

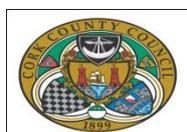
REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR

HOMELESS SERVICES

2013 -2018

In

The South West Region



Local Authorities of

Cork City

County Cork

County Kerry

Incorporating HSE South (South-West) Region

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1. Introduction

Under Chapter 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, housing authorities are responsible for the adoption of homelessness action plans.

Section 40(10) of the 2009 Act requires a housing authority to arrange for:

- the review and, where appropriate, amendment of the homelessness action plan,
or
- the preparation and adoption of a new homelessness action plan.

while it is expected that the amended or new plan would be adopted within a specified timeframe, Section 40(8) of the Act provides for a default process whereby, in the event of the plan not being adopted by a particular council within the 6-week period, the Manager of the housing authority concerned shall, by order, adopt the plan within an overall maximum period of 8 months from the commencement of the process.

In accordance with Section 37 of the Act, the amended or new plan shall specify the measures to be undertaken to address homelessness in the region by the housing authorities, the Health Service Executive, specified bodies, or approved bodies or other bodies. In addition, the amended or new plan should include a review of progress made in the implementation of the previous homeless action plan [see Section 37(3) (d)].

Subject to the statutory provisions, it is a matter for each Management Group, in consultation with the Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum, to determine the particular format and content of the plan for each region and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government have not issued any prescriptive line in this regard.

Upon adoption, a copy of the homelessness action plan shall be copied to the Minister and each member of the Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum and shall be published and maintained on the Internet for the period of the plan.

The process of reviewing the Regional Action Plan commenced in July 2012 and the report of the Focus Group tasked with the review is contained in appendix 1 of the amended plan.

The key recommendations made in this report have been reassessed by the Strategic Management Group in consultation with the South West Regional Forum, and the three Strategic Aims of the Regional Plan have been amended to be implemented over the life of the amended plan.

The Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG) has introduced measures designed to provide a working framework, including guidelines, for the implementation of the National Homeless Strategy. The measures, which have been enshrined in legislation, the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, places all aspects of the national and local approach to addressing homelessness on a statutory footing, and are designed to achieve uniform approaches and outcomes which are client-focused, efficient and structured. The planning and delivery of Homeless Services is directed by the provisions of part 2, chapter 6 of the [Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009] and the Housing Act 1988 and is supported by the National Partnership Agreement Towards 2016, the National Development Plan and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.

The Local Authorities in the South West, Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Kerry County Council, in conjunction with HSE South (South-West) commissioned an independent Review of Homeless Services in 2009, the recommendations of which have been in implementation since December 2009.

The Local Authorities in the South-West rely on the services of the community and voluntary sector to provide many residential and homeless services for people who are homeless and have good relationships throughout the Region. There are approximately sixteen voluntary organisations which deliver thirty-two residential and other services on a contractual basis with HSE South, Cork City Council, Cork County Council and Kerry County Council.

The Local Authorities have dedicated personnel for Homeless Services including Homeless Services Officers, Outreach Workers and Coordinators, while HSE South provides health and welfare services including a dedicated team in the Region.

Cork City Council was invited to be the lead Local Authority Agency for the *Strategic Management Group* which comprises of Kerry County Council, Cork County Council and Cork City Council and the HSE South (South West). The Local Authorities and the HSE welcomed the initiative to put their relationship regarding homeless services on a statutory footing and are keen to ensure that it will lead to co-operative and co-ordinated practices and protocols to address homelessness in the Region.

The perspective of HSE South, whose Social Inclusion Team line management structure is Region wide, regards the initiative as a key opportunity to further streamline its homeless services and to pursue greater uniformity throughout homeless service provision.

Membership of the Management Group is set out in Table 1 below.

Member	Agency
Assistant City Manager., Housing & Community	Cork City Council
Senior Executive Officer. Housing & Community	Cork City Council
Director of Services, Housing Department	Cork County Council
Director of Services, Housing Department	Kerry County Council
Project Manager, Social Inclusion Services	Health Service Executive, Southern Region (Cork and Kerry)

Table 1 Management Group Membership SWJHC Forum 2013

2. Strategic Context

Definition of Homelessness

For the purposes of this Homeless Framework Plan the definition of homelessness is that as has been defined in the Housing Act of 1988 as:

A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purpose of this Act 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 institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a).

This definition includes:

- persons living in temporary unsecure accommodation,
- persons living in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation and hostels/health board accommodation because they have nowhere else available to them,
- rough sleepers and
- victims of domestic violence

2.1 National Policy Framework

In drawing up this Regional Homelessness Action Plan, the Management Group of the South West Joint Homeless Consultative Forum took particular consideration of homeless and housing policies published over the past two decades. The policy framework incorporates the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government National Housing Strategy Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities, the 2008 National Homeless Strategy The Way Home and the subsequent 2009 National Implementation Plan, the 2002 Homeless Preventative Strategy, the 2001 Youth Homeless Preventative Strategy and the 2000 National Homeless Strategy.

In particular, the Regional Action Plan will also take full account of recent (2010) DECLG directives and information contained in DECLG circulars regarding the expectations of homelessness strategies requiring the prioritisation of returning people who become homeless to permanent, independent housing with supports where required and thereby reducing the dependency on emergency and other

types of temporary accommodation. The implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the introduction of the Supported Living Initiative (SLI) are the policy reference points here.

There have been significant developments in response to the problem of homelessness over the past two decades. Overall it is evident from policy that homelessness has moved from the direct provision of accommodation, to a more co-ordinated approach that enables homeless people to access long-term accommodation and prevents homelessness from occurring and re-occurring. The key policies and legislation affecting the delivery of this strategy are outlined below.

Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 provides a comprehensive statutory framework for the making and adoption of homeless action plans within specified time periods, publication and circulation of the adopted plans and procedures for undertaking a review of a plan or preparing a new plan.

2009 Homeless Strategy National Implementation Plan

Implementation of the Homeless Strategy will be carried out primarily through the local homeless action plan process, which has been put on a statutory basis through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.

The 2009 National Implementation Plan provides a framework to guide the action required at national level to promote and support effective implementation locally. It sets out a sequence of strategic aims, key approaches, priority actions, constituent/supporting measures necessary for implementation of the overall Homeless Strategy. The implementation plan indicates appropriate lead roles, timelines, key performance indicators and linkages to relevant local action.

The plan also brings to bear on the implementation process important considerations such as efficiency, value for money, organisational and financial streamlining and the roles of various agencies, particularly in the context of the changed economic context. Priority areas highlighted for attention, particularly those focused on the elimination of long-term dependence on emergency homeless services, including the following:

Action to provide effective long-term solutions for people leaving homelessness, primarily in mainstream housing but including cluster or sheltered supported housing schemes for very difficult-to-place people who are homeless.

Re-orientation of current resources to support a significant increase in suitable accommodation and support for people leaving homelessness.

New arrangements and procedures for funding of homeless services based on needs, priorities and maximising efficiency, quality and value for money.

Engagement between the relevant Central Government Departments, Local Authorities and the HSE to identify ways of enhancing effectiveness and best value nationally from resources in relation to homelessness.

Co-ordination of guidance to local authorities, homeless fora and health services, particularly in the context of formulation of homeless action plans.

Housing Policy Statement 2011

The Programme *for Government 2011* contains a commitment to ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough by implementing a “housing led” approach. The 2011 Housing Policy Statement has an overall objective to enable all households’ access good quality housing appropriate to their circumstances and in their particular community of choice. It acknowledges that delivering better outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged households is a key priority for the Government. In this context, a continued focus on tackling the root causes of homelessness and maintaining an integrated and efficient approach to service delivery is required.

Homelessness Policy Statement 2013

The 2013 Homelessness Policy Statement places the rapid provision of appropriate accommodation, with support as needed to ensure sustainable tenancies, as the key solution to ending homelessness. The primary purpose of the 2013 Homelessness Policy Statement is to make explicit the housing led principles in *The Way Home A Strategy to address Adult Homelessness 2008 – 2013*.

2008 – 2013 the Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland

The Way Home was launched in 2008 and is informed by the findings and recommendations of the 2006 Fitzpatrick report. The emphasis of the new strategy is to prevent people from becoming homeless or if they should become homeless this would be short term. The ultimate intention is that persons who have accessed homeless services will be assisted out of homelessness and into long-term housing in as short a time as possible.

The strategy sets out six strategic arms around three core objectives;

- Eliminating long-term occupation of emergency homeless facilities.
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough.
- Preventing the occurrence of homelessness as far as possible.

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016

The NAPSI sets out a comprehensive programme of actions and goals to address poverty and social exclusion. It places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery and offers a framework for implementing a streamlined, cross cutting and visible approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion.

The National Development Plan 2007 - 2013

The NDP incorporates measures agreed in *Towards 2016*. And the social inclusion priority is of most relevance to homelessness. This priority outlines measures to address barriers to social inclusion by improving access to health care, education, training and employment and high quality housing. The main objective is to provide a coherent approach to social inclusion by improving co-ordination across central and local government, better monitoring and evaluation of interventions and consultation with stakeholders.

2007 Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities

The 2007 National Housing Strategy *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities* places emphasis on the interagency approach to combating homelessness. It also places emphasis on the use of a case management approach in meeting the needs of homeless households. The strategy prioritises actions aimed at the inclusion of special needs groups within services that are focused around homelessness.

Towards 2016

Towards 2016 is part of a series of national social partnership agreements. It makes particular reference to homelessness and makes proposals in relation to improved coordination of service provision and joint approaches at local level. The aim of this national agreement is to facilitate a holistic response to the needs of homeless persons through the further development of a case management approach based on needs assessment and access to multiple services by all the key stakeholders. Other features include the elimination of long-term occupation of emergency accommodation.

An Independent Review of Homeless Strategies (2006)

Undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates, and commissioned by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the review focused on *Homelessness: An Integrated Strategy (2000)* and *the Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)*. It also carried out a review of local action plans. The review made twenty-one recommendations around seven key themes. The Government accepted the broad thrust of the recommendations including a more concentrated focus on development of long-term accommodation options, an improvement of co-ordination of funding, the development of a case management approach to addressing the needs of homeless people based on key workers and the development of preventative strategies, appropriate local services and supports, and better data on the extent, nature and causes of homelessness.

The Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)

The 2002 strategy focused on ensuring that no one is discharged or released from state institutional care without the appropriate measures in place to ensure they have a suitable place to live. The aim of the strategy is to target adult and young offenders, people leaving mental health residential facilities, people leaving hospitals and young people leaving care. It highlighted that an effective preventative strategy would help break the cycle of homelessness.

The Youth Homeless Preventative Strategy (2001)

The 2001 strategy was published by the Department of Health and Children. It aimed to eliminate homelessness amongst young people under the age of eighteen years. A key element of this strategy is the prevention of homelessness among young people leaving care through the implementation of education, training, information, awareness, care and aftercare supports.

Homelessness - An Integrated Strategy (2000)

The 2000 strategy set out a new policy approach to homelessness. It involved a whole Government approach to ensure that homelessness is addressed and prevented. It recognized that homelessness would not be solved by housing or shelter alone. It focused on the need for a holistic approach involving health, care, welfare, education, training and support to enable people who experience homelessness to re-integrate into society and prevent it from happening. It made Local Authorities and Health Services jointly responsible for homelessness, with Local Authorities charged with a lead role to prepare three-year action plans on homelessness. It led to the establishment of Local Homeless Fora.

The Housing Act 1988

The 1988 Act defined homelessness for the first time in legislation and expanded the role of Local Authorities in addressing homelessness. It resulted in improvements in funding available to voluntary bodies for accommodation for homeless persons. It also resulted in greater awareness of homelessness as an issue and in development of additional responses to it.

County / City Development Plans 2009 - 2015

Each Local Authority has a County/City Development Plan which seeks to develop and improve in a sustainable manner the social, economic, cultural and environmental assets of the county/city. The purpose of the plan is to inform the public, statutory authorities and service providers, developers and other interested parties, of the policy framework that will guide development decisions within the county/city over the plan period.

Each County/City Development Plan includes a Housing Strategy which seeks:

- to ensure that sufficient land is zoned for residential use and made available to meet the requirements of all sectors of the population.
- to ensure that housing is available for persons who have different levels of income, particularly those in need of social housing.
- to ensure a mixture of house type is developed to match requirements of different categories of households, particularly vulnerable households.
- to counteract undue segregation in housing between persons of different backgrounds.

Equality Legislation including Equality Status Acts of 2000

The Equal Status Act 2000, which came into operation in October 2000, compliments the Employment Equality Act 1998. The Equal Status Act is based on the principle that everyone has an equal right to participate in our society. People should not be denied access to services, facilities or amenities because of race, age, disability or membership of a traveller community – everyone should be seen as being of equal worth and entitlement. Each person should be treated on his or her own merits and not on the basis of a prejudice or stereotype.

The Act provides comprehensive legal protection against discrimination in the delivery of goods and services, whether provided by the State or private sector – this will be of particular benefit to people from marginalised groups and those vulnerable to discrimination.

3. HSE Specific Responsibilities regarding Homelessness

The aim of the Department of Health and Children Health Service Executive Social Inclusion Services is to improve access to mainstream services, target services to marginalised groups, address inequalities in access to health services and enhance the participation and involvement of socially excluded groups and local communities in the planning, design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of health services. Substantial research evidence demonstrates the links between socioeconomic status and health status and has resulted in a better understanding of the determinants of health that impact on access to health services. In Ireland evidence of health inequalities by socioeconomic status shows a sharp class gradient in mortality and morbidity¹.

The main policy and legislation that underlines HSE Social Inclusion Services and determines the delivery of timely, responsive and person-centred health services to Homeless people include the following;

- Quality and Fairness (the National Health Strategy);
- Towards 2016 Partnership Agreement;
- National Anti-Poverty Strategy;
- Homelessness - An Integrated Strategy;
- National Drugs Strategy;
- National Travellers Strategy, Equality legislation and
- National Action Plan against Racism (NPAR);
- A Vision for Change – Mental Health Policy

The following come within the remit of the HSE Social Inclusion services:

- Homeless Services;
- Services for Minority Ethnic Communities;
- Traveller Health Services;
- Drug and Alcohol Services;
- Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender Communities;
- Community Welfare Services;
- HSE RAPID and CLAR Programmes;
- HIV/STI Services;

¹ HSE Social Inclusion Fact File November 2009

The HSE believes that the homeless service provision is best served by successful partnership with the HSE being a principal partner alongside the Local Authorities.

The HSE's Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011 espouses the values of respect, fairness and equity in the delivery of health services and this is particularly applicable to homeless people. It specifically commits to progressing the implementation of the National Homeless Plan 2008 and furthermore identifies the number of Local Health Officers operating a formal leaving and aftercare support service for young people leaving care as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI).

Other elements of the HSE approach, as developed by the Social Inclusion Services are:

- Funding of core staff in Voluntary Organisations and other services as per agreed template in "The Way Home";
- HSE Multi-disciplinary Teams - Outreach Services/ Supports;
- Dedicated and enhanced CWO Service;
- Care and Case Management – a holistic response to homelessness involving the HSE ;
- The availability of client centred services is important and the application of the HSE Strategy on Service User Involvement "Your Service Your Say" is central to the action plans;
- The application of agreed quality and standards to all services;
- Multi-disciplinary teams where they exist will interact with emerging/ existing Primary Care Teams and Social Care Networks and Integrated Services Programme (ISP). The new model of service delivery is through Integrated Service Areas;
- Recognition that central to solving the issue of long term homelessness is the provision of housing options that afford people long term tenancies and a stable living environment;
- Mental Health – Vision for Change Programme and linkages with Community Mental Health Teams;
- Linkages to Addiction Services and Regional Drugs Task Forces;
- Awareness that increasing numbers from minority ethnic groups are becoming homeless and the reasons could include Habitual Residence Condition, loss of employment and welfare allowances, addiction, domestic violence etc;
- Integrated discharged planning including the implementation of acute / mental health and leaving care/aftercare protocols;
- Youth homelessness and the critical links to adult homelessness;
- Funding, Service Level Agreements, Performance Indicators, Value for Money and Quality Standards / Performance Measurement / Outcomes focused are fundamental to service provision;

3.1 HSE Policy Framework

National Health Strategy Quality and Fairness A Health System for You (2001)

There are a number of strategies relevant to the development of homeless services as general and specific health needs and addiction issues are often a contributory factor to a person becoming homeless. The National Health Strategy Quality and Fairness A Health System for You (2001) has a specific aim of improving the health and well-being of homeless people and an overall aim to improve the operation and quality of health services generally.

The 2006 Vision for Change report by the Mental Health Expert group recognises that homeless people with mental health problems have more difficulty meeting their accommodation needs with a specific chapter dedicated to addressing the mental health needs of homeless people. It is acknowledged that Vision for Change was published five years ago and that it did not take account of local, homeless services delivery specification and configurations at that time and could not have foreseen the many changes in the interim period.

The Vision for Change Implementation Plan published in late 2009 notes that future services for people at risk from homelessness as a result of a mental illness are confined to ‘two Community Mental Health Teams based in North and South City Dublin (should) be provided and all Community Mental Health Teams (should) adopt practices to minimise the number of service users becoming homeless through discharge planning and better co-ordination of Voluntary and Statutory Services’. These changes are envisaged for 2011 at the earliest and plans for the South-West Region will be followed up by Management Group of the South West Joint Regional Homelessness Consultative Forum.

The HSE Hospital Integrated Discharge Plan identifies homeless people as an at risk group when discharged from hospital care and places an obligation on HSE acute hospital services to ensure, through protocols for discharge, that patients who are homeless are notified to relevant local homeless services.

The National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2016 (Interim) focuses on the needs of specific groups in accessing services. The strategy recognises the complex needs of homeless people and prioritises further engagement with homeless people and the provision of drug treatment and prevention measures at national, regional and local level.

HSE Primary Care Teams and Networks and Homeless Services

The National Health Strategy, 'Quality and Fairness – A Health System for You' (2001) sets out a new direction for primary care as the central focus of the delivery of health and personal social services. Primary care is the first of the six frameworks for change set out in the Strategy which rebalances the emphasis from secondary care to primary care. This policy direction is consistent with international best practice.

National Intercultural Health Strategy (2007-2012)

The strategy recognises that the issue of homelessness is a developing issue for service users from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Recent surveys of people sleeping rough show that while the overall numbers have decreased there is a significant increase in those presenting from countries both inside and outside the EC.

4. Strategic Vision and Mission

This section outlines the purpose of the plan and the values and principles which it contains. The plan is based on the Framework Action Plan for the South West Region which was approved by Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Kerry County Council and the Health Services Executive, Southern Region in June 2010. The Overall plan reflects The Way Home the National Strategy to address adult homelessness in Ireland from 2008 – 2013 and is also guided by national policy on mental health and the National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2013.

Vision

The Way Home states that from 2010 long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough will be eliminated throughout Ireland. The risk of a person becoming homeless will be minimised and where homelessness does occur, the experience will be short term and the aim will be to move the person in as short a time as possible into appropriate long-term, independent accommodation. If supports are required for short or long-term periods, these will be provided to ensure that people, who move to independent living, retain their tenancy.

It is also acknowledged in The Way Home that not everyone who experiences homelessness will be able to move in to mainstream housing, even with supports and some will need housing with care provided on site. Those groups of people who are hard to place, such as sex offenders, individuals with challenging behaviour and severe mental health issues will require a tailored response to meet their needs.

The Way Home states that the homeless sector is not and should not be responsible for these groups but it often ends up being the only source of accommodation and assistance to them and it is appropriate that in the circumstances it is involved in securing more appropriate responses to those needs.

The South West Joint Homeless Consultative Forum's vision is of a region without homelessness where appropriate preventative policies and services are available. The needs of people who are homeless will be met in a co-ordinated and planned manner and will offer a range of appropriate, affordable and supportive services aimed at the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

Mission

The purpose of the South West Joint Homeless Consultative Forum is to place an emphasis on strengthening preventative policies, procedures, working relationships and services to reduce levels of repeat homeless, thus reducing the overall level of homelessness. In particular the South West Joint Homeless Consultative Forum aims to address the needs of the long-term homeless currently resident in emergency facilities and to reduce the dependency on these facilities in line with Government policy and directives.

5. Values and Principles

The following values and principles have informed the development of this plan,

- Homelessness is solvable and preventable.
- Homelessness can only be addressed by relevant bodies working in partnership to agreed objectives.

Homelessness has as much to do with appropriate support services as with bricks and mortar. Housing by itself will not solve homelessness in every case. There is also a need for interventions to assist people to move out of homelessness and support services to help them to maintain independent living.

The co-operation of all relevant parties in providing co-ordinated service provision and integrated care planning is essential to eliminating long-term homeless and rough sleeping.

Services and funding made available to tackle homeless in the South West Region must be used in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Every individual/family is entitled to a place it can call home which is secure and appropriate to their needs and potential.

Each person is unique and must be valued as such.

People who become homeless have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to have their beliefs and choices respected.

Services should pose a continuing challenge to people to be as independent as possible and to move out of homelessness.

This South West Homeless Regional Action Plan mirrors the six strategic aims as outlined in The Way Home:

- To reduce the number of households who become homeless through the further development and enhancement of preventative measures – preventing homelessness.
- To eliminate the need for people to sleep rough.
- To eliminate long-term homelessness and to reduce the length of time people spend homeless.
- To meet the long-term housing needs through an increase in housing options.
- To ensure effective services for homeless people.
- To ensure better co-ordinated funding arrangements and re-orientate spending on homeless services, away from emergency responses to the provision of long-term independent housing and support services.

6. Strategic Aims and Actions to Implement the Regional Action Plan

The following section outlines the *Strategic Aims* of the Regional Action Plan which have been identified as the main focus for the Region. Actions together with lead agencies and a time frame have then been put in place to ensure each objective is achieved.

The Strategic Management Group is committed to delivering on the Government Objective to eliminate long-term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation and to end the need to sleep rough. To achieve this, service delivery must be kept under constant review and there must remain at all times, a constant awareness of how to best utilise and, where appropriate to reconfigure services as the need for emergency accommodation is reduced.

To assist people out of emergency accommodation, providers must proactively find accommodation and place and support residents in this accommodation. This action should be supported by Homeless Action Teams in each area in the region. This action will reduce dependency on temporary emergency accommodation, and the number of people in emergency accommodation. In the short-term, service providers will be required to shift resources towards the re-settlement element within existing provision. In time, it will reduce the number of people in emergency homeless services.

To effect this change a planned, re-settlement programme for all residents based on a comprehensive assessment of each individual and followed by a recommended placement type should be considered. In some areas accommodation is already configured as apartments/houses/housing units where residents have access to their own front door. This model should be extended throughout the region.

Where adequate emergency accommodation is available within the region, existing emergency providers should commence the process of reducing their level of residential provision and increase their space allocation to face-to-face and group client development and rehabilitation work.

Facilities need to be in place for people who move from emergency accommodation and a combination of mainstream housing with floating supports, sheltered housing with floating supports, cluster housing with an on-site supervisor/manager should be considered to provide long term homeless accommodation for these clients. This action to support people in accommodation is vital in breaking the cycle of homelessness by ensuring that people do not return to emergency accommodation.

Transitional accommodation is based on a transitional programme which is specific to a client's needs and designed to prepare and return the person to independent living and permanent housing. Service

provision which does not meet this criterion will cease intake and a resettlement programme will be implemented following a comprehensive assessment of each resident.

Each Strategic Aim has been identified on the principle of cross cutting themes for every Local Authority Area. The presentation of these actions follows the framework which has been taken from the Cork Homelessness Strategy, “Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy for Cork, 2009-2011.

The following are the Strategic Aims for the Regional Action Plan:

- Data Collection – The collection of data on a local and regional basis to quantify the requirement of services for each area.
- Housing and Support – The provision of adequate and appropriate housing and supports for the Region.
- The Prevention of Homelessness – The implementation of Preventative Policies for the Region

STRATEGIC AIM 1 -DATA COLLECTION

Decisions relating to the configuration of services must be based on rigorous analysis of relevant, comprehensive, accurate, and up to date information, particularly in relation to needs and existing homeless services, aspects such as unit cost analysis, cost variations between services, usage of service, duration of homelessness and outcomes for service users.

The collection of accurate and up to date information is vital to plan for services and ensure the needs of all homeless persons in the region are catered for.

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
1	PASS System	<p>Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), a homeless IT system, is now in place in the SW Region. This system, properly utilised, will capture the statistical information for the region.</p> <p>To fully utilise the PASS system, ensure there is a central placement system in operation for all homeless persons in the region.</p> <p>PASS, must be fully utilised by <u>ALL</u> Homeless Service Providers in the Region. Future funding to Homeless Service Providers must be dependent on the proper use of this system in order to ensure that accurate and up to date data is available on a regional basis.</p> <p>PASS to be reviewed 12 months following introduction of the system and KPIs should then be agreed.</p>	<p>All service providers must give a commitment to ensure that the information on PASS is accurate and up to date at all times.</p> <p>Identify what placement systems are in operation and best use of resources in the Region</p> <p>Funding will be dependent on full compliance with the PASS system.</p> <p>Set up a user group at management level within the Service providers to put in place best practices for the PASS system.</p> <p>To use the data captured by PASS to inform service delivery in the SW Region.</p>	<p>Cork City Council in conjunction with all Agencies.</p> <p>SMG</p> <p>Cork City Council in conjunction with all Agencies.</p> <p>SMG</p>

Rec. No.	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
2	Common Assessment Form	<p>The Common Assessment Form is a form used by Cork Homeless Service Providers to record the details of homeless service users, assess their needs and make recommendations on how best to meet their needs.</p> <p>To review Common Assessment Form and process to ensure that it is compatible with the PASS system and the information requested is at all times relevant.</p> <p>Once this form is reviewed and agreed, it should be used by ALL Homeless Service Providers in the Region so there is consistency in approach to collection of data</p>	<p>The common assessment process to be standardised among all agencies in the region. Guidelines for the use of the CAF will be updated and circulated to all key workers.</p>	Cork City Council Homeless Management Unit supported by Cork County Council & Kerry Co Council
3	Initial Assessment Form	<p>Where a person remains in temporary supported accommodation for a period of less than 3 days in Cork, details of the person are recorded on a form called “Initial Assessment Form” as the Common Assessment Form is too detailed.</p> <p>The Initial Assessment Form is to be reviewed in consultation with Homeless Service Providers in the South West Region.</p>	<p>Initial assessment form/ support plan to be completed for all residents 1 week or less in temporary supported accommodation.</p> <p>Common form to be used by all agencies in the Region so there is consistency in approach to collection of data on</p>	Cork City Council Homeless Management Unit supported by Cork County Council & Kerry Co Council
4	Use of Bed & Breakfast	<p>B&B accommodation is used in the Region to provide temporary supported accommodation for persons presenting as Homeless where they cannot be accommodated in the existing Homeless Services.</p>	<p>Through the best use of the PASS system, collect data on the usage of B&B in the Region.</p>	All Agencies

Rec. No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
		To establish the reasons why persons are being accommodated in B&Bs.	DSP Community Welfare Service to co-ordinate and collect data in the Region and report quarterly to the Local Authority. Usage of B&B to be monitored by the SMG.	SMG + DSP
5	Rough Sleepers	A number of Voluntary Homeless Service Providers have Outreach Staff who work with and provide services to Rough Sleepers. Where people are sleeping rough and not availing of Homeless Services in the Region, there is a need to establish the level of persons sleeping rough, identify if these people are linked in with services and if not linked in with services, the reasons why to be established.	Through the PASS system, have accurate and up to date information on instances of rough sleeping in the area. To identify all individuals who are rough sleeping and the reasons they are sleeping rough. This information to be analysed and assessed by the SMG with a view to ensuring no one needs to sleep rough in the SW Region,	All Agencies SMG

STRATEGIC AIM 2 –HOUSING AND SUPPORTS

Develop practices and protocols in the South West Region to ensure that Health, Housing and other vital Support Services for people accessing homeless services are widely available and accessible.

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
1	Links with CWS under DSP	CWS has now transferred to DSP. The CWS has always played a key role in the provision of services to homeless persons as they are the first point of contact and are responsible for assessing the needs of persons presenting as homeless.	To monitor the CWS service to ensure that there is no reduction in the level of service provided to homeless persons in the Region	Each Local Homeless Forum to review on ongoing basis at meetings of the Forum.
2	Accommodation for homeless families	<p>The level of difficulty with the provision of appropriate temporary supported accommodation for homeless women/families with children has been identified.</p> <p>To consider the issues that arise following family breakdowns and how having a legal interest in a family home or a Local Authority tenancy can prevent rent allowance being granted.</p> <p>The level of suitable accommodation for homeless families with children needs to be quantified in the region to ensure there is appropriate accommodation for such categories.</p>	<p>To support the redevelopment of Edel House to provide adequate and appropriate for homeless women and children.</p> <p>Through the HATs (Homeless Action Team) referrals, to identify the number of individuals who enter homeless services as a result of this issue and how this can be remedied.</p> <p>Identify availability of accommodation through RAS, Voluntary housing associations, Local Authority and Long term leasing options</p>	Cork Region -Cork City & County Local Authorities to jointly identify; Kerry Region – Kerry County Council

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
3	Provision of Tenancy Support for persons leaving homeless accommodation	There are a number of people living in homeless accommodation who will always require support to access and maintain a tenancy.	Local Authorities in the region will work with the Homeless Service Providers to identify accommodation options under RAS/Leasing / social housing whereby tenancy sustainment would be provided to resettled persons.	Cork City Council/Cork County Council/Kerry County Council in conjunction with Homeless Service Providers
4	Review the Tenancy Sustainment Services in the Region	The tenancy sustainment programmes in the SW Region provide vital support to assist individuals to live independently and best use needs to be made of this resource.	Complete a review of all existing tenancy sustainment services in the region to ensure they are operating effectively.	Cork City Council/Cork County Council/Kerry County Council in conjunction with Homeless Service Providers
5	Young People leaving care	To ensure that young people leaving care and those in the 18 to 25 year age bracket are provided with appropriate accommodation and supports to enable them to live independently. To quantify the numbers and identify the main reasons for referral from this client group so that solutions can be identified.	A HAT is in place in Cork City to identify accommodation options and ensure supports are in place for young people in the 18 to 25 year age group. Through the HAT to prepare a report for the consideration of the Regional Forum.	Cork City Council, HSE Aftercare Service & Wellsprings Homeless Service Provider
6	Homeless Persons with mental health issues	There is a need within the homeless sector to consider the needs of individuals with mental health issues. A joint initiative is underway between Cork County Council and the HSE whereby a full time Tenancy Sustainment Worker is being employed through Novas VHB to work with those with mental health issues to assist them to access and maintain independent accommodation in the West	This project should be reviewed to assess the benefits of the provision of this service to homeless persons or those at risk of homelessness and its applicability in the Region. A report should be provided to the Regional Homeless Consultative Forum on the project.	Cork County Council/HSE/Novas VHB

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
		<p>Cork general area.</p> <p>That persons being discharged from mental health services to emergency services receive the best possible care</p>	<p>A discharge protocol from mental health services to be agreed between homeless service providers and mental health services.</p>	<p>HSE in conjunction with all Local Authorities</p>

STRATEGIC AIM 3 – Prevention of Homelessness

In order to combat homelessness, effective preventative policies need to be in place. This will assist in avoiding the crisis which results in a person becoming homeless in the first instance and preventative measures will also assist in breaking the cycle of homelessness. The South West Region will need to address the causes of Homelessness in an integrated and holistic manner.

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
1	Client centred key worker system	That a Care and Case management approach be put into practice to ensure that a client centred service is available for all persons presenting as homeless in each Local Authority administrative area in the Region.	A sub Group of the Regional forum to put in place a protocol for a care and case management system and to ensure that this is compatible with the functionality of the PASS IT system.	Cork City Council/Cork County Council/Kerry County Council in conjunction with Homeless Service Providers
2	Discharge policies from acute, mental health care services and prison in the region	The implementation of national discharge policies, prison service policy and acute and mental health services discharge policies needs to be monitored to ascertain the level on compliance with these policies.	SMG to ascertain current status of Irish Prison Service Discharge Policy HSE to review compliance with existing acute and mental health service Discharge Policies, to establish what effect lack of compliance has on homeless services.	SMG in conjunction with the SW Regional Forum
3	Habitual Residence Clause	This is a national policy issue which is having an effect on homeless services in the region.	SMG to gather information through PASS on the numbers presenting and accessing homeless services as a result of not being HRC compliant. SMG to continue to highlight the impact of HRC non compliance for individuals affected and for homeless services to the appropriate Government Departments.	SMG in conjunction with the SW Regional Forum

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
		To identify people who are homeless as a direct result of the Habitual Residence clause	To explore pathways out of homeless for those identified which would include reconnection with home countries or reintegration into employment and work in the Irish context.	SMG in conjunction with all Agencies
4	To ensure there is access to training and education for all homeless persons	A lack of training and education contributes to homelessness and is a barrier to the reintegration of homeless persons into the community.	Through the Regional Forum to ensure there is a wide range of courses available together with the necessary supports to assist persons who wish to pursue their education. Particular attention should be directed to young people in the 18 to 25 year age group who may also be in need of financial assistance to pursue their training / education choices.	Education Training Board (ETB) formerly VEC and FÁS in consultation with the VHB; SMG to secure regional analysis and information.
5	Best Practice	The sharing of information and models of Best Practice should be facilitated within the South West Region.	<p>The SMG to look at putting in place a system to discuss and roll out models of best practice in the South West Region.</p> <p>Regional Consultative Forum to organise a twice yearly forum which seeks to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different approaches to addressing/eliminating homelessness; • practical evidence based models of best practice from own and other regions • effective collaboration across agencies b) consultation with service users 	SMG in conjunction with the SW Regional Forum

Rec No	Recommendation Name	Recommendation Detail	Implementation	Lead Responsibility
			c) Explore possibility of National Homeless Forum conference / e-learning options;	
		Identify interventions and approaches that effectively prevent homelessness from occurring and explore ways of developing such services and approaches across the region	Further develop services, such as the Access Housing Unit, which provide preventative, targeted supports to homeless people or people at risk of homelessness to enable them to remain in their own homes and communities and through tenancy sustainment services reduce the incidence of repeat homelessness.	Regional Consultative Forum VHB Statutory bodies

7. Evaluation and Review

Under the terms of the protocol governing delegation of Section 10 funding for Homeless Services to Cork City Council on behalf of the South West Homelessness Management Group and the South West Homeless Consultative Forum a new reporting procedure will be in place which will bring together data from each Local Authority area.

A performance report will be submitted on a **quarterly basis** by Cork City Council to the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government on the following key deliverables:

- Admissions to Homeless services
- Number of Rough Sleepers assisted off the streets
- Number of people resident in homeless accommodation by type of accommodation
- Number of clients with a care plan, allocated to a Homeless Action Team
- Private emergency units de-designated and full tenancies granted
- On site supported accommodation de-designated and full tenancies granted
- Number of former service users resettled to independent living
- Number of former service users supported by SLI
- Accommodation units delivered for homeless with full tenancies granted – across all social housing tenures.

A **six monthly** PASS report will also be required which will reflect the following:

- Numbers of persons admitted by number of admissions in the six month period to temporary residential services
- % who were resettled in permanent independent accommodation and % who were provided supports
- Of those resettled in the previous period % remain settled
- % have returned to emergency accommodation
- % of those admitted in the period had been admitted to emergency accommodation on previous occasions.

A Lead Agency **Annual update** is to be submitted to the South West Homeless Forum each year. The report will deal with progress to date on the action plan and identify any gaps or blocks which are preventing the achievement of the action.

8. Specialist Services

Specialist services should be looked at on a regional basis and Agencies in all areas to be encouraged to make best use of these services and to avoid any duplication of services.

Appendix 1

Review of Regional Action Plan for Homeless Services 2010 – 2013 South West Region

The Strategic Management Group for the South West Regional Consultative Forum agreed that the Strategic Aims of the 2010 – 2013 Regional Action Plan be reassessed in preparation for the review and, where appropriate, amendment of the homelessness action plan, or the preparation and adoption of a new homelessness action plan. A Focus Group with representatives from the statutory and voluntary bodies undertook this work.

Strategic Aim 1 – Data Collection

Recommendation 1 – Common Assessment Form.

It was noted that the common assessment Form was under review and must be amended to reflect the implications of Data Protection Act advising that PPS numbers can no longer be held by the Voluntary Housing Bodies. The CAF has been assessed in relation to the new PASS Homeless IT system and is compatible.

It was agreed that with the rollout of PASS, the PASS record ID will be the unique identifier as the PPS numbers can no longer be used.

It was agreed to circulate the CAF to agencies for feedback if any amendments are required.

Need to confirm that CAF will be utilized by all agencies in the region

Action:

Cork City Council to undertake the review of the CAF in conjunction with all agencies.
Cork City Council, Kerry County Council and Cork County Council to roll out the CAF to all agencies in the SW Region.

Recommendation 3 – Use of B&B's

Work in conjunction with the Dept of Social Protection to record this information on PASS as access to PASS cannot be made available to private B&B providers. Claims for B&B costs are to be requested on a quarterly basis from 2012.

Action:

Cork and Kerry County Councils are to ensure this information is recorded on PASS

Recommendation 4 – Rough Sleepers

Each Local Authority is to have in place procedures to ensure that information on rough sleepers is recorded on PASS

Action:

Cork County Council is informed of individuals who are sleeping rough by the Community Welfare Officers and will ensure that this information is recorded on the PASS system.

Kerry County Council currently gathers this information through their Resettlement Worker and will arrange to have the information recorded on PASS.

Recommendation 5: PASS

Train the Trainer sessions had been scheduled for 11th – 13th September and nominations received from each project to attend 1 day training with a view that they would return and train the remaining staff in the project.

Cork City Council will be available to provide support.

It was noted that the implementation of the PASS system had been postponed as the Homeless Executive had advised that they had resource issues to resolve before they would be in a position to roll out the system.

Action:

Cork City Council to oversee the roll out the PASS system in conjunction with Cork County Council and Kerry County Council within the SW Region and to provide the necessary support where required.

Strategic Aim 2 – Housing & Supports

Recommendation 1: Links with CWS under DSP

The APO, DSP has responsibility for overseeing the Community Welfare Service in the Homeless Person Unit in Cork which provides the service for the City area.

Action:

Each Local Authority to monitor the Community welfare Service in their administrative area to ensure there is no change/ reduction in the services being offered to homeless persons.

Recommendation 2: Accommodation for homeless families

To look at putting in place a Homeless Action Team with referrals from frontline agencies. The information can then be assessed to quantify what the need is for accommodation specific to the needs of this client group.

The HAT should also look at the issues that arise following family breakdowns and how having a legal interest in a family home or a Local Authority tenancy can prevent rent allowance being granted.

Action:

Cork City Council and the HSE to set up a Homeless Action Team to evaluate the need for accommodation specific to this group.

Cork County Council and Kerry County Council to look at the requirement for setting up similar HATs in their administrative areas.

Recommendation 3: Tenancy Sustainment

Cork City Council has written to various agencies in the view to audit those currently using the service to try and avoid duplication within the agencies if not required

Action:

Cork City Council, Kerry County Council and Cork County Council to undertake an audit of all Tenancy Sustainment Services in their respective administrative areas.

Recommendation 4: Young people leaving care

There is a HAT in Cork to deal with this client group.

Action:

Cork County Council and Kerry County Council to look at whether this model would be suited to their administrative areas.

Recommendation 5: Homeless Persons with mental health issues

A Tenancy Support Worker has been appointed in West Cork to deal with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are identified as having mental health issues.

HSE have committed to employ as a priority staff in the Mental Health area. 6 new nurses have been employed. No specialized unit for Homeless persons therefore no fast tracking for Homeless Persons. At present Homeless Persons with Mental Health issues have access to Tenancy Sustainment through Hostels and Threshold.

HSE have reviewed the mental health services in the Cork area, Cork is no longer divided between North and South but have shared services therefore pooling budgets, staff and standardizing policy. Agreed that ensuring adequate support is available is key in Homeless services

It was suggested that there should be someone available in the County Area that would be able to Assess Housing for Homeless Persons in the County area.

Action:

To look at learning from this West Cork project to see what can be gained for the Region from it. The SMG to consult with the Local Health Officer regarding the new Strategy for Mental Health which is due to be published. A protocol for the discharge of persons from Mental Health services to homeless services is to be put in place once the new strategy has been published. Cork County Council and Kerry County Council to look at how this is being dealt with in their administrative areas.

Strategic Aim 3 – Prevention of Homelessness

Recommendation 1: Client Centred key worker system

It was agreed that care & case management protocols that are available on the Homeless Executive website should set the protocols for the Client Centred key worker system therefore there is no need to draft new protocols.

Also available is Progressions Roots Initiative which would have people available to advise (Aoife Dermody & Caroline Gardiner)

Action:

All Agencies to ensure there is a client centred system in place and that each client has access to a key / project worker.

Recommendation 2: Discharge Policies

A draft protocol was submitted to the HSE and further discussions are required to develop the protocol

It was noted that a new integrated discharge policy is being developed within the HSE and should be completed by mid September 2012. It was agreed that this should be postponed until the integrated discharge policy is completed.

Concern of the discharge policy within Prison – suggested that a working group for accommodation needs for those leaving prison be set up. Staff within the prison should be linking in with the services. Contact to be made with the prison service to see what procedures are in place.

Action:

Cork City Council in conjunction with all agencies to follow up regarding the discharge policy for acute health services.

Cork City Council to set up a working Group to look at and put in place where required a discharge policy from prison.

Recommendation 3: HRC

Funding has expired from POBOL for the Threshold Outreach project to provide advice and support to non Irish nationals accessing homeless services and an application had been submitted to DOELG to extend funding. If funding is not available from the DOELG outside of the current budget may require to seek funding outside of the DOECLG i.e. Dept of Justice

It was noted that the policy is a national policy it is therefore outside the remit of the Regional Forum.

Action:

The Focus Group to monitor the effects of the HRC and report to the Regional Forum for their consideration. A report is to issue to the relevant Government Departments to advise them of the extent of the problems being encountered by accommodation providers as a result of this rule.

All Agencies to look at resources to see if a service can be provide for this client group within current resources.

Recommendation 4: Training & Education for Homeless Persons

Ongoing concern that there may be disruption in the future with uncertainty with the various agencies for the future. While recognizing the success of existing schemes it was agreed that VEC & FAS may need to adapt services for Homeless persons by prioritizing homeless persons and adapting course times and frequency to suit the difficulties that Homeless Persons may have in being able to attend courses.

Agreed that may need to put a paper together to recognize the necessity of these services for Homeless Persons but that may require adaptation to deal with Homeless Persons.

Action:

A working Group to be set up to look at what is available in the Region and what resources can be accessed to ensure there is a continuation of training and education for homeless persons.

Recommendation 5: Best Practice

Add to the Regional Forum Agenda as this is a huge area that will require a lot of co operation from all agencies if it is to be achieved.

Action:

The SMG to put on the Agenda for consideration by the SW Regional Forum

Recommendation 6: Consultation with service users

It is recognized that it would be useful to conduct surveys with service users, currently Mental Health are working with UCC as their service has been in existence for 10 years and Simon utilized outside consultants when drafting programme for the future.

Action:

Agreed to revisit this recommendation in 12 months before the next review of the plan. It was agreed that it was essential that this research be conducted independently and look at the possibility of a research grant.

USEFUL LINKS

Cork City Council	www.corkcity.ie
Cork County Council	www.corkcoco.ie
Kerry County Council	www.kerrycoco.ie
Cork Foyer	www.corkfoyer.ie
Cork Simon Community	www.corksion.com
Dept. of Social Protection	www.welfare.ie
Health Service Executive	www.hse.ie
Society of St. Vincent de Paul	www.svp.ie
Threshold	www.threshold.ie
Good Shepherd Services	www.goodshepherdservices.ie

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used within the document include the following:

LA	> Local Authority
HSE	> Health Service Executive
AHB	> Approved Housing Body
CWO	> Community Welfare Officer
HAT	> Homeless Action Team



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