



Centre for
Housing Research



Comhshaol, Oidhreacht agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government



Poverty Impact Assessment of The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008 – 2013



Stage 1 – Screening

Screening Tool

Is the policy, programme or proposal significant in terms of:	YES	NO	POSSIBLY
Overall National/Departmental Policy	X		
The level and/or proportion of expenditure involved.	X		
The change it will bring about in an existing policy or procedure.	X		
<p>Its relevance to those groups who have been identified as being most vulnerable to poverty or social exclusion, e.g.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women • Lone parent families • Families with large numbers of children • People with disabilities • Unemployed • Members of the Travelling community • People experiencing rural disadvantage • People experiencing urban poverty • Homeless • Migrants and ethnic minorities • Others ... specify <p>Also need to consider potential impacts on inequalities which may lead to poverty.</p>	X		ALL

When the answer is 'yes' or 'possibly' to any of the above a full poverty impact assessment should be carried out following the steps outlined above for stage two.



Stage 2 – Full Poverty Impact Assessment

Step 1 - Formal Consultation

For the poverty impact assessment process, over 550 stakeholders were invited to attend one of two consultation events (11/9/07 – Kildare, 13/9/07 – Limerick) where they had the opportunity to comment on a draft summary of the proposed strategy. Approximately 100 stakeholders attended representing local authorities, the HSE and the community and voluntary sectors. Participants also commented on the strategy from a health impact assessment perspective.

Step 2 - Define Policy Aims and Target Groups

What is the primary objective of this strategy?

The stated vision is this:


From 2010, long-term homelessness¹ and the need for people to sleep rough will be eliminated throughout Ireland. The risk of a person becoming homeless will be minimised through effective preventive policies and services. When it does occur homelessness will be short-term and all people who are homeless will be assisted into appropriate long term housing.

The strategy covers a number of strategic aims:

- Preventing homelessness
- Eliminate the need to sleep rough
- Eliminate long term homelessness
- Meet long term housing needs
- Ensure effective services for homeless people
- Better co-ordinated funding arrangements

Therefore, the strategy intends to ensure homelessness is prevented through early identification of people at-risk of homelessness and providing supports where necessary. When homelessness has occurred, the strategy intends to minimise the length of time people spend in emergency accommodation and that new tenancies are sustained through appropriate accommodation provision and support systems. At a local level, fora will be obliged to become more uniformly active across the country and ensure that their homeless action plans are implemented.

¹ Long term means long term occupation (i.e. greater than six months) of emergency homeless accommodation.



It was mentioned by some stakeholders during the consultation process that there are people who are 'voluntarily homeless', and best practice provisions would never be able to eliminate homelessness entirely. One of the strategic aims of the strategy – elimination of the need for people to sleep rough – will ensure that people who choose to sleep rough will be able to access basic provision if desired. The strategy recognises that not all people who are homeless want to access homeless services.

Who are the target groups and how will the proposal reach those groups?

The target group of the strategy is the homeless population of Ireland and people at risk of homelessness. These are not homogenous groups and may encompass many of the listed categories of vulnerable groups identified by the PIA process – although this list is not exhaustive. Homelessness can occur at any point, or reoccurring points across the life cycle.


The strategy intends to reach these groups through improved service provision at a local level, improved access to housing across a continuum of support needs as well as tenancy sustainment. Tenancy sustainment aims to ensure that when a formerly homeless person is housed, their tenancy is maintained, thereby preventing recurring homelessness.

Proposals around strengthening the local homeless fora, and improving access to funding will also have knock-on beneficial effects for the homeless population through more efficient application processes for housing and other services. Strengthening the fora will ensure that attention is paid to local homeless problems and people can be supported in their own communities and may not need to migrate for services.

It will be necessary to ensure that the strategy has a budget to match its strategic aims and objectives. To this end, the strategy has been drafted on the basis that agencies/departments will meet the costs involved from within existing/planned budgets. This will be underpinned by the strategy's focus on ensuring efficiency and effectiveness from the significant funding which the State is already providing to address homelessness (in 2007 DEHLG spending on current costs for accommodation and related services was €52.9 million, plus a contribution of €5.9 million from local authorities, the HSE provided €32.6 million for care costs of homeless services).

What are the differences within the target group/between the target groups which may lead to them benefiting from the strategy in different ways and how could these be addressed?


Stakeholders involved in the consultation events believed there were members of the homeless/at-risk of homelessness population who may not have access to the available benefits of the draft strategy. In their opinion these would include:

- 
- People who are particularly difficult to house, for example people who are homeless due to anti-social behaviour in a former residence or sex offenders.
 - People leaving hospital who may have a home but cannot return to it as it cannot cater for their altered requirements, either temporarily or permanently.
 - Single men are rarely prioritised on housing lists. When they are accommodated account is not taken of their visitation access to children (where applicable).
 - Migrant workers who find it difficult to get an initial deposit for private accommodation.
 - People with multiple problems may not benefit equally from the strategy as stakeholders feel they are often already inadvertently ignored by service provision.

The Way Home addresses these concerns; see tables 1 and 2 and also strategic aim 4. The intent is to identify people at risk of homelessness, for example those engaged in anti-social behaviour and ensure preventative measures are in place. The focus on moving people out of emergency accommodation and through transitional (if necessary) to long term accommodation should also benefit those who are already experiencing difficulties due to anti-social behaviour. Some of these comments will be addressed below:

- Sex offenders are particularly identified as a difficult group to house. The strategy notes the work of the Multi Agency Group on Homeless Sex Offenders which is a thematic subgroup reporting to the Homeless Agency's Care and Case Management Steering Group.
- Discharge policies from institutional care will be enhanced through monitoring and evaluation.
- DEHLG has regular engagement with Cosc (the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence) and measures are included in the strategy addressing stakeholder concerns in this area.
- The final strategy particularly identifies single people in its Strategic Aims 2008-2013. Holistic needs assessments and individual care and case management as outlined by this strategy assist in overcoming issues such as accommodating children of single people to whom they may have occasional access.
- The inclusion of refugee and integration groups as partners may be a positive step for migrant workers. The 'New to the Area' (table 1) provisions should assist people who are unfamiliar with the Irish system.

A more seamless service provision and better interagency working should also help to ensure that at risk groups do not fall through the net of service provision. However best practice models will need to be delivered and followed to ensure this high level of service and partnership working comes into effect.



At the consultation events, stakeholders were encouraged by the prevention and tenancy sustainment elements of the draft strategy document, however felt that these could be best practised through individual needs assessment and support provided on this basis also.

Stakeholders suggested that:

- The focus should be on prevention of homelessness and relevant training provided for case workers to facilitate tenancy sustainment.
- Systems must be provided for secondary needs that come to the fore under tenancy sustainment schemes; for example public health nurses and rehabilitation schemes.
- People accessing accommodation under RAS/rent supplement scheme should be facilitated with an ever-decreasing access to social welfare to encourage employment. It should be financially worthwhile for people to take up employment. However this latter point falls outside the remit of this strategy.

The strategy addresses these comments in the following ways:

- The strategy has a clear focus on care and case management and individual holistic needs assessment.
- Training for staff is particularly mentioned in table 2 in terms of improving capacity of mainstream services to meet the needs of homeless people.
- Additional needs of homeless people may be addressed via the National Drugs Strategy and the HSE's primary healthcare teams.
- A sliding scale of access to social welfare benefits is outside the jurisdiction of this strategy, and applies to a wider population than just that of the formerly homeless population. The NDP activation measures may alleviate some disincentives.

Additionally, it is important that emergency accommodation is still provided as necessary alongside transitional and long term accommodation solutions.

Step 3 - Identify available data and research

Prior to the consultation events, the Centre for Housing Research provided an interim document to help stimulate thinking about poverty and homelessness. This document profiled the Irish homeless population (noting this is a particularly difficult group to census) and considered definitions of homelessness. Additionally, this document discussed causes of homelessness, at-risk groups and highlighted the necessity of taking a life cycle approach. The document briefly touched upon the homelessness risks for migrants and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, prisoners and ex-prisoners, Travellers, lone parents, and other groups covered by equality legislation including gender and sexual orientation. This document intended to highlight that poverty was not merely about financial constraints, but

as defined in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPinclusion), with material, cultural and social resources also considered. The intent was to draw attention to the absence of social capital for homeless people; in other words that they may not be able to develop and sustain social networks/knowledge typically accumulated through societal positioning and engagement. Without this social capital, accessing resources becomes particularly problematic. A copy of this document, a draft summary of the strategy and a copy of the *Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies* were circulated to attendees prior to attending the consultation events.

Step 4 - Assess impacts and consider alternatives

What type of impact on poverty (either in terms of numbers in poverty or level of poverty) would the proposal have, in particular for each of the vulnerable groups identified?

Vulnerable Group (as identified in NAPinclusion)	Likely impact of the programme/ project in terms of poverty		
	None See Q.4.2	Positive See Q.4.3	Negative See Q.4.4
Life cycle groups		X	
Children and Young People	X	X	
People of working age Older people		X X	
People with disabilities		X	
Other vulnerable groups	X	X	
Women		X	
Members of Travelling community	X	X	
Prisoners and ex-prisoners		X	
People experiencing rural disadvantage		X	
People experiencing urban poverty		X	
Migrants	X	X	
Ethnic minorities	X	X	
Others: (please specify)	X		
Carers	X		
<i>Families with children in low-income employment</i>		X	

4.2 If the proposed strategy would have no effect on poverty what options might be identified to produce a positive effect?

The strategy particularly addresses adult homelessness. However, the strategy will impact on children and young people whose household is headed by an adult who is at-risk of homelessness, or already homeless. In this regard, the strategy would have a positive effect for young people and children as it intends to ensure that rough sleeping will be unnecessary and that long-term accommodation provision with supports is made available to these household heads with obvious benefits for other householders. At national level, co-operation will continue between the Department of Health and Children, who have responsibility for youth homelessness and the DEHLG. At local level co-operation between local homeless fora and youth homeless fora will continue.


All other groups identified in this column are groups mentioned as being particularly vulnerable to homelessness by stakeholders at the consultation events. This is addressed in the strategy, and detailed previously in this section. Attention should be drawn to table 1 and provisions for those 'new to an area'. Also, *The Way Home* particularly refers to older homeless people (both those over age 65, and younger people who have been aged by the effects of homelessness), and homeless people with disabilities.

4.3 If the proposed strategy would have a positive effect would it help to prevent people falling into poverty; reduce the level (in terms of numbers and depth) of poverty and/or ameliorate the effects of poverty?

Explain how these positive effects are achieved and consider how the position could be improved upon.

The strategy will help prevent people from falling into poverty through its preventative measures. For example, through early identification, people who are beginning to encounter financial difficulties can be helped to sustain their tenancies. Additionally people with other difficulties who have been identified as 'at-risk' are identified and supported. In this way, the strategy should have a positive impact on the numbers of people at-risk of poverty.

Through measures intended to improve and strengthen local homeless fora and their local homeless action plans, poverty may also be alleviated through more robust and active local attempts at preventing homelessness and assisting people out of homelessness. New funding arrangements may also have a positive effect on poverty; by providing a more transparent and accessible funding protocol, voluntary and cooperative bodies may be able to use their time more efficiently and obtain funding in a more streamlined way.



Monitoring these effects is essential to quantify the strategy's success. The strategy contains guidance on monitoring and evaluating its success through data gathering. Therefore, overall the strategy could have a very positive effect on the inter-relationship between homelessness and poverty.

Stakeholders made some additional suggestions:

- Local Homeless Fora should be placed on a statutory basis. The rationale being that through active and accountable fora local homeless service provision could be improved.
- Funding should be ring-fenced for homeless services to ensure it does not get diverted elsewhere as need arises.
- In particular, tenancy sustainment would require additional funding.
- Additional housing across the needs spectrum is required.

The Way Home does not place local homeless fora on a statutory basis. However, they will become more active and accountable. The strategy has committed to placing local homeless action plans on a statutory basis. A stream of funding for long term supported housing for formerly homeless people will be considered by 2009. Some local authorities have committed to setting aside accommodation for their homeless populations according to the relevant needs of that population; for example, where the homeless population is predominantly comprised of single people. The strategy recognises the need for an adequate supply of appropriate housing options with related support services as necessary in its core principles; it is recognised that this is essential for tenancies to be sustainable.

With regard to the rental accommodation scheme (RAS), some stakeholders were concerned about its applicability and suitability for homeless populations. Some stakeholders raised the issue that landlords may not be favourable towards taking on homeless tenants. Some stakeholders noted that this form of tenancy would require support services, which may be difficult to provide when accommodation is scattered across a locality.

The strategy recognises that RAS may not be suitable for all formerly homeless households, and indeed in many areas of the country there may not be an available supply of private rented accommodation. In placing people who are capable of independent living in RAS accommodation and having ensured that a contract is in place with the landlord, people who were formerly homeless should be protected from homelessness in the same manner as other RAS tenants.

4.4 If the proposed strategy would have a negative effect (e.g. by increasing the numbers in poverty or the level of poverty experienced) what options could be considered to ameliorate this effect?

Not applicable

Would the proposed strategy contribute to the achievement of the NAP/inclusion targets (including the subsidiary targets)?

If it does contribute to the achievement of the targets, explain how this is the case and consider whether the position can be improved further. If it does not, consider whether anything can be done to reverse the position. In this regard, consideration should be given as to whether the programme is specifically aimed at groups experiencing poverty or at risk of poverty, i.e., whether it is intended as an anti-poverty measure.

The NAP/inclusion targets in regard to adult homeless are:

- A revised government strategy on homelessness will be published during 2007.
- Long-term occupancy of emergency homeless accommodation will be eliminated by 2010.
- The involvement of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector will be strengthened through the establishment of a National Homeless Consultative Committee under the aegis of the Housing Forum during 2007.

The publication of the strategy in 2008, covers the first target, and commitments contained in the strategy intend to ensure that the second target is met, strengthened by targets in *Towards 2016*. The third target was achieved in 2007.


Would the proposed strategy address the inequalities which may lead to poverty?

Groups covered by the nine grounds of equality legislation are referred to in the strategy. These include people who have experienced domestic violence, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, in particular mental ill health and addiction issues. In doing this, the strategy serves to address some of the equality grounds in terms of avoiding poverty. The strategy overall intends to ensure the transparency of service provision and progression of *Towards 2016* goals, through this all nine grounds covered by equality legislation should be ensured fair treatment.

Step 5 - Make decision and arrange monitoring

Will this proposal be adopted?

Yes, overall the draft strategy addresses any criticisms of policy and practice as identified in



the Fitzpatrick Associates' review. Criticisms raised by stakeholders based on the draft strategy were either already addressed in the full text of the draft or reaffirmed the way the strategy was already developing.

If the strategy is to be adopted, how will its impact on poverty be monitored?

A key element of the strategy is improved data-collection and eventual monitoring of outcomes. Through these measures it will be possible to see over time if there has been an overall reduction in homelessness, and additionally an overall reduction in reoccurring homelessness. The prevention element of the strategy should offer protection and support from homelessness, and therefore also prevent a worse poverty situation from occurring. Tenancy sustainment programmes should help ensure that formerly homeless people are maintained in provided accommodation and are assisted to live as independently as possible across a support continuum. Therefore these tenancy sustainment programmes should help formerly homeless households out of abject poverty.

If transitional and long-term accommodation demands rise, while emergency accommodation requirements remain stagnant, this will also be a good measure of the strategy's success at helping people out of homelessness, and therefore poverty.