

Joint Meeting of the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness and the National Homelessness Consultative Committee

26th February 2014, Custom House

Attendance

Michael Layde (Chair)	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Mike Allen	Focus Ireland
Kerry Anthony	DePaul Ireland
Aidan Culhane	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Concepta DeBrun	Health Service Executive
Theresa Donoghue	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Dáithí Downey	Dublin City Council
Pat Doyle	Peter McVerry Trust
Tony Fahey	Homelessness Oversight Group
Caitriona Gleeson	Safe Ireland
Shirley Groarke	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Jackie Harrington	Dept. of Social Protection
Claire Hartley	Waterford City Council
Maurice Hoare	Health Service Executive
Bob Jordan	Threshold
Vincent Keenan	NABCO
Alan Kelly	Dept. of Health
Mark Kennedy	Homelessness Oversight Group
Sylda Langford	Homelessness Oversight Group
Louise Lennon	Simon Communities of Ireland
Rob Lowth	Limerick City Council
Kathleen McKillion	Irish Council for Social Housing
Paul Minogue	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Cathal Morgan	Dublin City Council
Roibeard O'Ceallaigh	Westmeath County Council
Martin O'Connor	COPE Galway
Albert O'Donoghue	Dept. Children and Youth Affairs
Carl O'Rourke	Dept. of Social Protection.
Mary Quinn	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Gary Ryan	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government
Seamus Sisk	Irish Prison Service

Apologies

Tony Flynn	Cosc
Aileen O'Connor	Cork City Council
Eoin O'Sullivan	Trinity College Dublin
Niamh Randall	Simon Communities of Ireland
Mark Wilson	Probation Service

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed the various representatives and made opening remarks on items on the agenda which would follow for discussion, in particular updating those present on the Government's position on the Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report.

The minutes of the previous meeting (3rd December, 2013) were agreed.

2. Homelessness Oversight Group's Report

Mark Kennedy began by recapping on the objectives and approach taken by the Oversight Group in drafting their initial report. The Group's recommendations on the establishment of an Implementation Team and Unit, structured plan, housing and finance are set out in the report which is available at www.viron.ie.

Mr Kennedy reiterated that the challenges posed in sourcing the supply of accommodation for those homeless should not be underestimated, but that the key objectives of ending long term homelessness and rough sleeping by the 2016 target are achievable. However, to successfully deliver within this timeline will require those responsible for realising the objectives to drive progress and for the implementation of clear milestones and measureable deliverables. This task and the examination of financing models and the various options for increasing supply of homeless accommodation including a ring-fenced initiative will be under the responsibility of the newly established Implementation Team. Mr Kennedy observed that data issues which provide the primary source of information on homelessness is an indication of the complexity of the homeless area and it is vital that there is a common understanding and agreement of what constitutes definitions used in the reporting indicators. Mr Kennedy recommended that the workshop on data should move on to considering this issue. Mr Kennedy also advised that the future role of the Oversight Group would now evolve to having an oversight and advisory function.

3. Implementation of Homelessness Oversight Group

The Chair informed the group that the Government at its meeting on 25 February, 2014, had noted the Homelessness Oversight Group's First Report. The Government had furthermore approved the establishment of a Homelessness Policy Implementation Team and Implementation Unit. The team is tasked with implementing the recommendations in the report and the preparation of a structured plan for delivery of the key objectives. The Implementation Team will consist of high level officials from the relevant agencies with DECLG leading the preparation of the plan. The Team will report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy in April 2014 and quarterly thereafter.

The composite members of the Implementation Team are Mr Michael Layde DECLG; Ms Helen Faughnan, DSP; Mr Owen Keegan, DCC; Mr John Hennessy, HSE and a County Manager representing local authorities (subsequently announced as Mr Eugene Cummins, Monaghan County Manager). The Team will hold its first meeting in March and will continue to meet monthly thereafter.

General discussions followed with comments made by members on the reoccurring issues of the difficult market conditions in the housing and rental sector, rent subsidy levels, the mix-match between the type of available properties and accommodation suitable to the needs of those homeless, and the need for innovative funding initiatives. Particular reference was made for the need to rethink and/or reinforce prevention strategies as this is of key importance in stemming the tide of new homeless.

Caitriona Gleeson welcomed the recommendation in the report about the transfer of funding arrangements for the provision of domestic violence refuges to the newly established child and family agency. Ms Gleeson raised concern on the multiple interpretation of rules under the Habitual Residency Condition which seem to be applied currently.

4. 2014 Funding Arrangements

Shirley Groarke outlined to the meeting the current position regarding the Section 10 homeless funding for 2014. The lead housing authorities had recently been informed of their provisional allocations for 2014, which are the same as 2013. In 2014 1% of each authority's funding will be held back based on their performance throughout the year. Following receipt of all 2013 end of year reports, the Protocols for 2014 will be finalised. Based on the discussions at the Data Workshop in December and the recommendations of the Oversight Group, there will be slight changes to the format of the Financial and Performance Reports in 2014. Following receipt of the Performance Reports for the first quarter of 2014 it is intended to hold a Data Workshop on Performance Reports at the end of April or early May. As agreed at the December workshop, a separate workshop is scheduled for 4 April to consider the Danish proposal and "Counted In". Eoin O'Sullivan (TCD) has agreed to chair this forthcoming workshop and present a paper at that workshop.

5. Any Other Business – National Social Report

Gary Ryan outlined to the meeting the European Commission's 2014 "National Social Report" which for the first time will have an important piece on homelessness. He stated this reflects the increased emphasis at EU level in relation to this issue, which is also enhanced by the important work of FEANSTA, the European umbrella group for homeless organisations. The National Social Report will cover the period for July 2013 to June 2014. The Department would welcome any submissions which will be taken into account in the preparation of the piece on homelessness in the Report. He thanked the Simon Community on the submission which they have made and requested the HSE to consider the submission of suitable material for the report on improving access to health and other services for the homeless.

The Chair stated that future CDT-NHCC meetings will be aligned with the quarterly meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, which the Department will be reporting to. Therefore it is expected that the next CDT-NHCC meeting will be held at the end April/early May.