looking for assistance during the period. Considering the numbers of people from Bray already homeless in Dublin before 2001 and that the proportion of people who do not seek assistance from the Homeless Persons Unit are not included in the total and even allowing for the transitory nature of homelessness, the Homeless Agency figure of 6 households from Bray homeless in Dublin looks likely to be an underestimate.

In assessing the Homeless Agency figure of 6 households from Bray homeless in Dublin, it is also worth considering that another 7 households were identified as from "Wicklow", with a high probability of a certain proportion of these households as being from Bray. In addition a further 500 households (or one quarter of the total households homeless in Dublin) refused to answer this question. In the planning of any new service it might also be considered that in Loughlinstown and Shankill, areas neighbouring Bray, a further 10 people from these areas are homeless in Dublin City Centre. These people would likely

<sup>4</sup> Because of the two different time frames in which the research was undertaken, there is a theoretic possibility of an overlap of count information, i.e. people homeless in Dublin but from Bray at the time of the Dublin count then take themselves out of homelessness and are settled and no longer homeless by the time of the Bray Count, but this possibility is remote. Because of the importance placed on including people from Bray homeless in Dublin, some flexibility was agreed for this point. A unique identifier was filled in for each person met in Dublin from Bray so the possibility of double counting was avoided.

prefer to access homeless service (particularly accommodation services) developed in Bray if this was an option open to them.

## 2.4 Information and support

In an effort to maximise participation by people who were homeless, Bray Homeless Research Group contacted local media (Bray People, Bray and North Wicklow Times and East Coast Radio), who kindly featured pieces to alert people of the undertaking of the research. Notices were distributed for display in all the research count centres. Detailed written instructions were also provided and support was made available throughout the week of the assessment.

## 2.5 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire form used to gather the information on homeless people, was designed to collect the maximum amount of information while minimising the burden to the interviewer and interviewee. A further consideration was to allow comparability to the Homeless Agency count undertaken in Dublin in January 2003. The first and most important question was to ask each respondent their gender, date of birth and initials to establish a unique identifier and ensure no duplication of forms but also to respect the confidentiality of each respondent.

A further 11 other questions were asked. They are:

1. Whether the person has filled in a similar form previously;
2. Whether the person originated from Bray;
3. Whether they are on a local authority housing list;
4. If so which one and since when;
5. If not, why not;
6. Whether the person is homeless;
7. Where they slept in the previous 7 nights;
8. How long over the past 5 years they have been homeless;
9. When they first became homeless;
10. What their last form of accommodation was;
11. Their household status, e.g. whether they have children and/or partner.

The questionnaire and an explanation sheet, which went out to 30 different service providers in the Bray area, are in the appendices.

## SECTION 3 - COUNT RESULTS

In this section, the results of the survey count are set out, together with some elaboration of the significance of the main results and some graphs to help explanation.

### 3.1 Survey forms- excluding duplication and forms that could not be verified

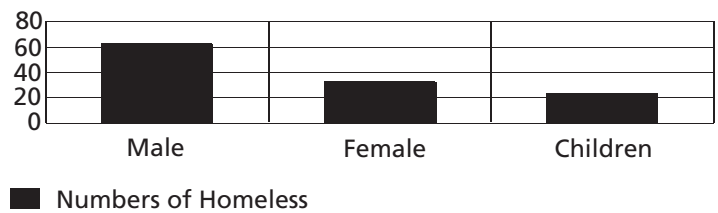
A total of 138 forms were returned. 53 forms were returned by the local authority and 85 forms from service providers to homeless people. Of the total of 138 forms returned, 9 forms were excluded because of duplication, 6 forms were excluded because they were not homeless i.e. they had their own house/ flat or were staying in their parents house, 2 forms were excluded because no direct contact was made with the homeless individuals (contact was made by phone) while 1 form was excluded because the date of birth was incomplete and could not be verified to ensure no double counting. A further 39 of the 52 forms returned by the local authority were excluded because although their homeless status was accepted by the local authority, their current homeless status could not be verified to the satisfaction of the research group for the week in question.

This left 81 unique survey forms containing 81 households. A further 6 households from Bray were identified as homeless in Dublin through the Homeless Agency Count undertaken in January 2003. These were included because although no forms were received directly from these households, their unique identifier (initials, date of birth and gender) was recorded by the Homeless Agency and thereby ensured that they were not counted elsewhere. This gives a total of 87 households homeless and from Bray during the week of the count.

### 3.2 Number of homeless people, including children

These 87 households contain 95 adults of which 33 are female and 62 are male. A further 24 dependent children were accompanying these homeless households, giving a total of 119 people from Bray homeless during the week of the count.<sup>5</sup>

Homeless Men, Women and Children- Bray



### 3.3 Typology of homeless households

Respondents were asked questions on their family circumstances. From their responses they could be classified as either:

- Single-person household - a single person with no dependents
- Dual person household - a couple with dependent child(ren)
- Single parent household - a single person with dependent child(ren)
- Couple only household - no dependent child(ren)

Household Typology	Number of Households	Percentage of Total
Single-person household	74	85%
Single parent household	6	7%
Dual person household (with children)	5	6%
Couple only household	2	2%

As can be seen the greater majority (85%) of homeless people in Bray are single people living alone. This compares with the ESRI/ Homeless Agency Counted In report for Dublin, which found that single person households made up 70% of the total number of households.

None the less, a significant proportion of homeless households in Bray contain children (13%). A total of 24 dependent children were identified as homeless, distributed over 11 families.

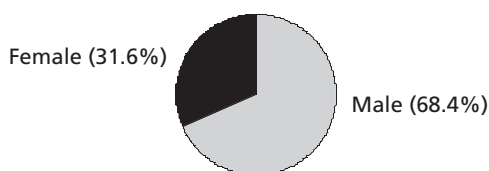
### 3.4 Gender

A total of 95 adults are living in the 87 homeless households identified during the week of the count.

<sup>5</sup> As explained above (see page 6), if the 2 traveller families living in mobile homes without service, who are included in the homeless count, were excluded, the homeless count figure would be 84 households or 91 adults and 16 children. That is, excluding these two households, 107 people from Bray were homeless during the week 24th- 30th March 2003.

Of these, a relatively high percentage are female, with 30 females making up 32% of the total and 65 males making up 68% of the total.

### Gender of Homeless Adults in Bray



Of the 74 single homeless households a slightly lower percentage are female. 52 (70%) are male while 22 (30%) are female.

This number of homeless women in Bray is still a high proportion and compares with the Homeless Agency/ESRI Count in Dublin, which found that of the single homeless households, 19% were female and 81% were male.

### 3.5 Age

Information on age was identified for both head of households and for single person households. The age groupings are set out in the tables for both Male and Female as follows<sup>6</sup>:

#### Head of Households

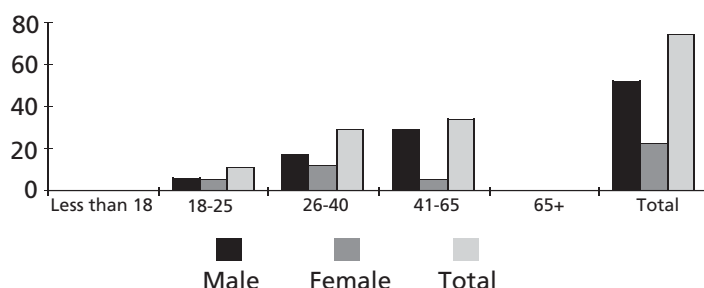
Age	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 18	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
18-25	9	10%	10	11%	19	21%
26-40	18	21%	13	15%	31	36%
41-65	30	34%	7	8%	37	42%
65+	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

The age profile for single person households varies somewhat to that of all head of households as the next table shows:

### Single Person Households

Age	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 18	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
18-25	6	8%	5	7%	11	15%
26-40	17	23%	12	16%	29	39%
41-65	29	39%	5	7%	34	46%
65+	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Age Profile for Single Men and Women



### 3.6 Type of Homelessness

Respondents were asked to indicate how many of the preceding 7 nights they spent in each of the following "accommodation" types:

#### a. Rough sleeping

An intensive rough sleepers' headcount was undertaken on the morning of Thursday 27th. 3 people were found sleeping rough in Bray during the count. However it should be noted that a higher figure claim to be sleeping rough during the week of the count when interviewed by service providers and these responses have been inputted for the survey count.

The higher number of people claiming to be sleeping rough compared to the numbers identified by the rough sleepers count may be explained by a number of possible factors:

- ▶ The difficulty in identifying rough sleepers because they are well hidden
- ▶ Homeless people themselves painting the most extreme picture of their condition in the hope of gaining extra help from the interviewer

<sup>6</sup> Of course the table below does not include the 24 dependent children who are aged less than 18 years old.

- ▶ Homeless people from Bray may have been sleeping rough in places other than Bray during the week of the count and thereby would not be identified in the Bray rough sleepers count
- ▶ The homeless people themselves may have interpreted the definition of rough sleeping differently.

**b. In a hostel**

While there are presently no emergency hostel options available in Bray, there are a small number of hostel options available in the environs of the town, including Dun Laoghaire’s CrossCare Hostel and further a field the local authority funded, privately operated hostel in Rathdrum. This homeless count, while including in those people identified as from Bray who are currently homeless in Dublin, found that they are predominantly in hostel accommodation in the city.

**c. In a refuge**

A women’s refuge operates in Bray with space for four households (woman and children). In addition one other household from Bray was identified as homeless in a women’s refuge in the city.

**d. In a Bed and Breakfast**

While the supply and availability of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for homeless people has been curtailed in recent months, there are a number of people paid for by the local authority (Bray Town Council) in B&Bs in Bray and Dun Laoghaire. However people who have been allocated this accommodation in Bray must leave the property during daytime hours, generally between 9am and 6pm. This is in contrast to the practice in Dublin, where the city council has negotiated for homeless people to be allowed stay within the property during day-time hours.

**e. In a friend/ relative’s house**

Although people who stay with friends/ relatives, e.g. sleeping on floors, are normally very difficult to identify, local contacts through the Community Addiction Teams and community and voluntary groups has made it possible to identify these households during the week of the count. To ensure that the count is not open to interpretation, people staying with parents were not included for the purposes of the count, though they may be counted as homeless by the local authority.

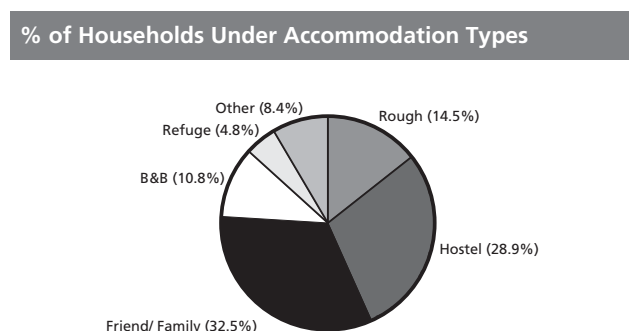
**f. Other**

In the context of this count, this heading refers to people staying in transitional/ supported housing (although not available in Bray, it is accessible in the city centre), trailers and mobile homes.

4 of the 87 respondents failed to answer this question on accommodation during the previous 7 nights. Of the remaining 83 households,

- ▶ 24 households used a hostel during the previous 7 nights,
- ▶ 12 households (people) slept rough,
- ▶ 27 households stayed with friends,
- ▶ 9 households were in B&B,
- ▶ 4 households were in a refuge,
- ▶ A further 7 households used another form of accommodation.

The pie chart below sets out percentages:



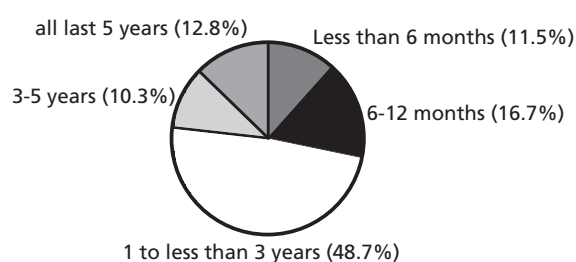
These proportions above are similar to the count results for Dublin, with the exception of the numbers of people staying with friends/ relatives. The ESRI/ Homeless Agency Dublin City Count finds that 53% of people are staying in hostel accommodation, 16% are sleeping rough, 3% are staying in a refuge, 14% are staying in a B&B, 7% are with friends/ relatives and 7% are staying in other accommodation.

**3.7 Length of time Homeless**

Of the 87 households surveyed, a total of 78 answered the question on the length of time homeless. The question asked, “Over the last 5 years, approximately how long in total would you say you have been homeless?” The answers were as follows:

Length of time homeless	Number of households
Less than 6 months	9
6-12 months	13
1 to less than 3 years	38
3-5 years	8
All last 5 years	10

Length of Time Homeless (Household)



Comparing the results from the Bray count with the findings of the Homeless Agency/ ESRI Count 2002 shows that the proportion of people homeless for more than 3 years in Bray (23.1%) corresponds very closely with the situation in Dublin (24%). However otherwise the proportions differ, with the number of people homeless in Bray for 1-3 years at 48.7% compared to 27% in Dublin, 6-12 months (Bray 16.7% compared to 15% in Dublin) and less than 6 months (11.5% in Bray compared to 34% in Dublin).

In general people spend longer spells homeless in Bray than homeless people in Dublin generally do. This might be explained by the lack of move on options for people in Bray waiting or dependent on local authority accommodation. While the situation is difficult in Dublin, there are a comparatively large number of single person units of accommodation in the city, which tend to be allocated to single homeless people.

### 3.8 Registered on local authority list as homeless

All 87 households answered the question as to whether they were registered with the local authority for housing.

A total of 41 households (47%) thought they were on a Local Authority housing list. Of these 41 households, 4 said they were registered on Dublin City

Council's Local Authority list, 2 households said they were on Wicklow County Council's list and 1 household said they were on Dun Laoghaire Rathdown's list, while the remaining 34 households stated they were on Bray Town Council's housing list.

One of the more interesting findings of this research is that in fact only 14 (41%) of the 34 households who stated that they were on Bray Town Council's housing/ homeless list could be verified as being on the list. The other 20 households consider themselves as homeless and believe they are on the housing list but this cannot be verified. They may be on other sections of the housing list (traveller accommodation or general need for example) but this is not certain.

Bray Town Council's policy is that it is the responsibility of the housing applicant to inform them of any change of address. A tri-annual housing assessment is made every 3 years.

Of the 34 households that say they are on Bray Town Council's housing list:

- ▶ 13 say they are on the list for less than 1 year,
- ▶ 11 say they are on the list for 1-3 years,
- ▶ 7 say they have been there for more than 3 years
- ▶ 3 do not specify how long they think they are on the list.

A further 46 (53%) of the 87 homeless households are not registered on any Local Authority housing list. 10 households did not give a reason why they are not registered (36 gave an explanation). Of those who gave an explanation, the most popular reasons were:

- ▶ There is no point (25 households)
- ▶ Barred by local authority (4 households)
- ▶ Arrived in Bray only recently (2 households)
- ▶ Allocated accommodation that they didn't like or that was unsafe (4 households)
- ▶ Too young (1 household)

What the findings in this section show is that not only are a majority (75%) of the 53 households on Bray Town Council's homeless/ housing list not using homeless services and therefore not included in the homeless count, but a majority (53%) of people homeless from Bray during the week of the count

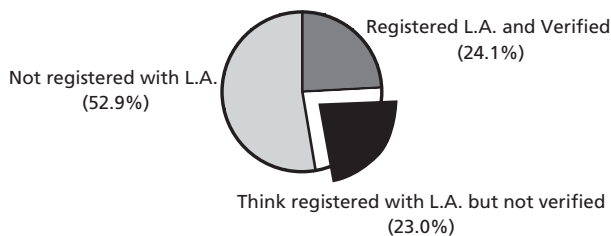


are not registered with a local authority as homeless and of the 34 households who think they are registered with Bray Town Council, a majority (20 households or 59%) could not be verified as on the housing list.

Homeless households that say they are registered with the Bray Town Council that can be verified.	Homeless households that say they are on Bray Town Council list that can not be verified.	Homeless households registered with another Local Authority and verified.	Homeless households that are not registered with a Local Authority
14 households 16%	20 households 23%	7 households 8%	46 households 53%

It may also be of note that at least 3 other people that Bray Town Council is paying B&B accommodation for and who are known to officials as homeless are not on the housing list (and are not included in the homeless count assessment).

#### % On housing list and verified



### 3.9 Originating from Bray

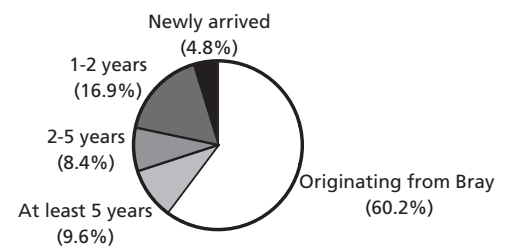
A relevant question was asked of all respondents, whether they were "born in Bray" and if not where they were born and when they came to Bray. 83 out of 87 households replied to this question. Of the 83 households:

- ▶ 50 households originated from Bray
- ▶ 8 households have been in Bray for at least 5 years
- ▶ 7 households have been in Bray for more than 2 and less than 5 years
- ▶ 14 households have been in Bray for at least 1 and up to 2 years
- ▶ For the remaining 4 households it is not clear

when they came to Bray While it may be the case that they are of very recent origin to the town, they are in contact with Bray homeless services.

The graph below illustrates the percentage of people from Bray, those who have arrived in the last 5 years and those who have newly arrived, who are homeless.

#### From Bray and length of time in Bray



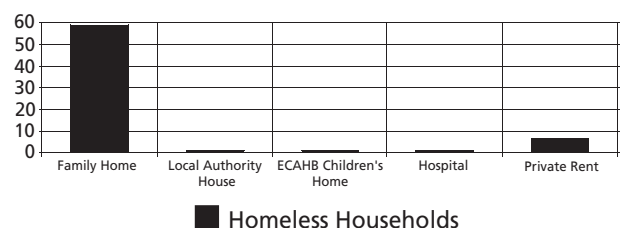
### 3.10 Type of accommodation before becoming homeless

Finally respondents were asked what type of accommodation they occupied before becoming homeless. Of the 87 households, 28 households gave no response; 69 households could be analysed for information.

For the overwhelming majority of people homeless in Bray, their last form of accommodation before homeless was their family home (87%). Of the total:

- ▶ 1 household came directly from hospital
- ▶ 1 from an East Coast Area Health Board supported housing project
- ▶ 7 from the Private Rented Sector
- ▶ 1 from a Local Authority House
- ▶ 59 from a Family Home

#### Last Form of Accomodation



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## **PART 2**

**Profile of Existing Services, Identification of Gaps and Recommendations on how Existing Problems can be addressed**

## SECTION 4 - A PROFILE OF THE SERVICES PRESENTLY AVAILABLE TO HOMELESS PEOPLE IN BRAY

Homelessness is about more than just a roof over one's head. If long-term solutions are to be found to address the needs of the 120 Bray people out of home then the complex needs that they sometimes present with must also be addressed. This section first sets out the broader demographic, social and housing context in Bray and how it relates to homelessness and then examines the services that presently exist for homeless people.

### 4.1 Profile of Bray, Co Wicklow

#### 4.1.1 Population

Bray is by far the biggest urban conurbation in County Wicklow. From the 2002 Census<sup>7</sup>, Bray's population was 26,215, which is an increase of almost 4% from the last census figure of 25,252 people. Bray town's population as a proportion of the total population of County Wicklow (114,719 in the Census 2002) is over one fifth.

A major effect on settlement patterns for the county and for Bray in particular is its proximity to the Greater Dublin urban conurbation. The population growth<sup>8</sup> and consequent demand pressures for housing have been fuelled in part by the influx of workers and their families from Dublin, seeking more affordable accommodation. This has inflated the prices of private homes and has radically increased the costs of private rented accommodation.

#### 4.1.2 Employment

There has been an increase in employment opportunities in the town over the last decade. In addition to the IDA client base, there are approximately 350 employers in the Bray area, which includes manufacturing services, retail, leisure and professional establishments, all of which provide a strong base for employment opportunities.

However previous surveys<sup>9</sup> indicate a tendency for knowledge-based industries in Bray to employ people from outside the area. The less skilled and most poorly educated therefore remain most distanced from the labour market; they do not match with the available jobs.

While there has been an overall drop of 52% in Live Register figures since 1996, there remains a difficult

to place long term unemployed group of people. These long-term unemployed are predominantly males (75%) of which 83% are aged between 25-54 years. The information gathered from the Bray Homeless Count in Section 2 shows that a majority of homeless people are males in the 25-54 age group and none of the approximately 20 homeless people met during the research were in full-time employment. This suggests that Bray follows the long-identified international tendency of a correlation of homelessness with long-term unemployment.

#### 4.1.3 Educational Profile

31% of people living in Bray have left school before the age of 15 years while only 10.4% of the population have gone to third level education. This is low when compared to the national average of 19.7% who have attended third level education.

#### 4.1.4 Disadvantaged Women

One of the striking findings of the Homeless Count is the relatively high level of women homeless in Bray. This might be explained by the fact that 47% of the total Live Register<sup>10</sup> in Bray are women, while 25% of all those long-term unemployed are women. In addition 66% of all Community Employment participants in Bray in September 1999 were female. Nationally women comprise 70% of part-time workers. Part-time workers are more likely to be in low paid positions.

While lone parents can also be men (the national average is approximately 10%), it is worth noting that 1,048 people were in receipt of Lone Parent Benefits in Bray in July 2000. Nationally it is known that 70% of Lone Parents are poor (1999 Combat Poverty Report).

Because of the hidden homelessness of women and their low numbers within the mixed sex support system it is often assumed that there is enough support available for the "few" homeless women. As a result women can be neglected as a target group with specific demands. But women are in danger of becoming homeless even more than men because of their higher poverty risks and the all too present violence against women. In fact women are less often homeless due to their competencies in taking care of themselves and in finding temporary solutions.

<sup>7</sup> Census 2002, Preliminary Report, Central Statistical Office.

<sup>8</sup> County Wicklow has had a markedly above average population increase in the period 1996-2002, up 11.7%.

<sup>9</sup> ICTU 1999, Survey of the Workplace.

<sup>10</sup> Figures from June 2000, Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

### 4.1.5 Travellers

The Traveller population of Bray and its environs is estimated to be approximately 350-400 people or 75 families with over 200 people under the age of 24 years<sup>11</sup>. Two organisations represent the Traveller population in an area covering Shankill, Kilcoole and Bray. Of 75 families, the vast majority are accommodated in individual houses and group schemes (standard houses). However there is a halting site off the N11 that accommodates 6 families. There are also a number of people, (partly reflected in the homeless count) who are either staying with friends or other family members in a homeless situation or living on the roadside without services.

The 1998 Travellers Accommodation Act places an obligation on the local authority to produce a Traveller Accommodation Plan to address the accommodation needs of Traveller families without access to adequate services and/ or accommodation. To further the meeting of the specific targets set in the plan, Wicklow County Council in 2000 set up a consultation committee, with participation from Traveller Groups.

### 4.1.6 Substance Abusers

Research conducted in 1998<sup>12</sup> identified 67 treated opiate users in Bray i.e. those accessing prescribed methadone as a substitute for heroin use. This number has since increased to more than 100 people attending the methadone clinic in Bray on a consistent basis<sup>13</sup>. However, there is a large hidden illegal opiate using population, which if included would increase this number significantly. The Health Board Drug and Aids Outreach Team estimates approximately 200 opiate drug users in Bray, (including heroin and methadone use). Bray was designated the 14th Drugs Task Force Area in 1999 in recognition of the serious drugs misuse problem in the town.

## 4.2 Profile of Homeless Services

**Profile of Services for Homeless People in Bray**  
At first glance it may appear that besides the considerable effort of a small number of voluntary groups there are very few services to homeless people in Bray. In fact there are a number of support organisations, both statutory and voluntary that do work with homeless people although they do not have an explicit remit to do so and are as yet uncoordinated. There is however a lack of specialised mainstream

funded homeless services and a particular lack of accommodation options.

The following organisations work with the homeless in Bray:

### 4.2.1 Statutory Agencies

Under the Government's "Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy" of May 2000, the disputed responsibilities of local authorities and health boards were addressed. Local authorities are now responsible for the provision of accommodation (bricks and mortar) and for the production and implementation of three year Action Plans for their areas. Health Boards are responsible for the additional care costs associated with supporting vulnerable homeless people. The two corresponding statutory agencies empowered to manage and/or finance services for homeless people in the Bray area are the East Coast Area Health Board (ECAHB) and the Local Authorities for Bray and Wicklow.

#### (a) East Coast Area Health Board

The ECAHB has a geographical spread from South of Ringsend to Carnew and from the East Coast of Wicklow to the borders of West Wicklow and Carlow. In terms of population the ECAHB works with approximately 325,000 people or approximately 60% of the population that the other Eastern Regional Health Authority health boards, the NAHB and SWAHB each cover.

The ECAHB provides two main services to homeless people:

- Through its Community Welfare Offices, Supplementary Welfare Allowance is administered, including Rent Allowance and deposits, to facilitate access to private rented accommodation. Approximately 450 households in the Bray and Greystones area are in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent Supplement. In recent years there has been a reduced amount of bedsits available to Community Welfare Offices in the area (which homeless people tended to occupy as a first step out of homelessness), because of increased fire regulations, an upgrading of accommodation, an increased number of non-nationals (language students rather than refugees) and the raising of rent levels.
- The ECAHB is also responsible for the funding and/or provision of services to address the health

<sup>11</sup> Estimate from Bray Travellers Development Network.

<sup>12</sup> O'Sullivan and Roche D, (1998), "The Level of Illegal Drug Misuse in the Bray Area", Bray Partnership.

<sup>13</sup> Estimate from East Coast Area Health Board Drug Co-ordinator.

care and support needs of homeless people, whether in hostel accommodation or in other places including supporting those sleeping rough. In practice very limited Health Board current funding is presently directed to services for homeless people in Bray, to support the activities of the voluntary organisations, Cracked Pots and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Two drug outreach workers are employed for Bray and they do meet with homeless people who are experiencing a drug addiction.

- ▶ The ECAHB directs the majority of its social inclusion budget to fund support and staffing costs of the Crosscare Hostel in Dun Laoghaire. In addition a mental health team from St. John of God's is now working with homeless people staying in the Dun Laoghaire Hostel.

### **(b) Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council**

Bray is in an anomalous situation in that although Wicklow County Council is the local authority responsible for the implementation of the relevant Homeless Action Plan, most of the housing stock of Bray is managed by Bray Town Council. However although Bray Town Council is a separate housing authority, it is itself a subsidiary of Wicklow County Council.

#### **Bray Town Council**

Newly homeless people typically present to the housing office in Bray Town Council if they are in need of emergency accommodation. There are no written procedures for dealing with homeless people. The procedure that is generally followed when someone is considered homeless is the following:

1. In general only "indigenous" homeless people from Bray i.e. born in Bray or with a local connection will be provided a service.
2. If the homeless person's local connection is proved then single people, especially men, will first be offered a place in the hostel in Rathdrum, made available by Wicklow County Council. 20 beds are paid for and reserved for Bray, Arklow and Wicklow Town Councils and Wicklow County Council. (This hostel is discussed further below.)
3. In Bray, Bed and Breakfast accommodation is generally offered to homeless families or homeless women with children and in exceptional cases to single people. It can prove difficult to find B&Bs that accept single homeless people, especially if they suffer from alcohol or drug dependence.

4. A housing application form is filled in for those people to whom either B&B accommodation or Rathdrum hostel is offered. (There is evidence of some failure to do this for some homeless people and thus some discrepancies/ inadequacies in the recording and maintenance of the housing list.)
5. If there are no spaces available in Rathdrum Hostel or if the homeless person does not wish to make the journey to Rathdrum then generally the Town Council "can only offer the Homeless free phone number" based in Dublin City, where emergency accommodation can sometimes be arranged.

- ▶ It is never possible to allocate Local Authority accommodation directly to a homeless person. Indeed housing applicants (particularly single people) typically can wait for over 5 years before a local authority unit becomes available. According to the Council Housing Officers, single person accommodation is at an extreme premium. "If a women and child and a single person are both seeking the same accommodation, the Council will always go with the woman and child."

- ▶ The Council also pays for an imaginative but singular scheme to maintain persons vulnerable to homelessness with their family or a supportive friend. In this scheme, the Council makes a rental payment to the friend or relative to house the potential or actual homeless person in their accommodation. In the Council's experience the scheme has worked reasonably well, in that it offers support to individuals in the family context and gives an incentive to the friend/ family to maintain the person in secure accommodation. They note however that there is a danger that other households will look for council payment for similar housing arrangements that otherwise would be operated without council payments.

#### **Wicklow County Council**

Wicklow County Council is responsible for the development and implementation of the Homeless Action Plan for the county, including Bray, and the establishment and coordination of the statutory homeless forum.

The Homeless Forum is established and meets on a bi-monthly basis. The Forum brings together officials from the Town Councils and the County Council,

Health Board representatives, Senior Community Welfare Officer for the region, voluntary organisations' representatives, local development organisations and a representative from the Drugs and Aids Service.

The purpose of the Forum is to monitor the implementation of the Wicklow Homeless Action Plan. Whilst the key actors involved in the process hoped that the Homeless Action Plan would be important in establishing practical ways of addressing homelessness, there is a very clear sense that many see the plan as lacking in the necessary detail or specific commitments and that it tends to repeat rather than engage with the text from the Government's Integrated Strategy.

According to officials in Wicklow County Council the major developments from the forum is the private contract for a twenty-bed hostel in Rathdrum, the employment of an Outreach Settlement Worker (both discussed below) and improved communication between agencies working with homeless people.

### **(c) Outreach Settlement Worker**

The recent employment of an Outreach Settlement Worker (funded by and working on a half-time basis between Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council) has allowed for greater contact and structure in dealing with the demands and needs of homeless people who approach the two local authorities. The new Outreach Worker worked with 71 people in total in 43 households in Bray (43 households) and with 44 people in Wicklow County.

The majority of homeless people met are seeking emergency accommodation. The Outreach Worker also advocates for the allocation of local authority accommodation for those homeless in greatest need and meets private rented sector landlords and refers homeless clients to them.

### **(d) Mental Health Services**

Although working in a separate departmental section under the ECAHB and with no explicit remit for working with homeless people, the Mental Health Services does encounter a large number of homeless people through its work, whether because of a mental illness that leads to the person unable to cope in their own living conditions or because of the negative mental health impacts of being homeless. Some connections have been made within the service between mental distress and the state of homelessness, demonstrated by the participation of the Service's Senior Social Worker for the North Wicklow

area in the Bray Homeless Forum but there is no evidence that these connections are being made at the clinical psychiatric level.

Part of the Senior Social Worker's role is to help people suffering from a mental illness into safe accommodation of whatever kind is available and/or appropriate. This may be:

- ▶ a nursing home placement
- ▶ the person's family home. The role in this case may be to negotiate some arrangement between family members
- ▶ a place in private rented accommodation. Although this may not be the most appropriate option, because of the lack of other options, it may be the only alternative. Because of the lack of private rented accommodation in Bray, the social worker often sources bedsits in Dublin City.

Homeless people are generally referred to Newcastle Hospital because of addiction problems and/ or lack of coping skills. The Hospital will generally only treat and accommodate on a long term basis those people suffering a chronic psychiatric problem i.e. who are a danger to themselves or others.

Other services for people with a mental illness who may be vulnerable to homelessness include:

- ▶ A number of supported housing units for people with psychiatric problems are located around Bray and environs. There are shared houses in Enniskerry (8 beds), in Old Court Park (8 beds), Shankill (4 beds), and Siddenton Road (13 beds, overnight staffing for an elderly group). In addition there are houses in Arklow (presently one house with a 2nd house in development), three houses in the Grounds of Newcastle Hospital (one 8 bed house for people able to live relatively independently, one 4 bed house for people needing medium support and one 14 bed high support hostel for elderly individuals). To date there have been no objections against the moving of these individuals and the setting up of the houses in a community setting. This may be because the service is "selective of who goes in to a community setting".
- ▶ The Lincara Centre, which is a work rehabilitation service offered to people who have been discharged from psychiatric hospital and/ or had a mental breakdown.
- ▶ A community nurse operates in Bray on an outreach basis and provides medication and outpatient care to those who are not attached to the Lincara Centre. In addition nurses based in the Centre go out to visit those attending the Centre in their own accommodation.

- Other organisations working with people with learning difficulties and mental health in the Bray area, include: Rehab, Sunbeam, New Dawn Centre, Aware, Grow, Open Door, Bray Lakers and the Recovery Group.

#### **(e) The Probation and Welfare Service and HOST**

The Probation and Welfare Service in Bray works with people who have been discharged from prison to support their integration into the community. The service has a dual role: to ensure the conditions of the discharge are being met and to support the individual back into the community.

The Service reports that in 2002 eight people from Bray experienced homelessness on their discharge from prison. This may be because the time spent in prison has disrupted the person's tenancy or access to accommodation. Other factors such as previous drug dependence or new drug dependence developed in prison also make it difficult to find accommodation on discharge. The Probation Service encounters particular problems working with homeless individuals on the terms of their discharge and integration into a non-offending lifestyle when their housing and other basic needs are not available.

The problem of people discharged from prison becoming homeless has been noted at a national level and in response the Homeless Offender Strategy Team (HOST) has been set up. HOST is a multi agency Accommodation Directorate with the Probation and Welfare Service as the lead agency. HOST seeks to co-ordinate, on an interagency basis, strategies and interventions to minimise homelessness among offenders (in the community and in custody), promote offender integration in the community, reduce re-offending and promote public safety. HOST does not yet have any role to allocate, manage or supply housing.

### **4.2.2 Voluntary and Community Organisations and other Groups**

#### **(a) Society of Saint Vincent de Paul**

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul conference in Bray is remarkably active and has for a number of years filled in or to a certain extent covered for the lack of a more coordinated statutory response to meeting the most basic social needs of homeless people and other vulnerable groups in Bray.

The Society has a number of services for homeless people. Its most visible and well known is the Saturday "soup kitchen" where food is served in a comfortable and welcoming environment. Food vouchers are also handed out. Volunteers staff the service but some experienced members of the Society are also able to offer advice on statutory benefits and accommodation. The Society also arranges Bed and Breakfast accommodation for those in emergency need and will even pay for Bed and Breakfast out of voluntary donations if the Council refuses to do so.

The Society also owns three individual apartments for single people above one of its Charity Clothes shops in Bray Town, which it has allocated to homeless people. The Society hoped initially that the apartments could be offered on an emergency or "transitional" basis, with the individuals occupying the apartments moving on promptly to more settled accommodation. This has not been possible however and the accommodation has silted up, with no one moving on from the apartments in the last five years.

#### **(b) Cracked Pots**

The Christians Group in Bray operates an important voluntary service at its welcoming centre in the heart of Bray. "Cracked Pots" offers a food and social support service. A shower and washroom facilities are available and clothes are given out, with considerable effort made to find well fitting and appropriate clothing. The service also supports homeless people in accessing accommodation and makes continual health checks on vulnerable rough sleepers during winter months.

The Christians acknowledge that their service has a slightly lower uptake than other services because of its minority religion backing. However this does not diminish the quality of the service in meeting the physical and emotional needs of street homeless and other extremely vulnerable groups.

#### **(c) Hostels in Rathdrum and Dun Laoghaire**

While there is no emergency hostel accommodation in Bray, there are two hostels in the general area, one in Rathdrum funded by Wicklow County Council and another in Dun Laoghaire, funded mainly by the ECAHB (to which it is not possible to nominate people from Bray).

In addition to the problems associated with these accommodation sources and the fact that housing people in Dun Laoghaire, Rathdrum and Dublin City

means that Bray is failing to take responsibility for housing the people from its own area is the fact that people are losing out on services, networks of support, family connections and their own environment, all elements to successful resettlement.

### **Rathdrum Hostel**

Rathdrum Hostel is located outside Rathdrum village about an hour bus journey from Bray. Wicklow County Council pays the owner of the hostel (which also houses tourists in a separate block) a monthly capitation fee in advance of 17,000 euro per month for 20 hostel beds to be set-aside for homeless people. The capitation fee is paid whether or not the beds are filled or not. The hostel contract was initiated in 2001. During the period 2001-2 Wicklow County Council retained the exclusive right to nominate people to the hostel. However because many hostel beds remained empty because of insufficient demand, Wicklow County Council gave permission for the town councils in Wicklow, Arklow and Bray to place people in the hostel.

The hostel still experiences under occupation<sup>14</sup>, with homeless people from Bray, whether through necessity (need to access methadone medication in Bray or non-availability of public transport) or choice (seeking private rented accommodation in Bray or too far from Bray and social networks) refusing to use the hostel. Travel vouchers were recently offered to overcome difficulties of transport costs to Rathdrum but this does not seem to have greatly modified behaviour.

Another disadvantage of the hostel is its high threshold on behaviour, with homeless people interviewed explaining how they had been barred for offences, such as climbing in and out of windows. Alcohol and drug use is prohibited on the premises. Staff in the hostel appears to have no training or previous experience of working with homeless people or other vulnerable groups and there are no supports available to clients in the village or nearby.

Wicklow County Council have recently confirmed that they are to renew the existing contract with Rathdrum Hostel.

### **Crosscare Dun Laoghaire**

The Crosscare Hostel is a very different kind of hostel in that it works directly with rough sleepers, and offers a lower threshold service in which people are accommodated even if intoxicated. It is housed in a

very basic prefabricated metal structure on the grounds of the Tivoli Road Hospital. The Crosscare Hostel has limited opening hours of 8.30pm to 8.30am.

The hostel offers a well staffed and accessible service to chronically homeless people, including doctor, nurse and mental health team visits and is a good example of a joint venture between the Health Board and Local Authority. However the service is exclusively for homeless people from Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and it is not possible for people from Bray to access it. None the less at least three people from Bray are presently staying in the hostel. However strict new guidelines ensure that in the future only people from Dun Laoghaire will be allowed access.

The Crosscare Hostel is instructive for any hostel development in Bray in that public and Gardai have been positive about the development, with less anti-social behaviour problems on the streets. If there are any difficulties in the hostel Gardai respond quickly to any hostel staff requests.

### **(d) Bed and Breakfast**

Although now used less frequently by Bray Town Council as a source of emergency accommodation, 12 homeless people are presently being maintained in Bed and Breakfast<sup>15</sup>. In the context of the lack of other emergency accommodation options, B&B offers an important short-term housing option. The accommodation is deficient however in the often variable quality of the provision, the fact that people must generally leave the premise during the day, the high cost of the accommodation and the fact that homeless people do not contribute to its cost.

Payments to B&Bs vary from 40 euro to in one instance 80 euro per night (an emergency case where a single person was occupied in a double room), the average payment being approximately 45 euro per night. 90% of the payments made by a local authority for B&Bs are reclaimable from the Department of the Environment, while 10% of the total payment must come from the local authority's own budget.

Only two B&Bs that accommodate homeless people have daytime access. All other B&Bs ask that residents leave during the day.

The longest any one person is presently in Bed and Breakfast is for one year. Presently there are no

<sup>14</sup> During March 7 people were staying in the shelter and during April 9 people were present. Wicklow County Council has referred a total of 53 people to the Hostel in Rathdrum since the first contracting of the service in May 2001.

<sup>15</sup> June 2003



families in B&B. However no single people have in the year to date been moved out of B&B accommodation to more permanent housing. They have however been moved on to other B&Bs because of objections by B&B landlords to their anti-social behaviour. This suggests that B&B is a high threshold housing option.

#### **(e) Bray Community Addiction Team**

A new and developing service, Bray Community Addiction Team (CAT) is based in two locations at either end of Bray Town. Since late 2002 the service has offered people clinics in its two welcoming office and meeting room centres. The two teams are staffed by a total 10 staff, which includes trained addiction specialists and administration staff. They undertake needs assessments, offer counselling support for alcohol and drug addictions and refer people on to other services as necessary. Their community involvement and ethos have allowed the service to evolve gradually to the needs that present. In this way they have identified that a lower threshold service is what is required in an informal setting, through for example Breakfast Clubs and other social supports but with a focus on addiction. Approximately 20 to 30 people that are in touch with CAT are homeless.

The Community Addiction Team's client group overlaps to a certain extent with the Probation and Welfare Service<sup>16</sup> in that both services are in contact with various members of the same large families, about 40 individuals in total. They are presenting with enormous needs, including drug addictions and low educational attainment. Some of this group are known to be accessing homeless services in Dublin and other places.

The Community Addiction Team also works indirectly with an older homeless group. During a week in late May, 8 older homeless people had come to visit the Community Addiction Team, the majority having drug/ alcohol/ mental health problems or a dual diagnosis.

#### **(f) Women's Refuge in Bray**

The Women's Refuge in Bray offers a refuge from domestic violence and physical, sexual and emotional abuse in the home. Space is available for 4 families (women and children under the age of 15) at any one time. The Refuge is a large house within a community setting. Occasionally some women from Bray

prefer to go to another Refuge, in Rathmines for example, to ensure anonymity and this can be arranged.

When ready to move on, women in the refuge will either return to the family home (on similar or different terms) or seek their own accommodation. For the time they are staying in the refuge they are legally and officially homeless.

There is a greater demand for the service at different times of the year, especially after Christmas and Easter, reflecting an element of seasonality of homelessness among the female population.

### **Housing options for someone homeless in Bray**

1. Allocation of accommodation from local authority housing stock- in all cases most unlikely given the existing demand pressures on local authority housing. However local authority stated that they were able to house 7 homeless people in the last 2 months. These were people who had been on the list for a number of years.
2. Private rented accommodation –rent supplement and deposits (sometimes) provided by the Community Welfare Service of the Health Boards if accommodation can be found.
3. B&B accommodation –with a local accommodation provider (only sometimes offered)
4. Referral to Rathdrum Hostel or Bray Women's Refuge if applicable
5. If none of these options are available or suitable then the individual/ family is offered the Homeless Freephone number based in Dublin City.

<sup>16</sup> There is also a Prison Support Worker as part of the Community Addiction Team. However the way in which the two organisations work with the same group differs in that clients may meet the Probation and Welfare Service on an involuntary basis but meet the CAT of their own volition.

## SECTION 5 - GAPS AND DEFICIENCIES IN THE EXISTING SERVICES AND WAYS IN WHICH THEY CAN BE ADDRESSED

This section sets out where the main service gaps lie, and based on the information gathered from the Homeless Count and interviews with homeless people and service providers, makes recommendations for the reorganisation, management and development of new and existing services under the following headings:

- ▶ Housing: Emergency, Transitional and Long Term
- ▶ Community Welfare and the Private Rented Sector
- ▶ Support Services
- ▶ Prevention and Education
- ▶ Strategy and Finance

The approach that informs the recommendations made in this report to address homelessness in Bray might be best described as the “individualised approach” which has been shown to be most successful in Europe in moving people out of homelessness<sup>17</sup>. It requires:

- ▶ a movement towards smaller-scale and homely living environments with appropriate levels of care
- ▶ adequate staff training and staffing levels
- ▶ effective co-ordination between agencies at both strategic and organisational levels

While it may not be possible for all the recommendations made in this report to be implemented in the immediate short term, they are tailored to the particular circumstances in Bray, have been informed by all major stakeholders in the delivery and receipt of existing homeless services and have been set at a practical and attainable level as a plan of action for the next three years.

The reader, in working through the recommendations, will find that some recommendations are in bold. Participants to the Homeless seminar held in June have prioritised these recommendations.

### 5.1 Housing

While it clear from section 4.2 above that there are a

number of potential sources of support for homeless people, indeed in some areas Bray is very well resourced, there are also a number of gaps in services and a number of deficiencies in the present approach to addressing homelessness. In particular, there is a real and growing need for further accommodation options adapted to the varying needs of different homeless people. The information gathered from the Homeless Count in section 3 of the report suggests that there is a need for housing in each of the areas of emergency, transitional and long term housing (both supported and independent living in the community). These are discussed below.

#### 5.1.1 Emergency Accommodation

Emergency accommodation in this report refers to directly accessible accommodation available to homeless people in need of shelter. Traditionally this means either hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation.

##### (a) Emergency Hostel

Many interviewees cited the absence of hostel accommodation in Bray as a major deficiency in meeting the needs of homeless people in the town<sup>18</sup>. The numbers of people sleeping rough and in hostel accommodation in Dublin identified in the Homeless Count would back up their argument that emergency accommodation in Bray is necessary. Towns of approximately the same size, such as Dundalk and Drogheda each have 20 bed hostels in their towns (operated by voluntary organisations) and Newry with a population of 22,000 people has a direct access hostel and move on flats (both operated by the Simon Community Northern Ireland).

However hostel accommodation per se is not the answer. There is a persistent danger that any hostel that is built will become “silted up” (i.e. people will stay in the hostel over the long term.) The effect of this is that residents of the hostel are permanently excluded in a homeless state, while people who become newly homeless are unable to access emergency accommodation when they need it because it is full.

In summary, respondents identified the need for, but also the limits of, an emergency accommodation response. It is by nature a sticking plaster, not a cure. Hostels have a tendency to institutionalise, with measures originally conceived as temporary becoming permanent- while at the same time failing to

<sup>17</sup> Feantsa, 1999, Services for Homeless People, - Innovation and change in the European Union- Bill Edgar, Joe Doherty, Amy Mina-Coull

<sup>18</sup> However some interviewees, including some homeless people suggested less formulaic approaches to providing accommodation for homeless people – “less big hostels”.

offer the necessary stability and opportunity to help homeless people find a way out of social exclusion. The location and apparent under-use of the hostel in Rathdrum is a dramatic symbol of what happens when there is a lack of a structured approach to homelessness.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has submitted a planning application for the establishment of a 20-bedroom hostel on a site near the seafront in the centre of the town. It is a courageous and ambitious move. The site to be redeveloped is a large, centrally situated site with no neighbouring properties so therefore likely to face fewer planning objections.

Some of the concerns raised about the Society's development of the hostel are the following:

- ▶ Some initial concern has been expressed as to whether it will be possible for the hostel to be developed in the two-year time frame proposed. A hostel has been talked about for a number of years but there has been little progress to date. Concern was also expressed that even if the two year timeframe was met there would be little or no emergency accommodation options in Bray until late 2005.
- ▶ There is some concern as to whether the hostel will receive planning permission. These concerns were even expressed by some local councillors at the Council meeting of 12th May 2003. Respondents suggested that another proposal on the same site, for example a planning application for individual apartments allocated to homeless people on a permanent basis, would be more likely to be successful. Of course any alterations will mean a resubmitting of planning but this may be a much shorter process overall. It is worth noting here that the Society of St Vincent de Paul held an open meeting on 21st July 2003 at which their plans for a hostel were received very positively. While some questions were raised about the facility, there were no objections.
- ▶ There is a lack of clarity as to who will be housed in the proposed hostel, with some suggestions that it will be Open Access, (i.e. people with drug and alcohol addictions may use the hostel as long as their behaviour is within accepted parameters) but with concerns also expressed that opiate and alcohol users do not mix.

At the Homeless Seminar in June 2003, the possibility was raised that in addition to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul hostel proposal, a further/ alternative hostel could be progressed on land owned by

the Bray Town Council. However at the above-mentioned meeting on 21st July 2003 most town councillors were present and were very supportive of the Saint Vincent de Paul project. At the present moment an alternative proposal seems doubtful.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ***There is an identified need for an emergency direct access<sup>19</sup> hostel in Bray as one of the major priorities for any plan to address homelessness. Any hostel developed should respond to the profile of the homeless population including age group and needs presenting (section 3) and should have individual sleeping rooms, shared dining/ washing facilities, 24-hour access, space for privacy and a non-institutional feel.***
2. *The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul should either progress with the planning application for the proposed hostel in Bray or transfer the site to another established housing association with experience of working directly with homeless people so that it may progress with development. A transfer of the site could be done through an open tendering process over which the Society would have full control.*
3. *If the society decides to progress with the development of the hostel itself, they should either:*
  - ▶ *Once the property is developed transfer it to a voluntary organisation with experience of working with homeless people, with the Society having management involvement at Board level.*
  - ▶ *Run the hostel at a very highly professional level, employing full time staff, maximising the involvement of other voluntary organisations in Dublin and stakeholders from Bray, have as part of its management a focus on individual key working<sup>20</sup> with residents and residents' involvement in the management of the hostel and a focus on moving people on to permanent accommodation, with strict limits on the length of time people may stay in the emergency accommodation.*
4. *If it is felt that the hostel application is unlikely to be successful then a Bray Town Council should issue clear guidelines on who, when, where and for how long people who are homeless can access Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Considering*

<sup>19</sup> Direct access means able to be accessed directly by street homeless and other vulnerable homeless people through referral by nominated individuals/ organisations

<sup>20</sup> A key worker is a case manager whose job it is to map out the course of care and support that a homeless person needs. The key worker builds up a relationship of trust with the client.

*the lack of other alternatives and the unsuitability of the Rathdrum Hostel, Bray Town Council should be more flexible in its attitude to accommodating single people in B&Bs. modified proposal for "supported permanent housing" in individual apartments should be submitted.*

5. *To reduce costs associated with B&B the Council should (a) actively attempt to house those people in B&B in the shortest possible time frame (most likely in private rented sector) and (b) source other forms of accommodation, such as local authority and private rented stock that can be allocated on an emergency basis to those people able to live semi- independently.*
6. *Emergency accommodation for families should be in self-contained units with cooking facilities and 24-hour access<sup>21</sup>. This accommodation could be accessed through more imaginative use of the Private Rented Sector, i.e. Bray Town Council renting a property from a landlord on a month-to-month basis and the Council allocating people into the accommodation for short periods based on emergency need.*

#### **(b) Bed and Breakfast**

As the information in section 4 above shows, the opportunity for homeless people to access Bed and Breakfast accommodation in the context of a lack of other housing options, is far from guaranteed. Wicklow County Council and the Department of the Environment have attempted to reduce dependence on B&Bs because of the considerable financial implications associated with their use and because they do not offer good quality accommodation relative to the price paid. However according to the Department of the Environment, B&B continues to be appropriate for families, but it needs to be accompanied with a focus on settling people into more permanent accommodation.

#### **(c) Refuge**

The women's refuge is a vital resource for women experiencing domestic violence. However it is suggested that there are insufficient places available in the refuge for people who need them. While only at the needs identification stage at the present time, the refuge is developing proposals to increase bedroom sizes, create self-contained units, increase the number of rooms on the site. They have even considered the possibility of a 'Community Building' (second stage housing) for this specific client group. If all proposals were to be carried out then a new site

and new building would be required.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7. *The capacity of the Bray Women's Refuge needs to be increased to accommodate larger families, women with boys over 15 years of age and present demand. Bray Town Council and the East Coast Area Health Board should facilitate the Women's Refuge in its expansion plans, including financial and planning assistance.*

### **5.1.2 Transitional Housing**

Through interviews with homeless people and information gathered from the Homeless Count, family/relationship breakdown appears to be by far the greatest trigger for homelessness. However interviews also drew out issues of alcohol and drug abuse and mental illness. For some homeless people, especially those leaving prison, those who have been homeless over a long period and those with addiction issues, permanent housing is unlikely to be immediately successful as the person is unlikely to have the skills available to maintain a home.

Transitional housing is accommodation generally offered on a 6-18 month basis which includes a training and support package, acknowledging that homeless individuals may well be capable of independent living in the medium to long term, but require short term support to assist resettlement and re-integration, particularly directly following prison. The typical programme is designed to provide intensive individual support to promote independent living through a carefully devised step-by-step programme of preparation.

#### **TYPICAL 3 STEP TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME**

**STEP 1** - Minimum of 3-4 months- Basic social and hygiene skills, including care for oneself and the promotion of self-esteem and self-motivation. Includes self-help group sessions, a social skills workshop and occupational activities. Personal plan on integration  
**STEP 2** - the take off phase, 6-8 months- Introducing external activities such as training. Problem solving and therapy sessions are also introduced.  
**STEP 3** - exit phase, 3 months. Preparation for leaving the centre. Subsidised shared flat, job seeking, personal activities. Typically there is also a firm commitment from providers of permanent affordable accommodation, e.g. the local authority, that people who successfully complete the programme will be housed.

<sup>21</sup> All Bed and Breakfast accommodation used in Dublin is accessible on a 24-hour basis.

There are three possible ways in the short term that the gap in transitional housing in Bray and Wicklow (there is no transitional housing in the whole of Co. Wicklow) can be addressed.

#### **(a) Shanganagh**

Earlier this year the Bray Probation and Welfare Service identified an existing property on the Shanganagh Prison complex site (which was closed last year because of the need to restructure budgets "for other more productive prison-related purposes"<sup>22</sup>.)

For reasons of its structure, its listed building status and the need for major renovation works, the Minister expressed the opinion that Shanganagh Castle does not present "as an opportunity to provide hostel accommodation." However the Bray Drugs Task Force and the Bray Homeless identified a warden's house on Shanganagh Prison Site as suitable and they propose to continue seeking the use of this house for transitional housing from the Department of Justice. The Bray Homeless Forum and the Drug Task Force are both lobbying for its retention as a community resource as a transition house for ex-offenders from Bray leaving prison to support their re-integration in to the community. The Drug Task Force has written to the Director of HOST setting out their case, including the fact that eight Bray people left prison in 2002 only to enter homelessness.

If the property on the Shanganagh site is used as a location for transitional housing there are two relatively minor hurdles that then need to be overcome.

- ▶ The first is the fact that while the site and the property sought are in Bray Probation Service's catchment area, it lies in the local authority administrative area of Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown. A way around the problem might be for the proposed transitional accommodation to house people leaving prison who are vulnerable to homelessness from both areas.
- ▶ The second is that the property and the client group will need intensive management. A housing association with experience of working with this client group, for example PACE or Depaul Trust could take possession of the property and manage it on behalf of the Probation and Welfare Service.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

8. The Probation and Welfare Service, together with the Drugs Task Force and the Homeless Forum should continue to work with the Department of Justice and

HOST for the allocation of the property situated on the boundary of the Shanganagh site to be used as transitional accommodation. The Service may also consider (a) widening the catchment area for people leaving prison who are vulnerable to homelessness to include ex-offenders from Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and (b) identifying a housing association as managers, to strengthen their case for the allocation of the property.

#### **(b) Local authority**

In the last year, Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown County Council has sought to develop a transitional accommodation facility through a private developer. They have plans for 5 newly developed self-contained units to be leased for transitional accommodation, with Dublin Simon Community as managers.

Their difficulty has been in sourcing suitable accommodation. Because of the well-established communities in some residential areas they have been unable to access existing residential properties. They have been able to find one large property in a commercial area for which the developer has sought a very high price. The scheme is a good one in principle that has presently fallen down because of the difficulty in sourcing accommodation at the right price.

There may be greater possibility of leasing/ buying/building property at a lower cost in Wicklow County compared to urban areas such as Dun Laoghaire, Blackrock and Bray.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

9. Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council should investigate the possibility of leasing from a private landlord/ developer a number of individual apartments sited together, which would be suitable for families and individuals, for transitional housing for the County. Bray Town Council should make contact with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to investigate the possibility of a joint venture transitional accommodation project in a lower housing cost location with similar support elements as proposed for the Dun Laoghaire housing project.

#### **(c) Society of Saint Vincent de Paul**

Perhaps the most immediate source of transitional accommodation available is a number of individual apartments held by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which are presently "silted-up"

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

10. The current accommodation provided to formerly homeless people by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Minister Michael McDowell

*in Bray (3 individual apartments) should be used as transitional accommodation. Bray Town Council should house those people presently occupying the units to free up the existing spaces. The Town Council should also give a guarantee of move on housing to persons that have successfully remained in occupation of the Vincent de Paul accommodation for a period of six months, if accommodation is available. Working on moving on present residents from permanent accommodation to transitional accommodation would also have the effect of the Society itself gaining expertise and knowledge of the process of moving people onto other more settled accommodation out of emergency/ transitional accommodation types. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul should also work with the local authority, their Settlement Outreach Worker and the relevant Community Welfare Office to attempt to source move-on accommodation.*

*11. The Society might also consider in its plans for a new hostel building, the incorporation of a separate transitional accommodation section (ideally in the form of individual apartments) as part of the development.*

### 5.1.3 Long-term housing access

As the Government's Integrated Strategy and other forward looking documents, such as the Dublin based Homeless Agency's Homeless Action Plan stress, access to long term housing provision is the most important element for reducing the incidence of homelessness in any area. However in Bray the available housing stock is not adapted to current demands - in particular there is a crucial lack of smaller flats and apartments available to rent, and of homes which are affordable for low-income households. The low levels of new building and the sale of existing stock means that increasing numbers of people are dependent on Rent Allowance, which is failing to match the rising levels of rent on the private market.

In this section I make short and medium term recommendations as to how the problem of access to long term housing provision can be addressed in the following areas:

- ▶ Local Authority Housing
- ▶ Supported Housing
- ▶ Traveller Accommodation
- ▶ Housing Associations

Access to private rented housing is addressed in the next section.

#### (a) Local Authority Housing

Over the last five years Bray Town Council has experienced a major surge in demand for local authority housing while at the same time being unable to respond with a correspondingly large increase in supply. The result has been what some councillors and public officials term a "housing crisis" in the town. There are more than 730 households on the local authority housing list<sup>23</sup>, which depending on average household size, translates to as many as 2,000 people or approximately 8% of the population of the town. In total there are 1,150 local authority dwellings in Bray. Last year the Town Council built 120 new housing units and a further 26 units were made available through casual vacancies.

The Bray Homeless Count found that 85% of the households who are homeless to be single person households. However the Bray local authority housing stock does not reflect the needs of this particular group or the changing profile of the housing waiting list in terms of household size and composition. The Council states that in May and June, it was possible to allocate 7 new one bed housing units, a proportion of which went to homeless people staying in precarious housing conditions. However they admit that this is atypical. The majority of single person dwellings are specifically designed for older persons (in most cases moving out of larger local authority properties). A small number of one-bed units have been built and are likely to be built in the coming years. In terms of allocation, a couple tends to get precedence over a single person when allocating a one-bedroom unit. So while single males over 50 years may be considered for a housing unit, because there is some elderly single person accommodation available, other single housing applicants can expect to wait 5 or more years.

The situation in Wicklow Town Council is equally difficult. In 2002 there were approximately 1,800 people on local authority waiting lists in County Wicklow. A housing official in County Offices suggests that, "single mothers, older people and women and children who are victims of domestic violence heavily populate the housing list". As in Bray, the size of the household is a factor in the length of time on the housing list in Wicklow. However the biggest determinant to length of wait in Wicklow is the location in which housing is sought. If the household seeks to be housed in Kilcoole then waits of 5-7 years are usually. If a property in the Tinahely area is

<sup>23</sup> At 1st June 2003. A housing official suggests that there may be some duplication of applicants on the Bray, Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire lists (i.e. people putting themselves on two or more lists) reducing the actual number of people in need of housing.

desired by the applicant then the household can be allocated within the year.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

12. *The lack of local authority housing options for single people in Bray may explain the high numbers of single homeless people and the length of time that they are staying homeless. Bray Town Council should address the needs of single people in its allocation policies and building plans for the next five years so that single people are not considerably worse off compared to larger households in terms of length of wait for housing. The Town Council should also strengthen the housing assessment system for homeless applicants.*

13. *In order to first of all stop the increase in numbers of people homeless and second reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and the length of time homeless, Bray Town Council should set a target on the number of homeless households that are housed from its waiting list during the period 2003-2006. The number of homeless households housed should increase from year to year, from 10 for example in 2003, to 15 in 2004 and so on until homelessness is reduced. A target of reducing homelessness by 50% by 2006 is possible if this and other recommendations are implemented in full.*

14. *Because the great majority of existing stock is in two, three and four bedroom properties<sup>24</sup>, meaning that Bray Town Council in the short term is unlikely to have sufficient smaller units to house the 85% of homeless households that are single person households, the Council should attempt to house 3 or 4 single homeless people sharing a house together. The success of this proposed sharing scheme, which is used heavily in the UK and Northern Ireland and is being introduced in Galway, Cork and Limerick, is dependent on a number of factors, including the coping skills of the people being housed, the location of the houses and structured support offered to ensure the tenancy is successful and conflicts are mediated. Legal issues regarding for example allocation of a tenancy to 3 single people rather than 1 single tenancy or if one person chooses to move on, should be easily resolved. One obvious way to resolve any legal issue is to allocate a house to a housing association as manager, with the housing association sub-letting the property to its nominees<sup>25</sup>.*

15. *The Town Council should enter into discussion with the Department of the Environment (initial con-*

*tact has already been made) on Bray becoming the focus for any pilot schemes that the Department proposes on meeting the needs of homeless people in areas of high housing demand. In turn the Council, taking into account the fixed administrative boundary and diminishing supply of development land (in which it appears that only infill developments are now possible), should make proposals on how existing properties in the town, including space above shops and any derelict sites, can be brought back into use as housing for vulnerable groups. This could include use of the Derelict Sites Act, incentives for existing owners or partnership arrangements with developers/ private rented sector landlords.*

The existing system of allocating housing in Bray lacks transparency and the scheme of letting priorities is not clearly prioritising homeless people. While decisions are undoubtedly made using the best possible motives by housing officials considering length of time on list and medical and compassionate grounds, there is a need for greater transparency, to disprove any possible allegations of bad decision making or political influence. It is unclear how homeless people, who are generally less articulate and lacking in political clout, are being treated. Presently it appears they are only considered as a priority to be re-housed if the Council is paying for their accommodation (for example in B&B).

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

16. *A new points system for the allocation of housing should be introduced that is transparent and clear and by its nature is more efficient. Someone who is homeless should receive high priority status on the housing list. While some officials express concern that people may make their housing situation worse to advance themselves on the housing list, there is no evidence to suggest that this does occur, although the normal checks and balances should apply.*

#### **(b) Traveller Accommodation**

The Bray Homeless Count reveals that a large number of Travellers experience homelessness, including in particular families that are sharing houses inappropriately with friends. This report would be remiss not to include some reference to the particular needs of Travellers in accessing appropriate accommodation.

As discussed earlier, while the greater majority of Travellers in Bray are in settled accommodation, there are a relatively large number of Travellers

<sup>24</sup> and also because these larger properties are becoming somewhat difficult to let.

<sup>25</sup> There is already an example of this in Newtown Mount Kennedy where a 2-bed unit has been allocated to the Health Board as tenant, for them to hold nomination rights and management responsibility.

living on the side of roads without access to services. Bray Traveller Groups argue that these families too are homeless. Traveller groups also note that there is a tendency for young Travellers, when they get married, to set up in caravans together, often in locations without basic services, because of the lack of options available to them. The vast majority of these new households want individual homes similar to those in which they have been raised.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**17. Some Travellers experience not only a lack of the most basic facilities and services but homelessness as well. Housing Travellers who are homeless in Bray should be an important responsibility of the Wicklow Local Authority<sup>26</sup> as a way of not only meeting their legal responsibilities of the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy, but in addressing the problem of homelessness too. The provision of accommodation to Travellers experiencing homelessness should be addressed in conjunction with the National Traveller Accommodation Strategy.**

**While most Travellers seek permanent local authority homes in the community, as part of this strategy, the culture of nomadism, especially for Travellers who wish to raise horses, should be respected and planned for. The lack of smaller units for Traveller families should also be considered in new developments.**

#### **(c) Supported Housing**

The reintegration of long-term homeless people into permanent affordable housing with normal tenancy rights has been an emerging and key objective for European governments and organisations working with homeless people throughout the 1990s. There is some evidence from case studies across Europe (for example in Germany, Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands<sup>27</sup>) that this can be successfully achieved even for people who have fewer coping skills and a background of institutional care.

Supported housing means housing allocated to people who are unable to live independently without continuous support. This housing option is typically in shared properties with communal areas<sup>28</sup>. Support can be offered on a live in basis or less intensively, while places are offered on a permanent basis and residents tend to live there over the long term. The development of supported housing has been a critical element of the success of settling people in the community with normal tenancy rights.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**18. The provision of supported housing in Bray is a vital step in addressing the needs of older homeless and/ or homeless people with mental health difficulties, who have temporary or insecure accommodation and are ready to settle in the community but need ongoing support. The most experienced providers of this type of accommodation are Housing Associations and they should be invited to examine possibilities for its development in the town. Existing large Council housing can also be used to provide smaller supported housing.**

19. Many interviewees suggested that the psychiatric services in Co. Wicklow need to more fully address the housing and other basic needs of its clinic group, particularly those who become homeless. Another group home in Bray is argued for, considering the slow rate of move on from existing housing and the need for the integration of mental health services with housing for this particularly vulnerable group.

#### **(d) Housing Associations**

As far as can be ascertained there are no housing associations presently operating in Bray and few others in the rest of Co. Wicklow. This is a remarkable gap in provision, considering the growing role housing associations are playing at a national level and the particular skills and competencies they have in working with more vulnerable/ difficult to manage groups. The lack of specialised knowledge among housing providers in working with some of the multifaceted problems that the homeless population sometimes presents would be rectified with the introduction of housing associations in the town.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**20. Housing associations with their specialised knowledge, singular focus and access to direct Government funding (through the Capital Assistance Scheme) are ideal vehicles to progress plans to address homelessness. Introducing housing associations to Bray can be achieved in one of two ways:**

- (a) Bray Partnership or another organisation in the town could either set up or support the development of an indigenous housing organisation. This would have resource implications, but the Department of the Environment has a small budget scheme to facilitate such a process. This would have the advantage of greater local control and a continued focus for the Homeless Forum but would have to borrow from expertise from more experienced organisations.**
- (b) Housing associations operating in other parts of**

<sup>26</sup> Regular communication between Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council is required when trying to identify appropriate lands for halting sites as some land in the Bray environs comes under the auspice of Wicklow County Council.

<sup>27</sup> Feantsa, 1999, Services for Homeless People, - Innovation and change in the European Union- Bill Edgar, Joe Doherty, Amy Mina-Coull.

<sup>28</sup> An examples is the Vincent de Paul project on Carlyle Terrace, which is a house bought for 4 men, all in their late 50s, who have alcohol difficulties. They have settled very well in this medium/ long-term housing option.



Ireland could be encouraged to expand into Bray. This has the advantage of being the most straight forward. However development would be completely at the discretion of the housing association and it may be difficult for any outside association to find property/ sites to develop.

## 5.2 The Community Welfare Service and Access to Private Rented Accommodation

While the discretionary nature of the Community Welfare Service is often said to be one of its strengths, through research a number of difficulties have been identified for homeless people using the Service.

Some agencies working with homeless people find that some Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) can be less helpful in some cases, particularly regarding the issuing of deposits and the setting of rent levels. Recent memos sent by the Department of Social Welfare state that in "exceptional circumstances" people may be allocated accommodation at rates above the maximum and that deposits will be paid to ensure access to accommodation. In Dublin "exceptional circumstances" is commonly understood to mean people "out of home", however the Offices in Bray take a more restrictive interpretation.

For example people who are homeless but living with a relative or friend tend not to be considered for a deposit. Because of the less flexible attitude taken by one office as against another there are instances of homeless people looking for accommodation on one side of town where the CWO responsible takes a more flexible attitude to deposits and rent levels than in the other side of town where the CWO takes a stricter line. The ECAHB Mental Health Service has also encountered difficulties in accessing rental deposits for people moving out of psychiatric care into private rented accommodation to the extent that hospital charitable funds are used to cover the expense.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

**21. A referral of a homeless person from the Town Council or other service working with homeless people should constitute sufficient grounds for the allocation of deposits and payment of higher rent levels for private rented accommodation by the Community Welfare Officers in the town. A referral from the Town Council should include an examina-**

**tion of present accommodation and previous housing history so that the Community Welfare Officer is confident that a satisfactory assessment has been carried out. Community Welfare Officers should supply accurate information to all service providers on the guidelines for the issuing of deposits and rent levels.**

22. Supplementary Welfare Allowance should be operated in a positive manner that ensures homeless people do not rely on voluntary bodies to meet basic needs like clothing and laundry costs.

### Housing Access Unit

There is a particular difficulty at the present time for someone homeless, particularly a single male, to be allocated accommodation from a landlord willing to accept SWA Rent Allowance. This difficulty has been intensified of late with the fixing of maximum rent levels for SWA payments<sup>29</sup>, leading to some landlords leaving the SWA system and increasing the shortage of separate single person accommodation for older males. Another part of the new regulations is that landlords charging rents higher than the levels set cannot be included in the SWA scheme.

The difficulty caused by the setting of maximum rent levels is particularly intense in Bray because in contrast with other places there is no evidence of a dropping off of rents levels in Bray.

Because of the difficulty in housing single homeless people in Dublin, the Homeless Agency asked Threshold to set up and run a Housing Access Unit to facilitate homeless people's access into private rented accommodation. The Unit has been up and running since December 2002 with a full compliment of staff since April 2003 (consisting of 3 project workers and 1 manager).

The Unit deals with people homeless in Dublin and its environs (including Bray) who want to be housed in private rented accommodation. People who want to be housed outside Dublin can be housed there e.g. people have been housed in Maynooth. To date the Unit has made no contact with CWOs or landlords in Bray but they have already dealt with a relatively big landlord in Dun Laoghaire.

To date the referral agents to the Unit have been Focus Ireland, Dublin Simon, Merchant's Quay Ireland, Dublin City Council and Health Board Social Workers. They refer homeless people from B&Bs,

<sup>29</sup> Rents for single persons are set at 107 euro per week, 178 euro per week for a couple and a single parent or couple with one child is set at 953 euro per month. The difference in rent levels may explain the difference in the relative difficulty in housing single parents with families versus single people.

Hostels and Transitional Accommodation. The referral agent makes the assessment<sup>30</sup> that the person is ready for private rented accommodation, the Housing Access Unit source the accommodation and the referral agent supports the individual or family in their private rented accommodation once it has been allocated. In other words the Housing Access Unit identifies landlords and maintains a database of tenants/ landlords.

For landlords the advantage is that under the scheme, (a) they receive rent in advance and a deposit once they sign up to the scheme (b) they don't need to advertise their property, they just come directly to Threshold when any vacancy arises.

The Unit has encountered some difficulty with CWOs who object to the payment of rent in advance and their lack of willingness to pay above the rent cap for homeless people even though they are empowered to do so. (The Homeless Person's Unit makes the initial payments but CWOs need to show an element of positive flexibility when administering the claim.) However because of how the scheme is structured, it has not encountered any industrial relations issues. CWOs are conscious of not getting too involved with landlords because they fear that if they recommend a particular tenant to a landlord this could create contractual obligations. This problem is overcome by the Housing Access Unit acting as agent.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

*23. Organisations working with homeless people (that are in a position to offer post-settlement support) should refer on homeless people with whom they come in contact to the Housing Access Unit based in Threshold. The scheme is an appropriate option for Bray organisations working with people who wish to access private rented accommodation, especially families and lone parents, where a fast turnaround is likely.*

*24. The Senior Community Welfare Officer for the ECAHB should consider supporting the Housing Access Unit initiative and help negotiate with CWOs in Bray on the implementation of the scheme in Bray.*

#### **Quality of Accommodation**

The quality of private rented accommodation is variable and a small number of landlords with a large portfolio of properties let their premises out to SWA claimants. They have a strong hold over the rental market and thus the quality of the accommodation

offered in the town.

Only about 40% of landlords are registered in Bray. The failure to register is not the responsibility of the CWOs, the responsibility lies with the Local Authority. While many interviewees expressed hope that the new incoming legislation for private rented accommodation may change the lack of regulations, the poor quality of some of the accommodation is unlikely to be rectified. Environmental Health Officers are available to the Local Authority to make checks on landlord accommodation but according to interviewees they are rarely utilised for this purpose.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

*25. The quality and safety of accommodation is often an important factor in maintaining vulnerable people in their accommodation and out of homelessness. Bray Town Council should utilise the Environmental Health Officers available to it to make periodic checks on the quality and safety of the lower end of the private rented accommodation to ensure it meets basic standards. However there was some concern expressed that stringent inspections might drive some landlords out of the lower rent market and this should be taken into account when inspections are made.*

### **5.3 Support Services**

Many vulnerable homeless people require extra help in order for them to live in and be part of a community.

#### **Support can include:**

- ▶ Help in setting up and maintaining a home
- ▶ Help in developing domestic and practical skills
- ▶ Help in developing social skills/managing behaviour
- ▶ Advice, advocacy and liaison with statutory agencies
- ▶ Help in managing finances and dealing with welfare claims
- ▶ Emotional support, counselling and advice
- ▶ Help in gaining access to other services (e.g. training, education)
- ▶ Help in establishing social contacts and activities
- ▶ Help in establishing personal safety and security
- ▶ Peer support and befriending

The goal of support is to stimulate people to live more independently. That includes promoting a return to normal life and extending the supply of

<sup>30</sup> The assessment should explore previous tenancies/ additions/ money issues. The referral process requires a guarantee of post-settlement support.

care without extending the budget. While there is not the same deficiency in the area of support compared to accommodation, a number of recommendations are made in this area.

**(a) Co-ordination of support services**

As explained earlier there are a number of organisations and staffing roles in Bray, with different remits that are directly and indirectly supporting homeless people. However their functions are not co-ordinated with numerous gaps and in some cases even some overlap.

The main position that could co-ordinate these disparate services is the Outreach Settlement Worker employed part time by the Local Authority. However this role is presently shared with the rest of Wicklow County and is more focused at present with placing people in emergency accommodation.

The East Coast Area Health Board is also lacking in assigned staffing resources for social inclusion measures, such as support to homeless people. In comparison to the South Western Area Health Board where seven grade 7 staff and other necessary administration supports have been allocated to a separate Social Inclusion Section, the ECAHB Social Inclusion Section is very underdeveloped, with only one senior staff member available for half time and with no specific support staff available.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**26. *The outreach settlement worker, through weight of workload, is presently not able to concentrate on the settlement role that the role was initially designed to address. For example while the settlement worker has viewed a number of flats and negotiated with landlords on behalf of homeless people, she has not yet been able to offer advice or support on an ongoing basis to homeless people to ensure the tenancies set up have been maintained. The settlement function is a vital one and needs to be supported. The Outreach Settlement Worker's workload should be rebalanced between Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council to reflect the concentration of homeless people in Bray. The post should also be made permanent.***

**27. *The East Coast Area Health Board should consider apportioning additional staffing roles to the social inclusion section within the Health Board to help co-ordinate the different organisations and staffing roles that are working to support homeless people in the region. This will also support the development***

*of a structured response to the needs of homeless people.*

**(b) Mental Health**

Homeless people with a drug or alcohol dependency and homeless people with a mental illness are groups in need of particular support. These two groups are examined separately<sup>31</sup>.

The Wicklow/ Bray psychiatric service does provide an outreach service in the form of a Community Psychiatric Nurse and a Psychiatric Social Worker and psychiatric out-patient clinics are run weekly at the Lincara Centre with emergency referrals being seen there almost daily or by arrangement. Additional support in the form of attendance at the Lincara Day Centre or counselling by the Alcoholism Counsellor, either individually or in a group may be offered as appropriate. It is the view of the Psychiatric Social Worker Team Leader that it is possible to engage any individual who might benefit from a psychiatric involvement.

However it is notoriously difficult to include homeless people in existing services. This problem was identified in the Dun Laoghaire area and in response a specialised mental health outreach support scheme funded by the ECAHB and operated by St. John of God's, work on an outreach basis in the Crosscare Shelter in Dun Laoghaire.

The following recommendation is made to better address the needs of homeless people with mental health difficulties.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**28. *A similar scheme to that operating in Dun Laoghaire with the Crosscare shelter and St. John of God's should operate for Bray for vulnerable mentally ill homeless people. This can best be achieved by existing services explicitly identifying the needs of homeless people and the services they are using. Homeless people with mental health difficulties can be met and supported, in the short term, in all forms of emergency and supported accommodation and in the outreach centres used presently and in the medium term, in the hostel once it has been established.***

**(c) Drug and Alcohol Dependence**

Bray has been identified as having a significant drugs problem. The town was designated as the 14th Drugs Taskforce area in 1999. The numbers of people with drug addictions whose chaotic lifestyle has led to them becoming homeless is relatively small however.

<sup>31</sup> However it is worth noting that among the homeless population there is a high incidence of dual diagnosis, i.e. psychiatric illness coupled with a drug or alcohol abuse problem. It is the experience of the Newcastle Hospital service that homeless people who present will in general have been abusing alcohol/ drugs. People with a dual diagnosis (in Bray this would generally be a personality problem and alcohol abuse) are much less likely to receive a treatment for any psychiatric problem they face.

The greater proportion of homeless people experiencing an addiction, are addicted to alcohol.

Drug users are in an invidious situation as regards accommodation. If occupying local authority accommodation they may be evicted through anti-social behaviour legislation. If using illegal opiates they may use money for rent and other financial commitments to pay for drugs. The paradox is that without accommodation the drug user will not be able to begin to address their drug and other problems and their behaviour will likely become more chaotic and drug dependent.

There are a number of basic musts for homeless drug addicts. The first is provision of drug substitutes - in Ireland methadone is the most commonly prescribed drug. This provides some peace and calm in the addict's mind and is essential for stabilisation and regulation, in social and medical terms. When the need to score illegal drugs slips away, stabilised use and re-integration into society come within reach again.

The other essential is getting the homeless addict off the street. Any stability in drug use or improvement in health is impossible to maintain when sleeping rough. Low threshold, harm reduction style hostels are often the only places that homeless addicts will tolerate.

The second step is in channelling a homeless addict out of their hostels (away from other drug users) into more permanent housing with a social support. This can prove difficult but necessary. As part of settlement there need to be activities to fill the day, including training and work experience and care and support in the addict's home.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*29. A range of accommodation solutions is needed to meet the needs of homeless drug users. In particular any emergency hostel developed should keep in focus the need to accommodate homeless addicts who are perhaps the most excluded group and the most likely to sleep rough.*

*30. The Community Addiction Team and the ECAHB Drug and Aids Outreach Workers should liaise more directly with other homeless services, including the local authority, in developing a key worker system for homeless drug users, where the Addiction Team and Outreach Workers identify homeless people who would benefit and develop individual care plans for these individuals.*

Many of the same elements of working with drug addicts also apply to chronic alcohol users. It is equally difficult to address the alcohol addictions of people when they are out of home.

A number of services have been developed to address alcohol addiction. Newcastle Hospital offers a detoxification programme then refers people on to other rehabilitation centres for the full 6-8 week programmes. There is no compulsory admission for someone who abuses alcohol but there is nearly always service availability. However the primary focus of the psychiatric service is the treatment of mental illness. The present and the emerging national policy in the New Mental Treatment Act is steering people suffering from alcohol addiction away from psychiatric services.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*31. Newcastle Hospital should consider re-examining its guidelines for admission onto detoxification programmes for those homeless individuals who have been left out of standard treatments; including accepting someone homeless on a detoxification programme with behavioural problems who up to now would not receive treatment.*

*32. While it may not be possible for the Bray Community Addiction Team to offer a general social support service for the homeless, the Community Addiction Team should consider employing a new staff member or redeploying an existing member of staff to work on an outreach basis with homeless people in the town.*

*33. Any emergency hostel developed should keep in focus the need to accommodate homeless alcoholics who are one of the most excluded groups and more likely to sleep rough.*

#### **(d) Gardai**

The Gardai normally encounter homeless people when they are charged for drunk and disorderly behaviour, when complaints are made by local traders or from CIE against people sleeping on the DART line. The Gardai estimate that there are 6 local homeless people who are repeat offenders, i.e. committing criminal damage or drunk and disorderly.

It is the opinion of some of the members of the local Gardai that some people arrested have psychiatric problems and that this is a particularly prevalent problem of homeless people arrested. Gardai officials (speaking in their personal capacities) recommend that the psychiatric service from Newcastle Hospital be available for call outs on a 24-hour basis to treat

and if necessary retain in hospital persons in custody as the psychiatrist sees as appropriate.

The psychiatric service argue that it is quite beyond the capacity of the limited medical personnel within the psychiatric service to offer a 24 hour call out service to the local Gardai. Furthermore they point out that it is not legally possible for psychiatrists to initiate an admission to Newcastle Hospital within the 1945 Mental Treatment Act. This can be initiated by Gardai themselves in association with a G.P.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*34. In the present system, Gardai often encounter problems in accessing psychiatric services within the time limit that the person can be legally held<sup>32</sup>. Gardai also encounter difficulties in getting doctors from Newcastle Hospital to make call outs on week-ends. Newcastle Hospital points out that it is not legally possible for psychiatrists to initiate an admission to Newcastle Hospital within the 1945 Mental Treatment Act. Clear guidelines should be agreed between Newcastle Hospital and Gardai on protocol for working with homeless people who are mentally ill.*

*35. The Gardai in Bray are often one of the main contact points between the homeless person and statutory services. The Gardai should consider addressing any training gaps that may exist when working with homeless people, including those people who sleep rough. This issue has been identified at a national level, with Focus Ireland offering courses to Gardai that seek it, in working with homeless people in their communities.*

## **5.4 Prevention and Education**

The most cost effective and productive way to address homelessness is to prevent it happening in the first place. The most effective preventative strategy is to reduce the incidence of poverty. The next most effective preventative approach is to provide sufficient safe homes at affordable rents.

While these national level issues may be the most effective preventative strategies they are not always within the power of local statutory and voluntary organisations to influence. However there are other more local issues such as:

- ▶ Co-ordination of services
- ▶ Training of staff and volunteers in contact with homeless people

- ▶ Preventing evictions and breakdown of existing tenancies,

that are achievable and of considerable importance in preventing homelessness too.

#### **Co-ordinating services**

If services work together in a seamless net then vulnerable people are far less likely to fall into homelessness. In particular this means that mental health services need to liaise more closely with other services.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

*36. Financial problems often go hand in hand with homelessness. To address this, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service should be involved to work with ex-homeless people allocated permanent housing and those in permanent housing vulnerable to homelessness, to help with the timely payment of rent/ ESB and all other bills to ensure that they stay permanently housed.*

*37. In line with the Government's preventative strategy, on the release of patients from Newcastle Hospital, the local authority and mental health service should develop a clear protocol with each other prior to the release from the hospital of a patient so that the ex-patient is not released into a homeless situation.*

*38. Rent allowance should continue to be paid to ensure that a person in subsidised private rented accommodation admitted to Newcastle Hospital or other treatment centre for alcohol detoxification and/or mental health treatments can retain their accommodation. Once this procedure is established, in consultation with the Senior Community Welfare Officer, the psychiatric social worker should be the officer responsible for informing the Community Welfare Office of the status of their client.*

#### **Training**

A noted gap among some organisations involved with service delivery is the lack of expertise in addressing homelessness. Many services in Bray focus on addressing the symptoms of homelessness rather than the deeper causes. In part, knowledge and skills develop with experience but if staff and volunteers are to achieve best practice then an element of training from external specialists is required too.

*39. A training course on homelessness, including a focus on working with people with mental health problems, the special needs of drug users and those*

<sup>32</sup> If the person is intoxicated they can be held for up to six hours

who abuse alcohol should be run in Bray in the short term. The ECAHB may consider funding. Training should be provided to all homeless service providers, including volunteers of the agencies who work directly with homeless people. Alternatively the Homeless Agency runs courses on a continual basis and Bray Partnership may consider co-ordinating with the Homeless Agency to see whether it would be possible for service providers from Bray to attend. If it is Bray Partnership should inform interested organisations and individuals about courses and dates.

#### **Preventing evictions and breakdown of existing tenancies**

Providing quality help sooner can lead to people staying in their homes, including a reduced need to evict and exclude. Among this group are tenants who have the tools to live independently but make a mess of their home or their area, have serious rent arrears or cause trouble in their direct living environment. In Amsterdam the city medical and psychiatric team works on the street and in the first-line support institutions, tracking down patients and putting together a package of treatments. Police also have a central support role. However the view in Bray from initial discussion is that Gardai have only a minor role to play in addressing such anti-social behaviour.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

40. *If organisations and individuals like the East Coast Area Health Board Drug and Aids Workers, community mental health workers, the Gardai, the local authority and care organisations work pro-actively as a team to reduce anti-social behaviour in an area then evictions can be minimised, problem cases can stay in their home and the neighbourhood gets peace and quiet again. Bray Partnership should set up a forum meeting to discuss how co-operation of this kind between the housing department, the housing estate officer and the estate management forums could identify those households at risk of eviction at an early stage and have some mechanism for referral to appropriate support services.*

41. *The ECAHB Drug and Aids Workers and the Bray Community Addiction Team should join together to develop a workshop for tenant associations to raise awareness of drug addiction, allay the fears of providing community services in their areas and reduce the misapprehensions of those who use drugs and of housing drug users on maintenance programmes in the community.*

### **5.5 Strategy and Finance**

The final set of recommendations focuses on a plan

for implementation, including how the recommendations can be financed.

Any strategy needs to have the following basic components<sup>33</sup>:

#### **(a) Planning**

- ▶ Identifying the user group
- ▶ Defining the needs of the user group
- ▶ User involvement
- ▶ Service planning

#### **(b) Implementation**

- ▶ Project development
- ▶ Project design

#### **(c) Management**

- ▶ Finance
- ▶ Project Management

#### **(d) Monitoring**

- ▶ Evaluation
- ▶ Record Keeping

#### **(a) Planning**

Through the development of the Bray Homeless Forum and the commissioning, interviewing, awareness raising and user involvement in this research, the planning stage has already been completed to a certain extent. The Bray Forum has local credibility and is action orientated. However for the formalisation of these plans a further step is required, to ensure the Bray Homeless Forum and the recommendations in this research have statutory backing.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

42. *All Homeless Fora are the responsibility of the Local Authorities. The Department of the Environment has recommended, and other stakeholders endorse the recommendation, that the Bray Homeless Forum should be re-constituted under Bray Town Council rather than continue to be run by Bray Partnership. With a formalised statutory link there is less danger of the Forum being viewed as acting alone as it would have an inbuilt mechanism to feed into the County's Homeless Forum, with the Bray Town Council responsible to the County Manager.*

43. *Bray Partnership should have a continuing support role in the Homeless Forum ensuring that the good practice that they established is maintained.*

#### **(b) Implementation**

Successful implementation requires that all stakeholders buy into an agreed vision. This does not mean that one solution is best. Good practice recognises that successful implementation requires moving beyond universalistic solutions in favour of

<sup>33</sup> Feantsa, 1999, Services for Homeless People, - Innovation and change in the European Union- Bill Edgar, Joe Doherty, Amy Mina-Coull.

programmes tailored to the specific needs of homeless individuals.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

44. *The Bray Homeless Forum should agree a vision for their work with measurable targets for their next three years work. For example the Forum might set a vision that,*

*“No-one will be rough sleeping in Bray and no one from Bray will need to go to Dublin or another place to get their housing needs met by 2005. The numbers of people on the Local Authority Housing list identified as homeless will be reduced by X% and xx people will be settled in permanent housing and maintaining their tenancy. In addition the needs of single homeless people will start to be addressed. Services offered will be at a more professional level and existing service providers and new entrants will offer a more complete safety net with an explicit focus on people out of home.”*

45. *Any new services to be funded from statutory sources should be through a tendering process inviting experienced homeless service providers from outside Bray as well as local providers to tender.*

46. *The Forum should seek support and advice from the Homeless Agency on any major developments, notwithstanding the Agency’s own exclusive Dublin area remit. There may also be a role for established voluntary organisations operating in Dublin in promoting good practice in hostel provision, providing support to improve and enhance standards and advise on monitoring systems.*

#### **(c) Management**

While most of the recommendations made in this report do not have financial implications or are cost neutral, some recommendations do require funding.

The two main sources of funding are likely to be the Health Board and Local Authority/ Department of the Environment. While Government funding for homeless services is particularly constrained at the present time, imaginative and balanced funding proposals can still be successful if they show a genuine meeting of need and the provision of additional accommodation and support.

Presently the East Coast Area Health Board spends 450,000 euro on social inclusion initiatives, the greater proportion of this (approximately 85%) going to the Hostel in Dun Laoghaire. In the development of new services it is the view of the Department of the Environment that the ECAHB should commit itself upfront to cover any care costs

before new accommodation services are developed. The ECAHB in turn has suggested that it will fund additional projects only when the local authority has committed itself to providing more accommodation.

The Department of the Environment has committed itself to funding new accommodation services that are appropriate, funded through the Capital Assistance Scheme, whereby 90% of the capital cost of development (up to certain ceilings per housing unit) will be statutorily funded. The Department has also stated that in the very short term, proposals for a short term hostel in Bray (along the lines of a pre-fab option like Crosscare, Dun Laoghaire) or other accommodation options can be funded if it leads to reductions in the use and cost of B&Bs.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

47. *In the short term, the main sources of funding for new services will be the Health Board and the Department of the Environment/ Local Authority with some voluntary funding-raising. The Health Board has the greatest scope to source additional funding (most of its present budget is focused in Dun Laoghaire). The Health Board should state their commitment to funding the support element in any new emergency/ transitional accommodation and support service to settle people in the community and assign a budget as necessary.*

48. *Additional funding, in smaller amounts may be accessible through schemes such as the Back to Education Initiative (to support people in learning basic skills such as management of the home) and the Dormant Account moneys to fund proposals for a day care centre. Even though property prices in Bray are some of the highest in Ireland, capital building works should be able to be financed from the Capital Assistance Scheme, if used imaginatively.*

49. *Funding applications for new developments should be reported back for consideration and if appropriate, endorsement by Bray Homeless Forum.*

#### **(d) Monitoring**

Once a vision has been set, it needs to be evaluated so that there is an accurate recording of data and tracking of the progress of homeless people.

One of the most noticeable and surprising finding in the Homeless Count and through research has been the inadequacy of administrative records and the lack of knowledge about movement and progress of homeless households after contact with the relevant organisation. That is particularly striking in the case of the local authorities, where a sizeable proportion

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of people on the homeless list are not necessarily homeless while those using homeless services are not on the list.

For example Wicklow County Council knows that 53 people were allocated to use the Rathdrum Hostel since it was contracted but there is no further knowledge on movement, progress or otherwise of those individuals. The only statistics available are those on a ledger of the numbers of people who called to county council offices as homeless. There are no local authority records on allocations of housing to homeless people to check progress and analyse performance. It was not possible, after a number of requests, to find out the exact number of one-bedroom units that Bray Town Council manages.

Best practice would suggest that there is a need to maintain accurate housing lists, to know who exactly is homeless and to monitor their progress and to share this information between voluntary and statutory bodies.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*50. The local authority, health board and other organisations should agree a system of recording information on people homeless to monitor progress and ensure people do not “slip through the safety net”. A particular focus should be on accurate monitoring of homeless people on the local authority’s housing list. Once services are more developed, the local organisations should consider joining up with the LINK system (being implemented in Dublin by the Homeless Agency), to record information and monitor the progress of homeless people, in Bray and Dublin.*



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## SECTION 6 - CONCLUSION

This report makes a considerable number of recommendations to address homelessness, fifty in total. This reflects the recent greater awareness of the problem of homelessness in the town and the reliance on a more traditional approach, rather than any negligence on the part of committed and dedicated people from Bray.

The focus of the recommendations is on integration, which by its nature involves coordination between housing and social services as well as between the public sector and voluntary service providers.

The key elements in integration are:

- ▶ Good quality housing units which are affordable for low-income groups and suitable for single people as well as for families, either by renovating/ converting existing buildings or by starting new construction projects.
- ▶ A framework of continuous support adapted to address the individual needs of vulnerable people, including settlement support to sustain

their tenancy and training that gives people the opportunity to learn new skills and to obtain recognized qualifications and access to employment.

It also involves homeless organisations working with private and social landlords, enabling people at risk of homelessness to sustain a normal tenancy. Voluntary organisations have a critical lead role in initiating supported housing projects as well as in their management and implementation, often within the context of uncertain funding regimes.

The identification of the scale and profile of homeless people, the profiling of existing services and the gaps in provision and the 50 recommendations contained in this report set out a path towards reversing the homeless crisis. The true challenge is in making the recommendations become reality so that the life experience of homeless people is improved and the growth in the number of homeless people is halted and reversed.

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# APPENDICES

## 1. List of contributors:

Fran Berry, Community Worker

Eileen Byrnes, Bray Partnership

Russell Chapman, Threshold

Frank Costello, CWO Bray

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David Forde, Bray Town Council

Mick Groves, Cracked Pots

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Mary Jones, Department of the Environment and Local Government

Noel Kinsella, Gardai, Bray

Pauline Long, LEAP, Local Education for Adult Progression for Traveller Men Project

Ray Meade, SCWO, ECAHB, based in Wicklow Town

Theresa Mulvaney, Bray Town Council

Jim O'Brien, Bray Travellers Development Network

Sheila O'Connor, Wicklow County Council

Leonie O'Neill, East Coast Area Health Board

Davin Roche, Bray Partnership

Naomi Roche, Bray Town Council

Fred Rowntree, Senior Social Worker, Newcastle Hospital

## **Round Table Discussion Participants at Homeless Seminar - 30th June 2003**

Pat Doherty (Depaul Trust)

Christine McTaggart (Focus Ireland)

Sean Megahy (Simon Community)

Tom Healy (Crosscare)

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## **2. Survey Instructions**

Enclosed please find a survey form to count the number of people who are homeless in Bray for the week of the 24th to the 30th March. The form is a snapshot count for all people who are homeless during the week only and is not a count of people homeless at other times in the year.

The count is more than a count of those people roofless, i.e. sleeping rough, which is the common understanding of homelessness. The survey count follows the definition of the 1988 Housing Act to include those sleeping rough, sleeping in a hostel, in a Bed and Breakfast or sleeping in a friend's house because the family/individual has nowhere else to sleep. If you are in doubt, record the details of the interviewee(s) and explain the full circumstances of their homelessness.

**The following is an explanation of the different questions in the survey count.**

- Q1. It is most important that you record the "unique identifier" of the person being interviewed. Some people may not be happy to answer other questions but the unique identifier is the most important part of the questionnaire and the other details may be able to be collected elsewhere
- Q2. To ensure that the person is not being asked to fill in a form more than once we find out whether they have been surveyed in the week already. If the person is uncertain, then fill out the form anyhow. The unique identifier will ensure there is no duplication.
- Q3. We ask whether the person was raised in Bray to better understand whether the homeless population in Bray is self-generated or not. Sometimes homeless people can lead very transient lives and if this is the case in the Bray homeless population, this question will reveal this.
- Q4. The answer to question 4 is yes or no.
- Q5. If yes, then ask question 5. Q6. If no, then ask question 6.
- Q7. To verify whether the person is homeless we ask Q7. This is the legal definition of someone who is homeless. If the person is not sleeping in one of these conditions then they are not homeless for the purposes of this count.
- Q8. To find out what type of homelessness the individuals experience during the week of the count, please fill out this question.
- Q9. The year the person first became homeless is sought for question 9.
- Q10. Some people may be newly homeless but have experienced homeless before their present spell of homelessness. To quantify this we ask Q9.
- Q11. To understand a little more about people's pathways into homelessness we ask question 11.
- Q12. Some people homeless, especially those staying in refuges and bed and breakfasts, are homeless with family. To reflect this more fully, we ask question 12.

***Thank you most sincerely for your time and help in filling in these forms.***

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### **3. Existing local authority scheme of lettings in Bray**

**Households are considered for housing if they are:**

Homeless

Travellers (persons to whom section 13 of the Housing Act, 1988 applies)

Living in accommodation that is unfit or materially unsuitable

Living in overcrowded accommodation

Sharing accommodation involuntarily

Young persons leaving institutional care or without family accommodation

In need of accommodation for medical or compassionate reasons

Elderly (in OPD or other accommodation)

Disabled or handicapped

Not reasonably able to meet the cost of the accommodation they are occupying or to obtain suitable alternative accommodation

## 4. SURVEY ON HOMELESSNESS IN BRAY

24th – 30th MARCH 2003

CENTRE NAME: .....

Interviewer's Name

Date

We are conducting a very short survey on homelessness over the course of this week and would like you to help us by completing a very short questionnaire. It will take only about 2 minutes of your time. All the answers you give will be strictly confidential.

### Q1. What are: (a) your initials (b) your date of birth and (c) gender?

(a) Initials

(b) D.O.B.   -   -     
Day Month Year

(c) Male  Female

(INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENSURE THAT (a), (b) & (c) ABOVE ARE FILLED IN AS ACCURATELY AS POSSIBLE)

### Q2. Did you fill out one of these questionnaires at any time over the last week 24th to 30th March in Bray?

Yes  Where \_\_\_\_\_ (END INTERVIEW)

No/ Don't Know  Go to Q3.

### Q3. Were you born in Bray?

Yes  No  If no, where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

What year did you come to Bray? \_\_\_\_\_

### Q4. Are you currently on a Local Authority housing or homeless list?

Yes

No

### Q5. Which Local Authority list or lists?

\_\_\_\_\_

Since When?

Month \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_

### Q.6 Why not? (Tick most important reason-one only).

- a. There is no point
- b. Barred by local authority
- c. Arrived in Bray only recently
- d. allocated accommodation, which I didn't like or was unsafe
- e. Other Reason (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q7. In the last week did you have to sleep rough; sleep in a hostel; sleep in a refuge; sleep in a Bed and Breakfast; or sleep in a friend's house because you have nowhere else to sleep?**

Yes  No

**Q8. I would like you to think back over the last week. How many nights have you: (a) slept rough (including in a squat or other place not normally used for human habitation); (b) slept in a hostel; (c) slept in a refuge; (d) slept in a B&B; (e) slept in a friend's house because you had nowhere else to sleep; (f) slept in your own house/ flat/ other accommodation (including rented accommodation, mobile home, etc.) (g) slept in traditional/ supported housing (h) slept elsewhere?**

	No of nights
a) Slept rough	
b) Slept in a hostel	
c) Slept in a refuge	
d) Slept in a B&B	
e) Slept in friend/ relative's house because you had nowhere else to sleep	
f) Slept in transitional/ supported housing	
g) Slept in your own house/ flat/ other accommodation	
h) Slept elsewhere. <i>Please Specify</i>	
<b>Total</b>	

Must sum to 7 nights

**Q9. Over the last 5 years, approximately how long in total would you say you have been homeless?**

Less than 1 month <input type="checkbox"/>	6 to under 12 months <input type="checkbox"/>	3 to less than 5 year <input type="checkbox"/>
1 to under 3 months <input type="checkbox"/>	1 to less than 2 years <input type="checkbox"/>	All that time (i.e. 5 years) <input type="checkbox"/>
3 to under 6 months <input type="checkbox"/>	2 to less than 3 years <input type="checkbox"/>	If for all of 5 years, how long have you been continuously homeless? _____

**Q10. When did you first become homeless?**     (Year)

**Q11. What was your last form of accommodation before becoming homeless? (Tick one)**

- a. Family home,
- b. private rented accommodation
- c. local authority accommodation

d. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q12a. Do you have a partner or any children in your family group AT THE MOMENT, who are in the same position as yourself regarding homelessness?**

Partner only:  Children only:  Partner and Children:  No:  (END INTERVIEW)

**Q12b. In addition to yourself, how many homeless adults (persons aged 18 years and over) are in your family group at the moment?**

\_\_\_\_\_ adults

**Q12c. What are: (a) the initials (b) the dates of birth and (c) the gender of these other adults in your family group?**

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

**Q12d. How many children (persons aged 17 years or less) in your family group are in the same position as yourself regarding homelessness at the moment?**

\_\_\_\_\_ children

**Q12e. What are these children's (a) initials (b) dates of birth and (c) gender?**

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female

Initials    Date of Birth       Male  Female



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## NOTES

