

## **CCMA Opening Statement to the Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**

**The adequate and timely accommodation of refugees, asylum seekers and international protection applicants.**

**30<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Chairman, Members,

I am pleased to be here this afternoon to assist the Committee in its examination of issues facing us in relation to the adequate and timely accommodation of refugees, asylum seekers and international protection applicants.

My name is Michael Walsh, Chief Executive, Waterford City and County Council, chair of the Accommodation Technical Working Group and member of the City and County Management Association (CCMA) Housing, Building and Land Use committee. I am accompanied here today by Sinead Carr, Director of Service, Tipperary County Council and Niamh McCarthy, National Coordinator, Emergency (Ukraine) Unit, LGMA.

Local authorities, as the key operational arm of government, have fully supported and assisted the whole of government approach to the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis. We stepped up when the need was most acute, establishing 27 emergency rest centres in the early months of the response, supporting the Irish Red Cross pledge programme and sourcing local available commercial accommodation as part of the critical response when numbers of Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTPs) continued to rise.

Building on experience, structures and relationships developed during the community call response to Covid 19, each local authority has repurposed their Community Response Forum for the Ukrainian Response to provide coordination through local community action groups, working with various services and agencies.

This typically involves activities such as:

- The provision of information and supports to accommodation centres prior to arrivals, and throughout activation.
- Holding welcome events
- Working with the education sector, particularly around local school enrolment



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach  
County and City Management Association

- Identifying local flexible transport options
- Providing information on services to community groups and other contacts such as PPN members, Gardaí and other agencies.
- Providing practical supports such as with medical card applications, CV, interview skills, employment, social and integration supports.

Since November 2022, the local government sector has led out on 'Offer a Home', a national call for unoccupied homes, including mounting national and local awareness campaigns. Each local authority established relationship managers, took full responsibility for all contact with property owners, inspection of properties and allocating of beneficiaries to the suitable properties. To maximise the utilisation of homes offered under the scheme, a Community Car Scheme initiative was also included. This scheme is available to service rural housing and housing offers where there is no public transport to maximise the number of offers that can be accepted.

The LGMA put in place a national system for the registration of properties and to manage the full end-to-end process. To date more than 2,300 properties have been offered.

- 94% of those who made offers have been successfully contacted
- 94% of properties have been assessed of which:
  - 54% were suitable for occupation
  - 32% were withdrawn or not viable
  - 11% require some minor works
  - 2% have assessment underway
- Of the 1,228 properties deemed suitable, a total of 980 (80%) have been allocated
- Overall, 3,100 beneficiaries have been allocated to homes to date

An Accommodation Working Group was established to support the Department of Integration and the Department of Housing in their respective roles in supporting the delivery of accommodation.

I chair the Technical Working Group that reports into the Accommodation Working Group around the refurbishment programme of work. The Technical Working Group has representation from DCEDIY, DHLGH, Department of the Taoiseach, the OPW and the CCMA. Building on the work undertaken in 2022 the group has:

- Put in place a clear matrix of assessment, against which all projects are assessed.
- Set up a method of tracking all projects across four categories of refurbishment.
- Put in place a streamlined process on progression of projects across legal, regulatory and commercial frameworks.
- Developing guidance on standards, following on from the publication of the guidance in May 2022.

The table below provides a high-level overview of the scale of the programme of work :

Category	Total number projects	Number withdrawn/not viable – TO DATE	Total live projects
LA Owned	31	12	19
State Owned	27	16	11
Owner no capital	213	48	165
Owner Capital Required	150	78	72
DCEDIY	17	6	11
Not categorised	3		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>281</b>

The following projects have received capital funding from the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage and are now in use by the Department of Integration, providing 328 beds.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Bed spaces provided</u>
Kerry	62
Mayo	100
Waterford City	66
Meath	100

Over recent months there has been extensive engagement with the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO) to define a clear legal framework in terms of contract duration and template documents. These have been agreed and are being developed.

The focus while the legal and planning framework is being finalised has been on local authority and state-owned land with the following at various stages of the process.

Summary of projects under consideration and in progression across the LA or state owned	No of Potential Projects	No of Estimated Capacity
Proceed to survey	13	989
Surveys underway or with DHLGH	2	30
Procurement underway	7	370
Works underway	2	44
<b>Total projects currently in progress:</b>	<b>22<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>983</b>

<sup>1</sup> To note, not all projects may proceed pending survey



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach  
County and City Management Association

In March last year, many may not have anticipated that the number of Ukrainians now in Ireland would be provided with shelter, food, income, access to medical treatment, education, access to English language classes, help in securing employment and social and recreational outlets. Yet, here we are just over a year later and, to greater or lesser degree, that is what has happened.

Collaboration across the various agencies of the State, local community forum members, the community and voluntary sector, and the accommodation sector has shown our resilience to rise to the challenge.

The CCMA is fully conscious that efforts are being made by all involved to address the challenges that exist. The local government sector has been working in support of these efforts and are here today to offer any insight from our experience. We are fully committed to the improvement of the current system and to the continued engagement with all stakeholders. We welcome the opportunity to engage in dialogue on these complex issues and will do our best to answer any questions that you may wish to address to us.