

HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2020

NE Region Homelessness Strategic
Management Group
&
NE Region Homelessness
Consultative Forum



Murtagh & Partners

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1. INTRODUCTION

The North East Region comprises the local authority areas of Counties Louth, Cavan and Monaghan. Homelessness services are managed operationally at local level while the strategic and administrative obligations are the responsibility of the Regional Homelessness Strategic Management Group with Louth County Council as the lead, responsible agency by statute. The North East Regional Consultative Homelessness Forum is a parallel group comprising statutory, voluntary and community representatives providing direction and advice across all sectors of the Region.

Chapter 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009 is the statutory authority for the provision and of management of homelessness matters, designating housing authorities in the State as the responsible statutory providers of housing provision while also acknowledging the role of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in its statutory role of providing social and care support services.

1.1 ACTION PLAN

Section 37 of the Act requires housing authorities (now local authorities since the rationalisation/merging of the 81 housing authorities into 31 local authorities) to adopt action plans to address homelessness. Normally these plans are prepared by the regional homelessness strategic management group and for the North East Region, the 2018-20 plan will be its third 3-year plan since 2010. Once accepted at regional level, each local authority will present it to its representatives for formal adoption.

The Act also sets out the requirements of the homelessness action plans.

A homelessness action plan¹ shall specify the measures proposed to be undertaken to address homelessness in the administrative area or administrative areas concerned by the housing authority or housing authorities, as the case may be, the Health Service Executive, specified bodies, or approved bodies or other bodies providing services to address homelessness or the performance of whose functions may affect or relate to the provision of such services, including but not necessarily limited to measures to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) *the prevention of homelessness*
- (b) *the reduction of homelessness in its extent or duration*
- (c) *the provision of services, including accommodation, to address the needs of homeless households*
- (d) *the provision of assistance under section 10 (b) (i), as necessary, to persons who were formerly homeless, and*

¹ Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009

- (e) the promotion of effective co-ordination of activities proposed to be undertaken by the bodies referred to in this subsection for the purposes of addressing homelessness in the administrative area or areas concerned.

The Act also sets out the scope and content of the 3-year action plan and states that it should include:

- (a) any available information regarding the extent of the need for services to address homelessness, including, in the case of housing supports, any summary of social housing assessments prepared under [section 21](#) in respect of homeless households
- (b) the costs of the proposed measures referred to in subsection (2) and the financial resources that are available or are likely to be available for the period of the homelessness action plan to the housing authority or housing authorities concerned, the Health Service Executive or any specified body, as the case may be, for the purposes of undertaking those measures and the need to ensure the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of such resources
- (c) such policies and objectives for the time being of the Government or the Minister in so far as they may affect or relate to the provision of services to homeless persons, and
- (d) such other matters as the Minister may specify in a direction given to the housing authority under subsection (4), including (except in the case of the first homelessness action plan) a review of progress made in the implementation of the homelessness action plan during the period of the previous plan.

1.2 POLICY CONTEXT

The austerity of recent years has presented serious challenges for the provision of homelessness services throughout the State and the North East Region has been no exception. One of the key challenges arising from the recent recession and the crisis in the housing sector is the emergence of relatively new groups and numbers of people who are homeless. The supply of housing (for sale) has also declined in recent years with house prices rising as a result. People have been forced to rent and for longer periods, thus increasing demand for rented accommodation and driving up the rental prices. Such has been the relative instability in the economy and the market generally, that developers and house-builders have not been enticed into house-building programmes of any substance. A five-year slump in construction left the State facing a squeeze in the supply of new houses that drove sharp increases in property prices during 2014 and the number of new units built in 2014 was around 8,900, and was projected to be around 10,000 in 2015 and 14,000 in 2016².

² Irish Construction Prospects to 2016 DKM Economic Consultants and the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland (SCSI) April 2015

According to the AECOM³ 2017 Annual Review of the Construction Industry, Ireland's construction industry grew by 15 percent in 2016, and they expect it to grow 20 percent in value of output in 2017. The ESRI has suggested that some 25,000 houses need to be built annually to address the current gaps in housing demand⁴.

According to the Housing Agency (Ireland)⁵, construction data indicate sufficient development land, a growth in construction activity and further progress in the completion of unfinished estates. Preliminary figures for 2016 indicate that close to 15,000 completions were recorded last year, an increase of 18% on the previous year. Residential sales had increased year-on-year for the four years to 2015, but fell back in 2016; prices continued to rise, but at a slower pace. In the private rented sector, new rents in Dublin reached a new high, while rents in other parts of the country continued to rise.

Residents of private rented, social housing and some owner occupiers have been unable to retain their homes, putting demand pressure on the private rental market generally and driving rents up to levels which are unaffordable by people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness. Rental accommodation previously available to all people seeking accommodation has become scarce throughout the State, with the unintended consequence of service users remaining for longer than average periods in homelessness emergency accommodation and other temporary accommodation settings.

In terms of demand and supply, a growing population and smaller household sizes have implications for the number, type and location of housing needed, as does our current age profile (above EU average number of children) and projected growth in the numbers aged over 75. The number of households is increasing, but they are smaller in size. Based on Census 2016, a minimum of 81,118 homes are needed over the five-year period 2016 – 2020 to meet demand in our urban areas. The Housing Agency Report suggests that vacant homes offer potential to respond to this demand.

The latest Summary of Social Housing Assessments identified 91,600 households assessed as qualified and in need of social housing support. While the number of homeless has increased over the last two years, reaching over 7,000 people by the end of 2016, over that period over 5,000 sustainable exits from homelessness were recorded.

Throughout the State, emergency accommodation services may not have the capacity to assist the various target groups; and their protocols, safety and

³ Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations, and Maintenance Annual Review of the Construction Industry Island of Ireland 2017

⁴ Duffy, D., D. Byrne and J. FitzGerald (2014). 'Alternative scenarios for new household formation in Ireland', ESRI, Special Article, *Quarterly Economic Commentary*, Summer

⁵ National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2016 and Outlook for 2017-18 Housing Agency February 2017

safeguarding procedures may be insufficient to accommodate children, resulting in the use of B&B and hotel services, sometimes on an extended basis.

While these locations guarantee safe accommodation, they are only suitable for very short periods and service users are generally outside of all the mainstream homelessness supports and services⁶. While this was the case generally throughout the State, some of the LA services in the North East do maintain floating support services to some service users in B&B and hotel accommodation.

While the incidence of homelessness has increased generally in recent years since the onset of the recession, five target groups have been identified in the North East which include some service users whose needs are not being addressed, to varying degrees, within the current provision, in addition to the incidence of homelessness by single. The target groups identified are:

- single women;
- women and children;
- fathers and children;
- parents with children;
- people with complex needs including addictions, untreated mental ill-health and dual diagnosis.

Many initiatives, policies and interventions have been initiated at government level in recent years and this plan has taken account of a number of key policy directions in preparing the North East 2018-10 Homelessness Action Plan. These include:

- *Re-Building Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government July 2016*
- *Homelessness Policy Statement – (DOEHLG February 2013)*
- *The Way Home (2008-13) – a strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013 (DOEHLG August 2008).*
- *Homeless Strategy – National Implementation Plan (DOEHLG 2009).*
- *National Health Strategy, “Quality and Fairness – A Health System for You, 2001”*
- *Primary Care Strategy, A New Direction 2001.*
- *National Drugs Strategy (interim) – (2009-2016)*
- *Vision for Change (2006) – a strategy to address mental health and homelessness.*
- *Youth Homeless Preventative Strategy (2001)*
- *National Intercultural Health Strategy, (2007-2012)*

The 2018-20 strategic plan takes account of the role that it plays in the planning and implementation of responses to homelessness in the NE Region. The Strategic Management Group and the NE Regional Homelessness Consultative

⁶ Care Planning, Throughcare Case Management, Intensive Support etc

Forum have met regularly during the implementation of the previous plans and have been involved in consultation and review processes that have informed the preparation of the 2018-20 plan.

The 2018-20 plan is regarded as a document to provide a seamless continuation to the most recent plan and work within the NE Region. Services have been well-developed incrementally and strategically in the recent six years since 2013. Through the lead agency, Louth County Council, the NE Region liaises regularly with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and submits quarterly service user and financial data as required. The Department has agreed that the 2018-20 strategic plan should be workable document which progresses the developmental work being successfully implemented in previous planning periods.

The next section profiles homelessness in the NE Region, the services that exist to address homelessness and the key developments in the 2015-17 period. The final section sets out the key objectives for the 2018-20 period.

2. HOMELESSNESS IN THE NORTH-EAST REGION

This section presents a summary profile of homelessness trends in the North East during the period of the previous plan, 2015-17. It also focuses on the most recent data for 2017 which is prepared by the Region on the basis of the services provided by and through the local authorities of Cavan, Louth and Monaghan. These data are also reported to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DoHPLG) on a periodic basis.

Homelessness 2014-17

Homelessness data is expressed in many different ways in different publications. While M&P utilises ‘adults who are homeless’ as the unit of measurement, others, including the DoHPLG appeal to ‘households’ and ‘housing units’ in their nomenclature. Some also include children as ‘homeless’ which, unless specified by quantity, can present fallacious information particularly for planning purposes. These differences in presentation can also make comparative analysis incorrect. The number of children who are homeless is a significant and sensitive dataset which can inform planning, and M&P prefers to utilise their occurrence within the context of families.

Thus, in some datasets two parents and five children of the one household may be presented as seven people who are homeless or two adults thus introducing some possible misleading and impassioned elements into the interpretation of the data.

Homelessness in the State September 2017

For September 2017, the DoHPLG data notes that, in the State, there were 1,455 families homeless comprising 2,107 adults and 3,124 dependents (mainly children). Included in the adult homeless data were 893 lone parents in September 2017.

Homelessness in the North-East September 2017

In the North-East in September 2017, there were 24 families homeless, comprising 36 adults and 65 dependents (mainly children). Included in the 36 adults were 12 lone parents in September 2017. The vast majority of people in the North-East recorded as homeless presented to Louth County Council.

2.1 PRESENTATIONS BY LA AND ACCOMMODATION TYPE 2014-16

According to the data provided by the LAs, presentations have increased by 48% between 2014 and the end of 2016, from 720 to 1,070. The half-year recorded figure for 2017 is approximately 572 which suggests that a moderate increase is expected for the full 2017 year.

	2014	2015	2016
Presentations North East Region			
Cavan	83	205	241
Monaghan	33	43	77
Louth	604	631	752
Total Presentations pa	720	879	1,070

Table 1 Presentations NE Region by LA 2014-16

2.2 ADULT HOMELESSNESS AT END OF PERIOD

The data capture also records the number of adults in homelessness services at the end of each period and this is presented in Table 2 below.

Accommodation Type	2015	2016	2017 (to Sept 2017)
STA Supported Emergency Accommodation	25	44	80
PEA Private Emergency incl B&B, Hotel	32	70	59
TEA Temporary Emergency Accommodation	2	2	1
Other	0	0	0
Adults Homeless at End of Period North East Region	59	116	140

Table 2 Adults Homeless at Period End 2014 to September 2017

Table 2 summarises the trend in addressing homelessness in the North East between 2014 and September 2017. Adults in emergency accommodation provides a measurement of the type of accommodation used and one can see that from 2016, significant use was made of B&B and hotel accommodation. In 2014 and 2015, other accommodation was used for people who were unable to be accommodated in the traditional, supported, emergency accommodation and this was called TEA or Temporary Emergency Accommodation.

The increase in adults in temporary accommodation between 2015 and September 2017 is acute, moving from 59 adults in 2015 to 140 in 2017. However, the data also suggests that better use is being made of the supported emergency accommodation in 2017 with 80 persons accessing that type in September 2017 with a corresponding reduction in PEA. Adults and families in supported temporary accommodation normally have access to a Throughcare Plan for the pathway through homelessness services and back to independent living. This was not generally the case for all the persons in private emergency accommodation.

The gap in services was addressed within the new Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services (TSS) which were tendered in 2017 and which first took effect in September 2017. It is too early to assess the impact of the new TSS services, but they are more tightly targeted at eight discrete cohorts in tenancies at risk of homelessness and in PEA accommodation to ensure that the most appropriate support services are being provided.

The consultation process for this plan revealed that traveller individuals and families comprise an increasing cohort of presentations. Given that homelessness solutions may be different for the Traveller cohort, it has been suggested that the NE Region establish a specific line of communication to ensure that the current responses to homelessness meet their specific needs. The first task would be to collect service user data on the cohort since the national data suggests that Traveller access to homelessness services are 9% throughout the State but 31% in regions outside urban Dublin.

Other important details of adults accessing homelessness services in the NE Region in September 2017 include:

- The gender mix was 58% men and 42% women;
- 66% of adults were between 25 and 44 years of age, 20% between 45 and 64 years, 11% between 18 and 24 years and 3% over 65 years;
- 85% of adults accessing mainstream emergency, supported temporary accommodation have a key worker and have a care plan;
- 12% of adults accessing private emergency accommodation have a key worker and care plan;
- 19% of presentations (55) in Q2 2017 were new to homelessness services while 81% (241) were repeat presentations;
- At the end of Q2 2017, 72% of adults in all emergency accommodation had been residents for less than 6 months and 28% for 6 months or more.

2.3 FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

Family homelessness did not seem to be a major issue in the North East until 2016 and this reflects the national situation. Data for the NE Region until 2016 recorded minimal family homelessness and may have reflected the expediency with which NE local authority housing services and women and children refuge services responded at that time. However, the most recent data in September 2017 recorded some 24 families in homelessness services, comprising 36 adults and 65 dependents. Lone parent families accounted for 12 of the 24 total. As noted in Table 3 below, this was the one of the regions with the lowest incidence of family homelessness with two regions being lower – North West with 2 families homeless and the Midlands, 22 families.

Outside Dublin where the number of families homeless in September 2017 was 1,138, the range of homeless families was from 2 in the North West to 68 in the South West. The figure fluctuates month on month but from the end of 2016, the number of families in homelessness services has increased from 18 to 24 in the North-East. Many of the families have been necessarily accommodated in B&B/Hotels and remain a housing priority for local authorities in the Region.

Region	Region Population (CSO 2016)	% Population (CSO 2016)	Total Families	Total Adults	(of which) Lone Parent Families	Total Dependents
Dublin	1,345,402	28%	1,138	1,562	714	2,416
South-West	689,750	14%	68	89	47	173
Mid East	559,404	12%	44	68	20	89
South-East	511,070	11%	32	48	16	55
West	453,413	10%	44	65	23	120
Mid-West	385,172	8%	81	115	47	152
Midlands	291,941	6%	22	31	13	47
North-East	265,740	6%	24	36	12	65
North-West	256,084	5%	2	3	1	7
Total	4,757,976	100%	1,455	2,017	893	3,124

Table 3 Family Homelessness and Proportionate Regional Population (CSO Census 2016) State

2.4 MEASURING IMPACT

In the current services' delivery model of adopted by the NE Region, there is a clear commitment to not only housing-led solutions to the incidence of homelessness, but to keeping people in their tenancies where there is a risk of homelessness.

M&P has tested the effectiveness of the North-East model of service delivery and compared the number of people accessing homelessness services in a period of time with the number of people who remained in services at the end.

The rationale of the approach relies on the fact that there will always be emerging homelessness by individuals, and to a lesser extent, families. Relationship and family breakdown by partners and children will regrettably always occur for a variety of causal factors.

Overcrowding and unsafe housing conditions are also causal factors and have emerged over the past few years as people have been losing their tenancies and houses for financial affordability reasons.

'Buy-to-let' and other landlords may also decide to sell their properties depriving sitting tenants of continuity of tenure and this has been an incremental cause of homelessness. In many of these cases, the relatively steep increase in rent that such tenants must meet, deprives them of mainstream rental accommodation. Often, they are in receipt of rent supplement which traditionally remains well below the prevailing and increasing rents.

Chart 1 below notes the frequency of presentations and the number of adults remaining in homelessness services at the end of the year.

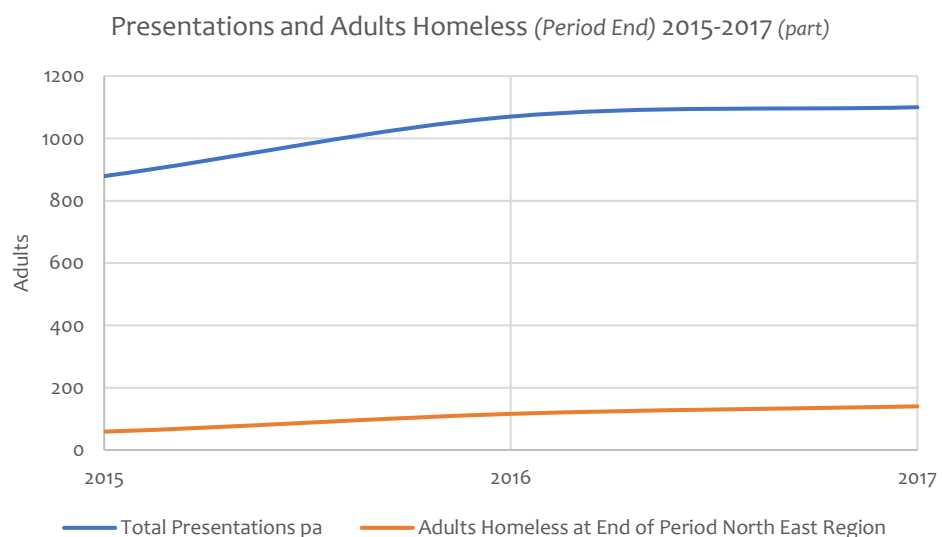


Chart 1 Presentations and PE Adult Homelessness 2014 - Sept 2017

An additional impact measurement of NE homelessness services is the identification of adults who are moved to independent living from emergency accommodation with full tenancies in year.

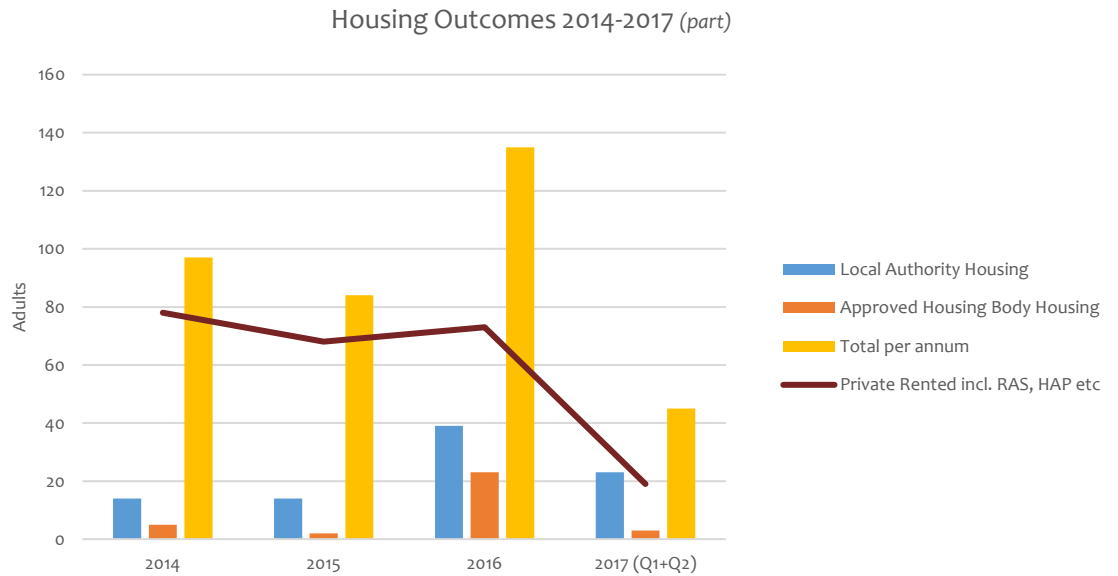


Chart 2 Adults from NE Region Emergency Accommodation to Housing 2014-2017 (part)

Chart 2 demonstrates that the referral rate to mainstream housing in the NE Region peaked in 2016 at 135 adults with the majority (54%) going to accommodation in the private rented sector. Local Authority housing was allocated to 29% of adults emerging successfully from emergency accommodation and VHAs provided 17%.

TSS services were re-tendered in mid-2017 with the new service providers resuming the service in September 2017. With the former service contract ending, this may have adversely impacted on the efficiency of the settlement services as reflected in the lower referral rate in the first half of 2017. It is anticipated that Q4 2017 will see increased activity in settlement services to maintain the momentum developed from 2016.

2.5 FINANCING SERVICES

2.5.1 EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

People accessing services must present to one of the local authorities where housing and homeless assessments are carried out. On the basis of these assessments, housing and other options are discussed with service users and decisions made. The priority of all parties in homelessness is to prevent access to homelessness services and temporary, emergency accommodation and to implement early interventions.

All referrals to services are addressed by the Homeless Action Teams (HATs) which meet bi-weekly in Louth and monthly in Cavan and Monaghan. The HATs ensure that for all service users, assessments are made, care plans are drawn up, a key worker is appointed and that their case is managed throughout the pathway.

Interventions by local authorities may result in referral to mainstream housing, emergency accommodation or to tenancy sustainment services. In the NE Region, there were 54 beds available for emergency accommodation – 26 in Dundalk Simon, 21 in Drogheda Homeless Aid, 3 in Drogheda Women’s & Children’s Refuge and an additional 4 throughout the Region.

Facility	County	Bed Night Capacity
Dundalk Simon Community	Louth	26
Drogheda Homeless Aid Association Ltd	Louth	21
Drogheda Women’s & Children Refuge Centre Ltd	Louth	3
Castleblayney Trust	Monaghan	4
Total Emergency Accommodation Bedspaces NE	NE Region	54

Table 4 Emergency Accommodation North East Region 2017

2.5.2 TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES

The newly-defined Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services were implemented in September 2017 and comprise services targeted at eight specific groups. Ten persons are employed to carry caseloads comprising service users identified and referred by the local authorities in Cavan, Louth and Monaghan.

Table 5 outlines the services and target groups identified for Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services and include service users in cohorts including:

- ▶ *Families at risk,*
- ▶ *Addictions,*
- ▶ *Mental Health,*
- ▶ *Intellectual Disability and*
- ▶ *Prison Aftercare.*

Eight employees carry caseloads for these sectors while Cavan and Monaghan have a caseload manager each.

Target Group	Discrete Target Group
TG 1	TSS Services for Single Persons as Risk – Louth County Council Administrative Area
TG 2	TSS Services for Families at Risk - Louth County Council Administrative Area
TG 3	TSS Services for Addictions - Louth Local Authority
TG 4	TSS Services for Mental Health related issues - Louth County Council Administrative Area
TG 5	TSS Services for Intellectual Disability & Behavioural Issues - Louth County Council Administrative Area
TG 6	TSS Services Relating to Prison/Aftercare – Regional Basis (Louth, Cavan and Monaghan)
TG 7	TSS Services – All Needs – Cavan County Council Administrative Area
TG 8	TSS Services – All Needs – Monaghan County Council Administrative Area

Table 5 Profile of Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services Sept 2017

This is a unique approach to housing-led interventions and services and is the first service of its kind in the State to specifically target discrete target groups with specific needs. The NE Region will monitor the services closely in a formal manner utilising formative evaluation techniques. The rolling evaluation exercise will facilitate service adaptation to meet emerging need as well as

provide a solid analysis of its effectiveness and impact not only on service user outcomes but on the regional response to homelessness generally.

2.5.3 FINANCIALS

Chart 4 below records the application of Local Authority financial resources to service provision in the North East. Expenditure has increased from €1.14m in 2014 to a budgeted €1.97m in 2017. This represents an increase in monetary terms of 72%.

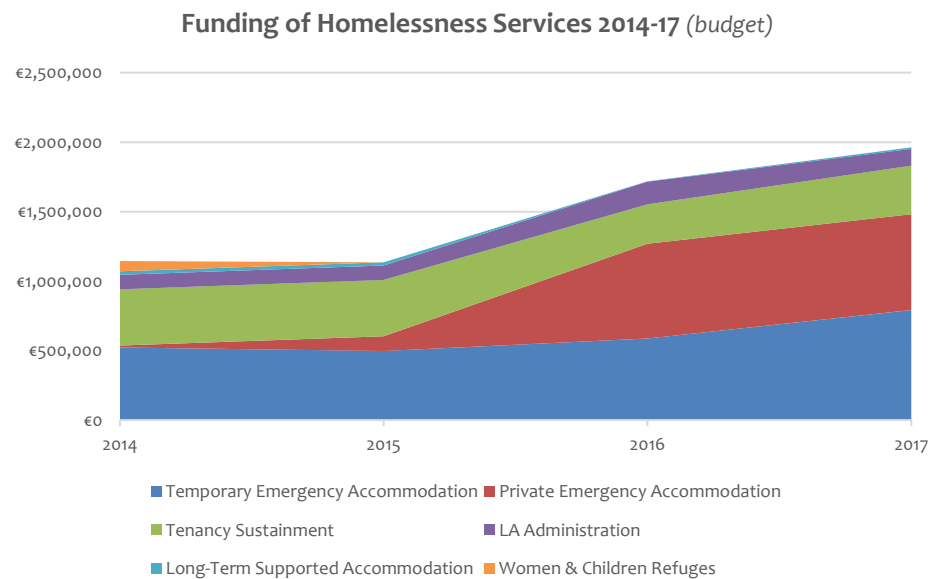


Chart 4 Financial Profile of Homelessness Service Provision 2014-17

The greatest increases between 2014 and 2017 have been in funding for supported temporary accommodation by 52% and in private emergency accommodation from €14k in 2014 to €690k in 2017.

The Tenancy Sustainment Services Model was re-defined within the re-structured homelessness response services in the North East in 2014/15 which brought about improved effectiveness and efficiency. While these changes were strategic, they were introduced at a time of increasing demand for homelessness services and a downturn in housing supply. It is anticipated that the full impact of the housing-led changes will be felt over the 2018-20 period as housing supply increases and demand for homelessness services reduces.

Core funding for women and children's refuge services has been subsumed by Tusla since 2014 and is no longer the responsibility of homelessness services, though Drogheda Women's Refuge provides a small number of bedspaces on a formal, funded basis.

2.6 SUMMARY

The main purpose of presenting the headline data above is to provide the strategic focus for the specification of services for the 2018-20 period. The

North-East Region implements an evolving range of services which has the in-built capacity to address emerging need in the course of its implementation.

For example, the Region introduced a transitional housing programme for young people in 2016 which was designed to prepare at risk young people for independent living in a housing setting. Louth County Council provided the housing element but the pilot did not meet its planned objectives and was discontinued. It is possible that such programmes could be re-introduced following the learning gained from the pilot.

For the previous plan, the Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services were tendered out and delivered on sectors of identified need bases, and were re-tendered following a refinement of the service delivery. For the North East, Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services delivered in such a targeted way are regarded as essential components of the 'housing-led' suite of homelessness services. Therefore, the priority is to maintain individuals and families in their tenancies and to return them to permanent housing and independent living as soon as possible. There is little doubt that if the supply of suitable accommodation was available, more people accessing homelessness would be resettled in permanent housing settings and the NE Region has the enthusiasm and the mix of services to deliver.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES 2018-20

In this planning exercise, the North-East Region has reviewed its performance in the 2015-17 planning cycle and identified the work that it intends to continue and develop for the 2018-20 cycle. The main objective for 2018-20 is to ostensibly build on the achievements of the recent three years while continuing to develop services in Cavan, Louth and Monaghan in response to emerging need.

The Region regards its current service provision as adequate to meet need and has made great strides in being innovative to meet the housing-led policy as outlined in Government documents.

Innovation has been an influential component on both the supply side of housing and on the demand side for services.

Supply Side

On the supply side, the Region has continued to bring back units of housing into service and has acquired a substantial number of additional housing stock in 2016 and 2017 through the vehicle of compulsory purchasing. There has been an acceptable flow of homeless adults and families to permanent housing, and the Region is committed to at least maintaining, if not augmenting its acquisition strategy to increase housing stock. At the same time, it will continue its work in upgrading social housing stock and private rented accommodation using statutory instruments where possible and will encourage additional development through the Capital Assistance Scheme for investment proposals.

Social leasing, HAP and RAS have all made significant impacts on the continued supply of housing also.

Demand Side

On the demand side, the Region is committed to providing emergency accommodation to all people who experience homelessness within its remit and to continue to develop its preventative responses which have been transformed in recent times.

In particular, the Region is committed to working with its statutory and voluntary sector partners in addressing service user issues of mutual concern and where reciprocal co-operation provides identifiable positive outcomes.

The various actions to be implemented in the 2018-20 period are noted in the table below and are based on four main areas.

1. **Reduce number of households who become homeless through the development of enhanced preventative measures.**
2. **Eliminate the need for people to sleep rough.**
3. **Eliminate long term homelessness and reduce the length of time people spend homeless.**
4. **Meet the long-term housing needs through an increase in housing options and constant flow of housing through acquisition and other procurement means.**
5. **Ensure effective services for homeless people.**

6. **Implement improved, co-ordinated funding arrangements and diversion of funding from emergency response to provision of long term housing and support services.**
7. **Design and implement a 'fit for purpose' data capture and information strategy.**
8. **Monitor the new TSS services and arrange to carry out a formative evaluation of their implementation and impact on service users and the suite of NE Region homelessness services.**