



Opening Statement

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Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Joint Oireachtas Committee Interim Report on Homelessness

05/03/2024

Good afternoon Chairperson and members of the Committee. I would like to thank the Joint Committee for inviting the Department to discuss the Committee's Interim Report on Homelessness and the recommendations made in that Report.

I am accompanied by my colleague, Rosemarie Tobin, Principal Officer, with responsibility for the Homelessness Policy, Funding and Delivery unit and Jennifer Peyton, Assistant Principal Officer in the Homeless Policy, Funding and Delivery Unit.

The Department works very closely with local authorities on the response to homelessness, and I am pleased that our colleagues from the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and Cork City Council are attending here today.



Eradicating homelessness is a priority for the Department. This year, funding of €242 million will be made available for the delivery of homeless services. This will ensure that local authorities can provide emergency accommodation, homeless prevention and tenancy sustainment services (including Housing First) and others services to households experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. A key focus is to ensure that households in emergency accommodation are supported to exit homelessness to tenancies as quickly as possible. The budget for homeless services will be kept under continual review in 2024 with a commitment to provide any necessary funding required.

[Housing for All](#)

Housing for All is the Government's plan to meet the overall aim of ensuring that everyone in the State should have access to a home to purchase or rent at an affordable price, built to a high standard and in the right place, offering a high quality of life.

The Plan includes more than 200 actions across four pathways which will collectively address housing issues, and all of those actions are contributing to creating a housing system that meets the needs of our people. Under Housing for All, at least €4bn in capital investment is available each year to support the delivery of housing, with over €5bn in capital investment available this year.



The Plan recognises that housing policy must address the needs of socially excluded members of society and that the issue of homelessness is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Many of the actions in *Housing for All* address issues raised by the Committee in its 2021 report.

The State made an overarching commitment at a European level through signing the Lisbon Declaration on Combatting Homelessness and has committed again in *Housing for All* to working towards ending homelessness by 2030. This will be done through a number of actions, including by increasing the overall supply of housing. The Plan aims to deliver 300,000 homes up to the end of 2030, including 90,000 social homes, 36,000 affordable homes and 18,000 cost rental homes.

Current Situation

The most recent monthly and quarterly homeless reports produced by the Department show that there was an increase in the numbers accessing emergency accommodation in January 2024 with 13,531 individuals requiring such accommodation.

While the numbers in emergency accommodation remain too high, the Q4 2023 Progress Report, which is based on data submitted from



the local authorities, shows strong progress in terms of preventions and exits from homelessness.

In 2023, 2,815 adults exited emergency accommodation by way of a tenancy being created, and 4,033 adults were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, a combined total of 6,848 adult exits and preventions. This is a yearly increase of 25% (1,370) on adult exits and preventions in 2022.

In particular, we can see that initiatives such as the Tenant in Situ Scheme are increasing the level of preventions. The Tenant in Situ scheme provides for the acquisition of a property where a social housing tenant has received a Notice of Termination due to the landlord's intention to sell the property. While the social housing statistics for 2023 are still being finalised, the Department understands that the target to acquire 1,500 properties in 2023 was exceeded. This scheme will continue in 2024 with provision to acquire an additional 1,500 properties.

The Q4 2023 prevention figures represent significant increases when compared to Q4 2022, with 91% more households, 100% more adults and 116% more families prevented from entering homelessness.

In order to further increase exits from homelessness, in December 2023, the Minister wrote to all local authority Chief Executives regarding the need to reduce the numbers in emergency



accommodation, placing a specific emphasis on translating the strong social housing delivery of 2023 into exits from homelessness. Based on the responses to this letter, local authorities are projecting a significant increase in exits achieved compared to the same period 12 months ago.

We are also driving better co-ordination in terms of policy measures and actions, and the National Homeless Action Committee has been playing a key role in this regard. All of the key Government Departments, agencies and other stakeholders, including NGOs, are represented on the NHAC. A key priority of the Committee is to drive delivery of actions under the Housing for All plan.

I would now like to touch on a number of key policy developments under Housing for All, which are being overseen in cooperation with NHAC members and the local authorities.

Housing First has continued to build upon the progress already made in housing some of our most vulnerable individuals. The 'Housing First' National Implementation Plan (2022-2026) outlines our target to provide over 1,300 new supported social housing tenancies and build on successes under this programme. In 2023, an additional 320 tenancies have been recorded nationwide. This brings the total to 560 under the current plan, which exceeds the two-year target of



551. Almost 1,000 individuals were in a Housing First tenancy nationwide at the end of 2023.

With the Programme significantly expanding, additional governance and management arrangements have been put in place, including the establishment of a new National Directorate based in The Housing Agency.

The Youth Homelessness Strategy was launched in November 2022. The first Youth Homelessness Strategy in two decades, it sets out 27 distinct actions to prevent young people entering homelessness, to improve the experiences of young people in emergency accommodation and to assist young people to exit homelessness. Implementation of the Strategy is well underway and work has commenced on 25 of the 27 actions within the Strategy. The Strategy will be at its halfway point in May and it is intended to publish a progress report at that stage.

Conclusion

The continuing increase in the numbers experiencing homelessness remains of great concern to the Department. Our key focus is to work with local authorities to ensure that suitable emergency accommodation is available to all those experiencing homelessness



and critically that households experiencing are supported to exit homelessness to a tenancy.

Thank you for your time and attention. My colleagues and I are happy to answer any questions that you may have.

ENDS