

Comhairle Contae **Lú**
Louth County Council



NORTH EAST REGION HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN 2024 – 2026



**Comhairle Contae
an Chabháin**
Cavan
County Council



Executive Summary

The North East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2026 was prepared by the local authorities of Louth, Cavan and Monaghan having regard to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as it relates to Homelessness.

The plan has been approved by the North East Region Homelessness Consultative Forum, being the representative body for the key stakeholders for homelessness services in the region including the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The purpose of the plan is to identify the key areas of challenge, throughout the region, in the area of homelessness, and to put in place effective objectives and actions to meet these challenges.

The North East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2024-2026 seeks to build and improve upon the work carried out during the lifetime of the previous plan which ran from 2021-2023. The previous plan was implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic which brought unprecedented challenges in many areas.

This Action Plan seeks to solidify and strengthen the enhanced levels of inter-agency and stakeholder co-operation over the past three years.

This Regional Action Plan 2024-2026 has been developed during a period of increased pressure on the housing market nationally. The North East region has not been immune to these issues. Factors include housing demand exceeding supply, increased rental costs in the private rented market and the influx of persons fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.

Homeless presentations, including a significant rise in presentations by families, have continued on an upward trajectory over the past number of years and many cases continue to be of a complex nature. The inter-agency response to dealing with these presentations and in finding viable solutions is a key aspect in the strategy to respond to homelessness in the region.

These challenges are likely to remain throughout the lifetime of this Action Plan and amongst the key areas of priority addressed in this plan are homeless prevention, emergency accommodation provision and standards, exit strategies, tenancy sustainment, health and welfare and the commitment to a multi-agency approach.

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INTRODUCTION

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

Chapter 6 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009¹ is the statutory basis for the provision and management of homeless matters, designating housing authorities in the State as the responsible statutory providers of housing provision while also acknowledging the role of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in its statutory role of providing social and care support services.

1.1 ACTION PLAN

Section 37 of the Act requires housing authorities (now local authorities since the rationalisation/merging of the 81 housing authorities into 31 local authorities) to adopt action plans to address homelessness. These plans are prepared by the Regional Homelessness Strategic Management Group and for the North East Region, the 2024-26 plan will be its fifth 3-year plan since 2010. Once accepted at regional level, each local authority will present it to its representatives for formal adoption.

The Act also sets out the requirements of the Homelessness Action Plans. A Homelessness Action Plan shall specify the measures proposed to be undertaken to address homelessness in the administrative area or administrative areas concerned by the housing authority or housing authorities, as the case may be, the Health Service Executive, specified bodies, or approved bodies or other bodies providing services to address homelessness or the performance of whose functions may affect or relate to the provision of such services, including but not necessarily limited to measures to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) *the prevention of homelessness*
- (b) *the reduction of homelessness in its extent or duration*
- (c) *the provision of services, including accommodation, to address the needs of homeless households*
- (d) *the provision of assistance under section 10 (b) (i), as necessary, to persons who were formerly homeless, and*
- (e) *the promotion of effective co-ordination of activities proposed to be undertaken by the bodies referred to in this subsection for the purposes of addressing homelessness in the administrative area or areas concerned.*

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

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

Department Circular 44/2021 provides up to date guidance on the preparation of Homeless Action Plans by Local Authorities. Per this circular it is advised that all action plans should reflect the core principles as set out under 'Housing For All' including the key policy objectives, principles and actions contained therein.

1.2 STATUTORY PROVISIONS OF THE HOUSING ACT 1988

The relevant statutory provisions regarding homelessness are provided under Section 2 and Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988, as outlined below:

SECTION 2 OF THE HOUSING ACT 1988 PROVIDES:

A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purposes 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 such institution, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph
- (c) and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources

SECTION 10 OF THE ACT OF 1988 PROVIDES:

- (a) A housing authority may, subject to such regulations as may be made by the Minister under this section:
- (b) make arrangements, including financial arrangements, with a body approved of by the Minister for the purposes of section 5 for the provisions by that body of accommodation for a homeless person,
- (b) provide a homeless person with such assistance, including financial assistance, as the authority consider appropriate, or
- (c) rent accommodation, arrange lodgings or contribute to the cost of such accommodation or lodgings for a homeless person
- (d) A housing authority may, while making enquiries to enable them to determine if a person is homeless, exercise the powers provided for in subsection (1). It is the Housing Authority that must form the requisite opinion, following an assessment of need, on whether the criterion as set out in Section 2 is fulfilled. The decision to provide emergency accommodation supports rests within the competence and expertise of the Housing Authority and is made within the context of available resources and competing demands on those resources.

1.3 POLICY CONTEXT

The actions and objectives set out in this plan are within the context of existing European and national policy documents, specifically addressing the issue of homelessness, with the objective of producing attainable and sustainable solutions.

Discussed in this section are a number of such initiatives, which are most relevant and applicable to this Action plan. This is not an exhaustive list in terms of those initiatives relevant to the objectives and actions as set out in this Action Plan.

The Lisbon Declaration:

Ireland was one of a number of European Union states to sign up to the 'Lisbon Declaration' on the European Platform on Combating Homelessness' in June 2021.

Amongst the key points of the Lisbon Declaration is the acknowledgment 'that homelessness is one of the most extreme forms of social exclusion, negatively affecting people's physical and mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life, as well as their access to employment and access to other economic and social services'.

The document further acknowledges that the root causes of homelessness are both complex and varied, and said causes include insufficient availability of social housing/housing supports, low income, family breakdown, long term health problems and the difficulty in transitioning from institutional settings.

The declaration cites growing evidence of the efficacy of a housing led approach in tackling the issue of homelessness.

All signatories of the Declaration have committed *‘to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030’*.

Housing for All: A New Housing Plan for Ireland

The previous Homeless Action Plan 2021-2023 was drafted in the context of the government policy document ‘Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness’. This has now been superseded by the 2021 policy paper ‘Housing for All: A New Housing plan for Ireland’.

Housing For All is a comprehensive policy document/action plan aimed at addressing the housing situation nationally and places special emphasis on tackling and eradicating homelessness in line with the aspirations set out under the ‘Lisbon Declaration’.

The core principals, policy objectives and actions set out in ‘Housing for All’ are the underpinning foundation for the formulation of Regional Homeless Action Plans.

‘Housing For All’ addresses areas such as increased social housing provision, affordable housing, enhanced Part V provisions and measures to increase availability in the private rented sector.

A number of homeless specific objectives and actions are contained within the strategy.

Included in this is the expansion of Housing First throughout the country. Government has indicated its commitment to Housing First as an essential tool in addressing the needs of the long-term homeless and the most vulnerable.

The critical importance of an inter-agency approach to homelessness is acknowledged and the National Homeless Action Committee has been established in this regard.

Other areas of critical concern are the need for enhanced healthcare supports and care pathways, family supports, early intervention measures for children and expansion of outreach services.

Housing First National Implementation Plan 2022 – 2026

Housing First is now firmly embedded as a key component in the national strategy for addressing the housing, health and social care needs of the long-term homeless and those with the most complex needs. The new National Implementation Plan commits to an expansion of the service from 2022 – 2026.

The targets, as set out in the implementation plan, commit to the establishment of a further 40 Housing First tenancies across the North East region over 5 years. This includes the creation of an additional 30 tenancies in Louth, 7 in Cavan and a further 3 in Monaghan.

National Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2017 – 2025

The National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy commits to a health led approach in addressing the causes and consequences of addiction in the state. The strategy acknowledges that homelessness has been identified as a social consequence of addiction and that homelessness and poverty are on the increase amongst those in active addiction.

The North East homelessness stake holders are cognisant of the prevalence of drug addiction within the client base and are fully committed to embracing a more health led approach in order to enhance and improve upon the current services within the region.

Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023 – 2025

This strategy specifically addresses the unique challenges faced by those aged between 18 and 24 when facing a homeless situation. Special emphasis is placed on the need to provide specific homeless prevention programmes for young people.

The requirement to improve the experience of those accessing emergency accommodation and the need for a clear exit plan is also cited. Close interagency co-operation between state agencies such as the local authority, Tusla and government departments, such as DCEDIY, is a key theme underpinning the strategic aims and actions of this strategy.

Guidance for Housing Authorities in assisting victims of domestic violence with emergency accommodation and long-term housing solutions.

Emergency accommodation for those displaced as a result of domestic violence is provided by NGO organisations such as the women refuges under the auspices of Tusla. Such placements are finite in length, and it is an imperative that longer term housing solutions are sought for this client cohort.

Circular Housing 2/17 dated 17th January 2017 outlines guidance for Housing Authorities to ensure a more consistent and effective responses to assisting victims of domestic violence. The guidelines provide an outline for best practice in this area and the procedural pathways within which local authorities may operate. Organisational responsibility is outlined between the key stakeholders in terms of crisis response to domestic violence, emergency accommodation and long-term accommodation needs. The requirement for a partnership approach being adopted by statutory agencies and other stakeholders involved in this area is emphasised.

Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone

This policy document published in June 2020 sets out a vision for a mental health service that delivers for service users through a more specified focus on the needs of the individual. 'Sharing the Vision' recognises those who are homeless as a vulnerable group with specific needs which should be met by mental health services. The requirement for effective liaison between local authorities and mental health services is identified as a key facet of service delivery in this area. Supported social housing provision and tenancy sustainment and support services are referenced as

potential solutions for the housing needs of individuals with complex mental health difficulties.

National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF)

The North East Region commenced implementation of the new and comprehensive national standards for homeless services in 2019. This national framework is designed to ensure a consistent approach to homeless service provision across the regions. The purpose of the framework is to ensure a safe and appropriate service to persons facing homelessness. The NQSF standards are applicable to all services in receipt of Section 10 funding whether relating to single individuals or families. The NQSF aims to ensure that homeless persons are accommodated in a dignified and suitable environment while providing the best supports which will enable people to obtain and maintain housing in the medium and long term.

HAP Tenant in Situ Scheme

The Tenant in Situ Scheme allows local authorities the option to acquire properties where tenants are facing eviction when the landlord is selling the property. The scheme applies to tenants with a valid notice of termination, deemed at risk of experiencing homelessness and who qualify for social housing support, including those in receipt of Rent Supplement, Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), or in a RAS or long-term leased property.

1.4 BACKGROUND CONTEXT

‘Housing for All – A New Housing Policy for Ireland’ outlines that Ireland’s current housing system is not meeting the needs of enough of our people. A number of factors are referenced as being contributory to this situation. These include inadequate numbers of available properties to buy or rent in the private market, affordability of housing especially for the ‘squeezed middle’, and the numbers of housing units built by the state being unable to keep pace with the increasing demand.

It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic seriously impacted the construction industry and further exacerbated the situation in relation to supply versus demand. ‘Housing for All’ contains clear targets and initiatives in relation to these construction issues, most especially in the area of accelerated housing construction.

‘Housing for all’ recognises that projecting the definitive level of housing need is not an exact science but points to the fact that the Scottish Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HDNA) model is the recognised leader in this area. Using this model, it is projected that 33,000 new houses per year will be required each year up to 2030 in order to fully address the housing needs of the country’s population. In order to meet these targets, the plan proposes ‘a landmark step in terms of state funding of housing’.

Many initiatives, policies and interventions have been initiated at government level in recent years and this plan has taken account of a number of key policy directions in preparing the North East 2021 - 2023 Homelessness Action Plan. A number of these initiatives are referenced in section 1.3 above.

The 2024 – 2026 Strategic Plan takes account of the role that it plays in the planning and implementation of responses to homelessness in the North East Region. The Strategic Management Group and the North East Regional Homelessness Consultative Forum have met regularly during the implementation of the previous plans and have been involved in consultation and review processes that have informed the preparation of the 2024 - 2026 plan.

The 2024 – 2026 plan is regarded as a document to provide a seamless continuation to the most recent plan and work within the North East Region. Services have been well-developed incrementally and strategically in the recent three years since 2021 and have proved resilient in the face of the unprecedented challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. An innovative approach involving dedicated inter agency co-operation was required and demonstrated throughout the period in which Covid-19 restrictions applied.

Through the lead agency, Louth County Council, the North East Region liaises regularly with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and submits quarterly service user and financial data as required. The Department has agreed that the 2024 – 2026 strategic plan should be a workable document which progresses the developmental work being successfully implemented in previous planning periods.

The next 2 sections profile homelessness in the North East Region and the services that exist to address homelessness. The final section sets out a selection of the key findings from the 2021 – 2023 period and outlines key strategic objectives and proposed actions for 2024 – 2026.

2. HOMELESSNESS IN THE NORTH EAST REGION

This section examines the homelessness trends in the North East during the period of the previous plan, 2021 – 2023. It also focuses on the most recent data for 2023 which is prepared by the region on the basis of the services provided by and through the local authorities of Cavan, Louth and Monaghan. These data sets are also reported to the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, on a periodic basis.

Homelessness 2021-2023

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on homeless service provision in 2020 and 2021 and service providers and stakeholders were compelled to adapt accordingly. Social distancing requirements resulted in the need to reduce capacity within the services, especially in congested hostel settings. In the early years of the pandemic a feature policy of central government was the introduction of the temporary moratorium on evictions from private rental accommodation. The short-term effect of this policy was to significantly reduce presentations from individuals and families in receipt of a valid Notices to Quit from private rented accommodation. By its nature the effect of this initiative was a temporary one and the lifting of the moratorium resulted in a dramatic increase in the numbers of homeless presentations from the private rented market. A further complication was that, rather than these presentations being sporadic and graduated, as is usually the case, the moratorium being lifted on a singular date for all resulted in a high concentration of presentations within a short timeframe.

Homelessness in the state – December 2023

For December 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage data notes that, in the state, there were 9,356 adults accessing emergency accommodation at that time. This was a significant increase when compared to end of the previous plan in December 2020 where the total recorded number of homeless individuals stood at 5,873. This shows a 59% increase in homelessness between 2020 to 2023.

A similar, though more significant, trend is apparent in the data relating to family homelessness. The number of families accessing homeless accommodation in December 2020 was 970. By December 2023 this figure had almost doubled to 1,916, an increase of 97%. The number of dependent children in emergency occupation rose from 2,327 to 3,962.

Homelessness in the North-East – December 2023

As with the national figures, homelessness numbers have increased steeply in the North-East between December 2020 and December 2023. The number of homeless individuals increased from 89 to 194 during that time but it is the numbers of homeless families that has shown the most significant increase. In 2020 there were 4 families homeless, comprising 4 adults and 9 dependents (mainly children). This was the lowest incidence of family homelessness within the 9 regions. By December 2023 this figure had increased to 38 families including 55 adults and 75

dependents. Despite this unprecedented increase in numbers, the North East remains third lowest of the nine regions, in terms of homeless family numbers.

As referenced above, the causal factors include the ending of the moratorium on evictions from private rented accommodation, the limited numbers of available properties and the affordability of private rents. The overwhelming majority of homelessness in the region is in Louth.

2.1 PRESENTATIONS BY LA AND ACCOMODATION TYPE 2021 – 2023

According to the data provided by the local authorities, overall presentations in the region has remained consistently high throughout the past three years. The numbers in 2021 were especially high. Homeless presentations were made over the phone and staff in Louth County Council reported very large volumes of presentations via this medium. The numbers have remained high and the number of presentations in 2023, both in person and over the phone, shows a percentage increase of 9% from the previous year.

Presentations North East Region	2021	2022	2023
Total per annum	3,584	2,592	2,817

Table 1 Presentations North East Region 2021 – 2023

2.2 ADULT HOMELESSNESS AT END OF PERIOD

The data capture also records the number of adults in homelessness services at the end of each year and the nature of their- emergency accommodation. This is presented in Table 2 below.

Accommodation Type	2021	2022	2023
STA Supported Emergency Accommodation	59	77	79
PEA Private Emergency incl. B&B, Hotel	13	70	113
TEA Temporary Emergency Accommodation	10	2	2
Other	0	0	0
<i>Adults Homeless at End of Period North East Region</i>	82	149	194

Table 2 Adults Homeless at Period Dec 2021 to Dec 2023

Table 2 summarises the trend in addressing homelessness in the North East between 2021 and 2023. Adults in emergency accommodation provides a measurement of the type of accommodation used and one can see that significant use has made of B&B and hotel accommodation as well as the traditional, supported emergency accommodation.

Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) is considered the most appropriate form of emergency accommodation for homeless persons due to the availability of 24-hour supervision and support as well as client access to qualified social care key working services. As such, STA bed levels have been increased over 2022 and 2023 to reflect the rising number of homeless presentations. Where STA bed occupation is at full capacity the use of Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA) is approved, as a matter of necessity, when appropriate.

As indicated in table 2, STA beds have been at or close to full capacity in 2022 and 2023 and it has been necessary to place increasing numbers in Private Emergency accommodation, particularly Bed & Breakfast facilities. In the absence of onsite key working and supports, those placed in Private Emergency Accommodation are generally provided with a Tenancy Sustainment and Support worker through the North East Regional Tenancy Sustainment framework.

2.3 FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

At the conclusion of the period covered under the Homeless Action Plan 2018 – 2020 the number of families accessing emergency accommodation in the region was relatively low. The total at that time was 4 single parent families with 9 dependent children. This was the lowest total amongst the 9 regions. However, the period 2021 to 2023 has seen the number of families in homeless accommodation rise steeply. In December 2021 the total had risen to 10 families including 12 adults and 27 dependents. The year 2022, following the end of the eviction ban from private rented accommodation, saw a sharp rise in presentations by families and subsequent placements in emergency accommodation. The total number of families in emergency accommodation at the end of 2022 was 31, comprising of 52 adults and 75 dependent children.

This was a threefold increase in homeless family numbers from the previous year. These Numbers continued to rise, though at a slower rate, through 2023 with the total number of families recorded as being homeless in the region at the end of 2023 being 38. Despite this concerning increase in numbers, the North-East Region has the third lowest number of homeless families amongst the 9 national regions. The national picture in relation to family homeless per region is detailed in the table below.

Region	Total Families	(of which) Lone Parent Families	Total Adults	Total Dependents
Dublin	1,400	736	2,424	3,020
South-West	105	71	157	198
Mid East	88	49	140	145
South-East	39	30	50	58
West	107	54	167	225
Mid-West	87	63	123	135
Midlands	33	23	43	58
North-East	38	26	55	75
North-West	19	13	26	48
Total	1,916	1,065	3,185	3,962

Table 3 Family Homelessness in Ireland December 2023

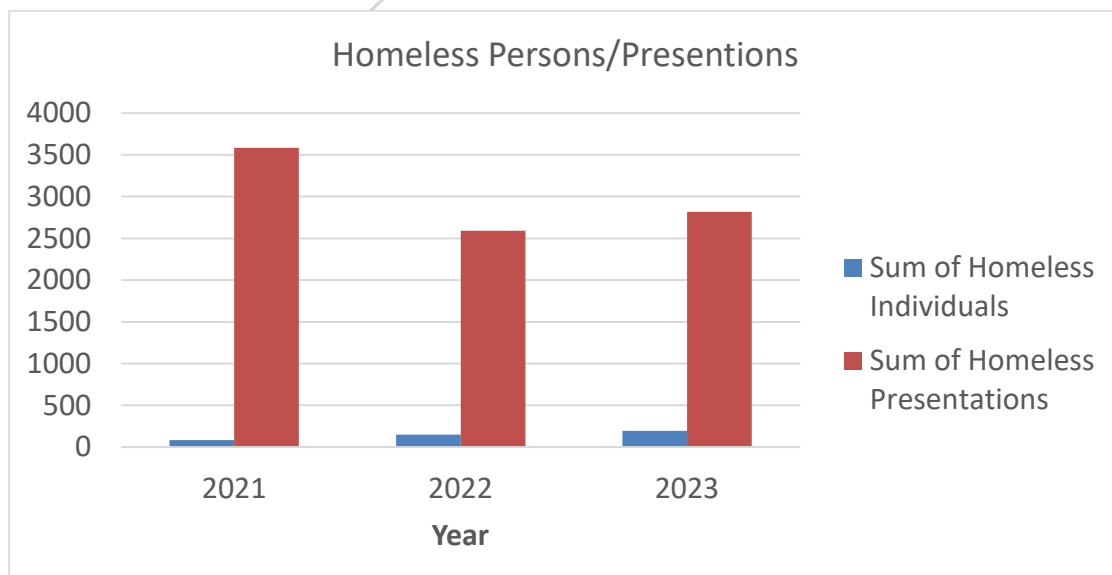
2.4 MEASURING IMPACT

In the current services delivery model adopted by the North Region, there is a clear commitment to not only housing-led solutions to the incidence of homelessness, but also to keeping people in their tenancies where there is a risk of homelessness. Emergency accommodation provision is an essential element of homeless services, but it is accepted that this is a temporary solution and ideally individuals and families will not enter into homeless accommodation at any point. A clear emphasis is placed on preventative measures such as Tenancy Sustainment supports, assistance in sourcing private rented accommodation through the HAP Place finder service, along with the national HAP Tenant in Situ scheme.

Where placement in emergency accommodation is deemed necessary, it is important that the homeless service providers work to ensure that the duration of time spent in temporary accommodation is as short as possible. Medium term or long-term housing solutions should be sought whether through social housing, AHB accommodation or the private rented market. The numbers of individuals and families exiting to longer term housing solutions is one basis for measuring the effectiveness of the service provision in the region.

Analysis of the underlying trends contained within the data collected is beneficial in better understanding the evolving situation and allows for a more focused approach in terms of service delivery solutions. The data collected in the North East Region between 2021 and 2023 shows a number of emerging trends both in terms of the increased number of presentations as well as the profile of those presenting.

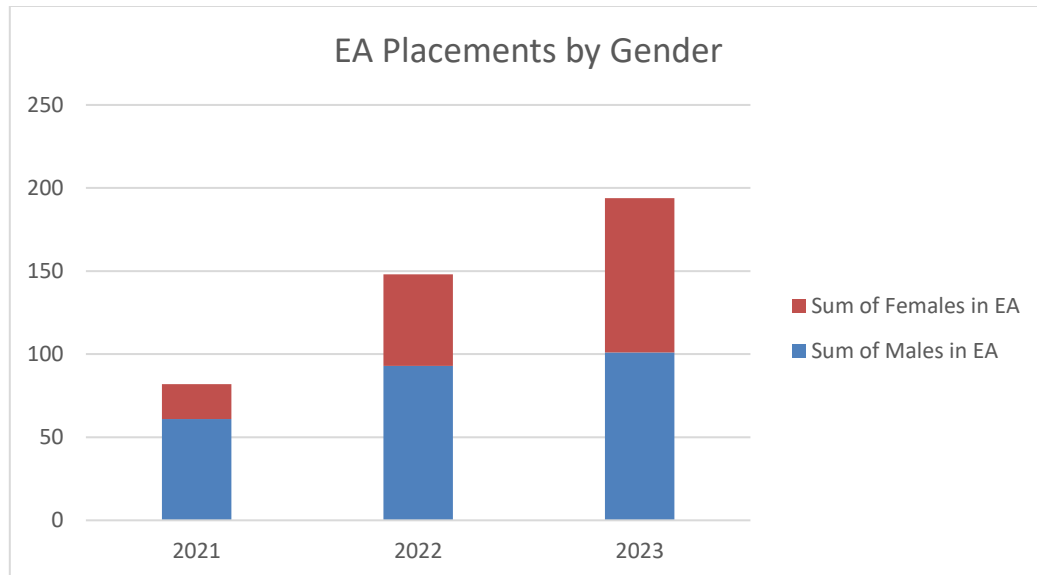
Chart 1 below notes the frequency of presentations and the number of adults remaining in homelessness services during 2021 – 2023



The number of presentations has been high throughout the period 2021 to 2023 although the Incidence of actual placements in emergency accommodation only began to fully reflect this increase in 2022. There are a number of factors which led to this delayed effect, primarily the number of persons presenting with valid notices

to quit in 2021 but who's tenancy termination was put on hold until 2022 due to the moratorium on private rental evictions. The lifting of the ban led to a sudden and steep increase in emergency accommodation placements.

Chart 2 breaks down the sex/gender of adults in emergency accommodation.

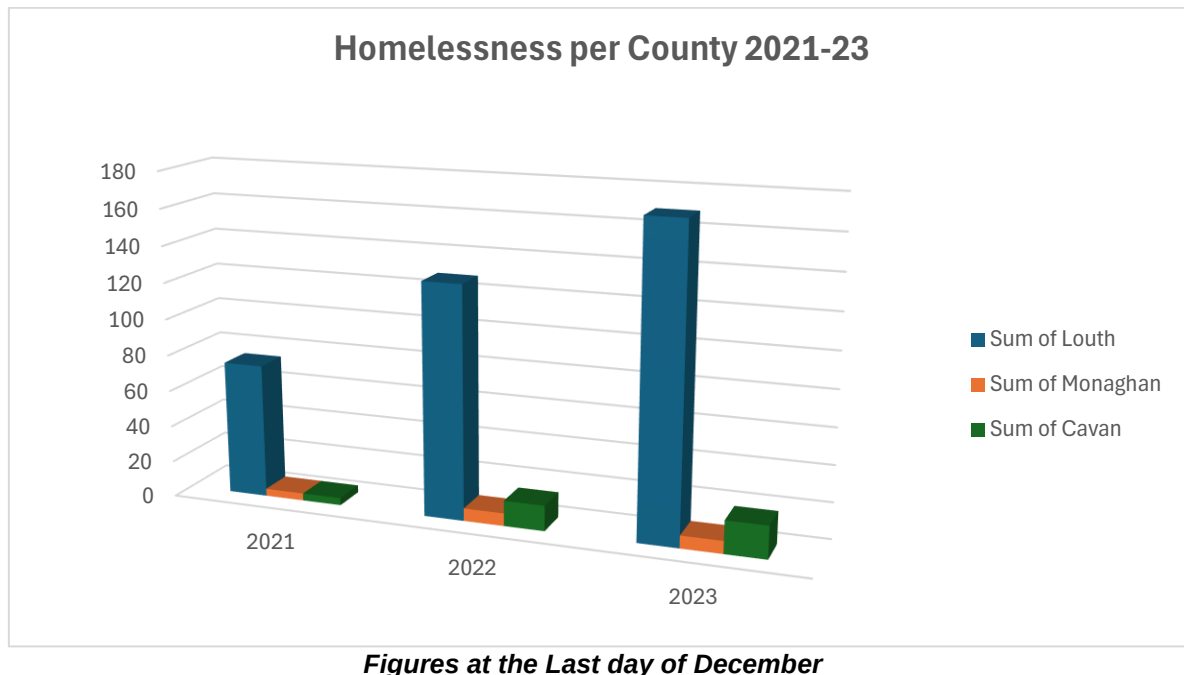


The chart above indicates an emerging trend in relation to the changing gender demographic accessing emergency accommodation over the past three years. 2021 followed the traditional pattern within the region whereby the clear majority of homeless clients were male. The breakdown in 2021 was 74% male and 26% female, which was broadly similar to the ratio recorded in the proceeding 3 years.

2022 showed an increase in the proportion of females, with this client cohort accounting for 37% of the total adults in homeless accommodation. At the end of 2023 the number of females accessing emergency accommodation stood at 93 out of a total of 194, this being 47% of the total number of homeless adults in the region.

There is a clear correlation between the increased percentage of females in emergency accommodation and the upsurge of family homelessness in the region. The number of families increased from 4 in 2021 to 38 in 2023. Of these 38 families, 26 were lone parent families. The overwhelming majority of these lone parents are female.

All indicators point to a continued rise in family presentations in 2024 and it is projected that, by years end, the number of females in emergency accommodation is likely to surpass the number of males.

Chart 3: Homelessness per county in the Northern East Region 2021 – 2023

As evidenced by the chart above, the numbers of persons accessing emergency accommodation in the region has been increasing annually over the past three years. This is true of all counties in the region with Cavan's numbers increasing from 4 to 18 (350% increase), Monaghan's rising from 4 to 7 (75% increase) and the numbers in Louth increasing from 74 to 169 (128% increase).

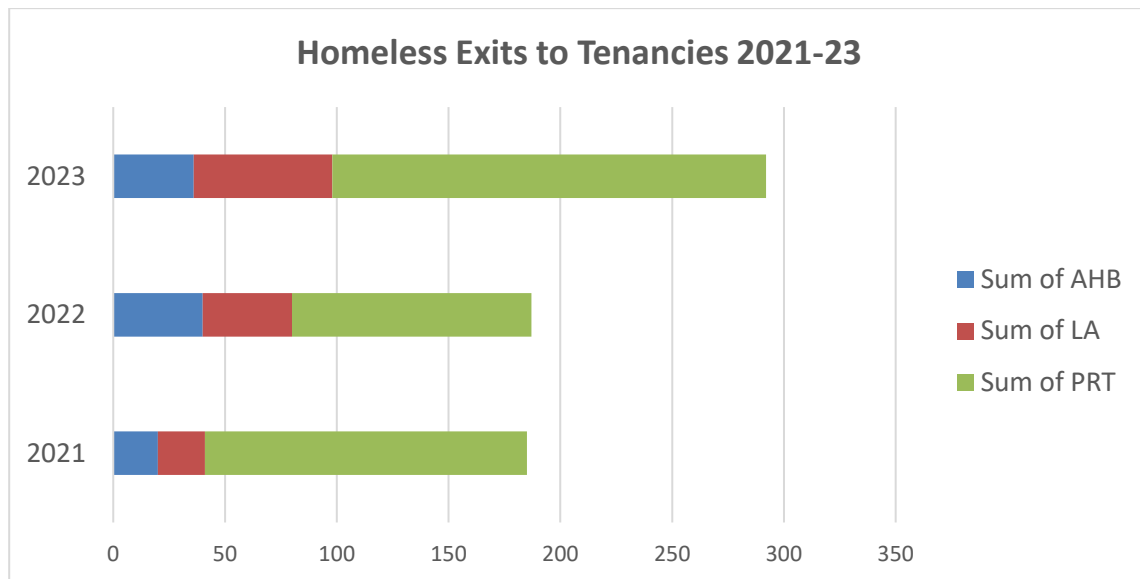
The overwhelming majority of homeless presentations and emergency placements in the region are in Louth. At the end of 2023, Louth clients accounted for 87% of the adults accessing emergency accommodation in the region.

There are a number of possible contributory factors to these numbers, most especially population size and concentration. According to Census 2022, the population of Louth is 150,000, which is higher than the combined population of Cavan and Monaghan which are respectively 81,000 and 65,000.

The prevalence of homelessness in the state is generally highest in cities and urban centres. While being the smallest county in terms of geographical area, Louth contains two of the three largest provincial towns in the country. Dundalk currently has a population of 43,000 people while Drogheda is slightly higher with a population of 44,000. These two urban centres, while constituting 60% of the county's population, account for over 90% of the homeless presentations.

Chart 4: Homeless Outcomes 2021 – 2023

An additional impact measurement of North East Region homelessness services is the identification of adults who are moved to independent living from a homeless situation with full tenancies, in a year.



As indicated above, there has been a positive trend from year to year in establishing long term tenancies for families and individuals over the past 3 years. Broadly speaking, there are three primary sources of long-term accommodation available to those in a homeless situation and with a low income – social housing through the local authority, AHB housing or private rented accommodation with HAP supports. The total number accommodated through these pathways in 2021 was 185 with a further 187 housed in 2022. This figure rose to 292 in 2023 and was broken down between Local Authority (62), AHB (36) and private rented (194).

The introduction of the Section 10 funded HAP Place finder service has provided a valuable additional tool in sourcing accommodation and increasing the number of private rented tenancies made available to those finding themselves in a homeless situation.

2.5 FINANCING SERVICES

2.5.1 EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

In order to access homeless services, clients must present to one of the local authorities in order to have an assessment of their housing and homeless need carried out. The priority of all parties in homeless services is to prevent the necessity of persons having to access homeless services and temporary, emergency accommodation and to implement early interventions. Decisions are made based on the homeless assessment and in accordance with these principals and priorities.

Referrals to services are addressed by the Homeless Action Teams (HATs) which meet on a monthly basis in Louth, Cavan and Monaghan. The HATs ensure that assessments are made for all service users and that, where applicable, care plans are put in place, a key worker appointed, and their case managed throughout the pathway.

Interventions by local authorities may result in referral to mainstream housing, emergency accommodation or to tenancy sustainment services.

The increasing numbers of homeless presentations has placed a substantial strain on bed capacity within the services and indicates a clear need for more STA accommodation. This has most especially been the case in relation to family homelessness. In response to this growing need, a potential facility for the accommodation of homeless families was identified in Louth in 2023. This facility, located in Little Ash, Dundalk has the capacity to accommodate up to 8 families and a total number of approximately 35 persons. Following Departmental approval, this service opened in July 2023.

Monaghan County Council increased their STA capacity in September 2023 with the opening of two bed family accommodation at Waterside Apartments, Monaghan. A further four Section 10 funded STA beds for homeless 'singles' in Louth was opened by Dundalk Simon in 2021.

It is accepted that the growing number of homeless presentations will necessitate further initiatives in the area of additional Supported Temporary accommodation. A number of potential projects have been identified across the region and a substantial increase in capacity is anticipated through the lifetime of this Action Plan.

By the end of 2023 In the North East Region, there were 64 beds available for singles in emergency accommodation – 37 in Dundalk Simon, 22 in Drogheda Homeless Aid, 3 in Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge and an additional 3 with Castleblayney Trust.

Table below details the capacity of the various STA services currently operating in the region

Facility	County	Bed Night Capacity
Dundalk Simon Community, (Barrack St)	Louth/Cavan/Monaghan	33
Dundalk Simon Community, (Castle Rd)	Louth	4
Drogheda Homeless Aid Association Ltd	Louth	22
Drogheda Women's & Children Refuge Centre	Louth	3
Castleblayney Trust	Monaghan	2
Total STA beds (Singles)	Region	64

Emergency Accommodation for families in the North East Region 2023

Facility	County	No of Rooms
Drogheda Family Hub	Louth	7
Former Cluskey's site, Dundalk	Louth	9
Drogheda Women's & Children Refuge Centre	Louth	1
Waterside Apartments	Monaghan	2
Castleblayney Trust	Monaghan	1

Total STA beds (families)	Region	20
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As previously stated, STA accommodation is the preferred option for placement in homeless services. However, limits in STA bed capacity coupled with the increased demand for accommodation has resulted in clients being placed in private bed and breakfast accommodation. In such instances, the Local Authority will provide a Tenancy Sustainment worker to support and assist the client.

The year 2023 also saw the opening of a four-bed aftercare facility for young people exiting the care system. A primary aim of this service is to create a pathway for care leavers towards independent living which does not involve entering mainstream homeless services. This was a joint initiative between Louth County Council, TUSLA Aftercare and Peter McVerry Trust.

There are 2 service providers for women fleeing domestic violence in the Louth area, Drogheda Women and Children's Refuge and Dundalk Women's Aid. These services are not funded under section 10 Homeless funding and referrals are made directly to the service provider rather than through the local authorities. Domestic violence cases are recorded separately but it is, nonetheless, an acknowledged and common cause of homelessness.

2.5.2 TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES

The new regional tender for Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services was awarded and implemented in September 2023. These services are designed to target specific client groups and provide supports tailored for the needs of that client cohort. The required services as defined in the Reference for Tender were a direct follow on from the previous tender which commenced in 2017.

Table 5 below provides a description of the specified target cohort as well as detailing the contracted service provider for each discipline.

Target Group	Contracted Service Provider
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR SINGLE PERSONS AT RISK – LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL	Dublin Simon Community
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR FAMILIES AT RISK – LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL	Dublin Simon Community
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR ADDICTIONS – LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL	Dublin Simon Community
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH RELATED ISSUES - LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL	HAIL Housing

TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY & BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES – LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL	Dublin Simon Community
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES FOR GENERAL NEEDS -CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL	Dublin Simon Community
TENANCY SUPPORT AND SUSTAINMENT SERVICES - GENERAL NEEDS – MONAGHAN COUNTYCOUNCIL	Focus Ireland

This approach to housing-led interventions and services was the first service of its kind in the state to specifically target discrete client groups with specific needs. The purpose of this client centred support, tailored to the specific needs of the client, is to create the best possible circumstances for a positive outcome. The North East Region monitors the service delivery closely utilising formative evaluation techniques. This ongoing evaluation process assists in facilitating service adaptation to meet emerging need as well as providing analysis of impact and effectiveness not only of service user outcomes but the regional response to homelessness in general.

Early intervention has proved a critical factor in the prevention of homelessness. This may include assessment for potential homelessness at application stage in RAS/HAP applications and early referral to Tenancy Sustainment services in the case of complex needs clients.

2.5.3 FINANCIALS

Chart 4 below records the application of Local Authority financial resources to service provision in the North East Region. The previous plan stated that expenditure had increased fairly incrementally from year to year between 2014 and 2019 but that 2020 had shown a decrease in the overall spend across the region. The total expenditure in 2020 dropped from over €4 million to €3.1 million. This reduction was in no way indicative of a reduced commitment in terms of resources but was due, in large part, to the moving on of individuals and families to more permanent, long-term forms of housing, in the backdrop of the Covid-19 restrictions which in general led to less transience in the housing market in terms of evictions and terminated tenancies.

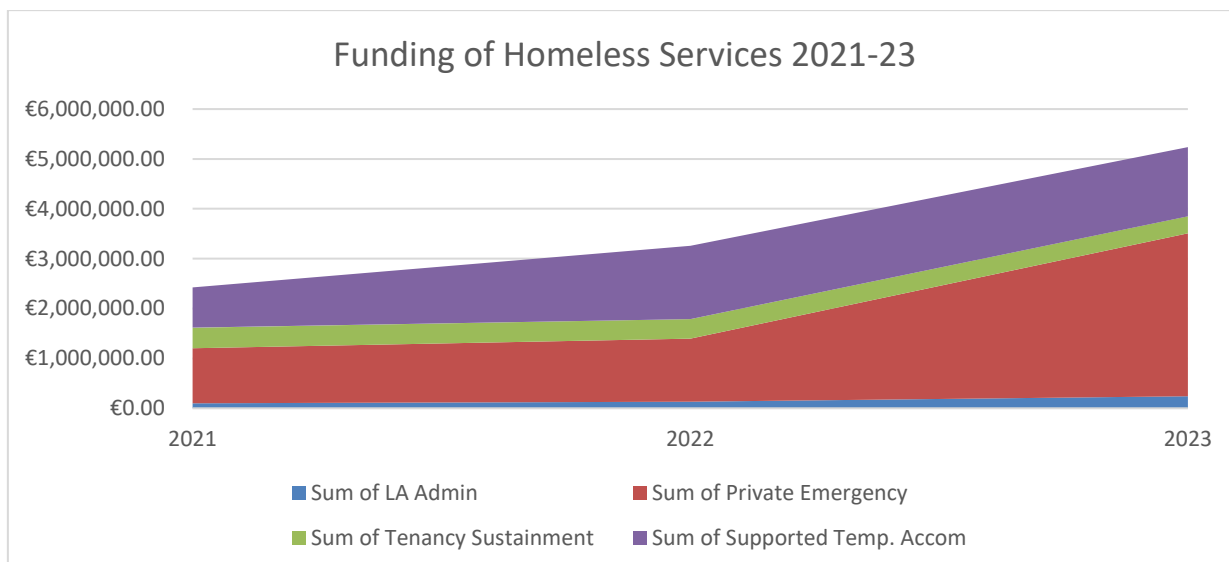


Chart 4: Funding of Homeless Services 2021-23

As evidenced above, the expenditure in 2021 continued to reduce from the previous Year with the total output being €2.4 million. This was largely due to the continuation Of the Covid-19 restrictions, most especially the moratorium on evictions in the private rented sector. As previously stated, this proved to be a temporary solution only and the lifting of the eviction ban led to an unprecedented level of presentations from those in receipt of a valid 'notices to quit' in a relatively short time frame. Although the number of available STA beds increased over the duration of the previous Action Plan, the rate of increase was not at the same level as the number of new presentations which required emergency placements.

The net effect of this fact is evident from the data contained in Chart 4, above, whereby there is a marked increase in the overall cost of service provision, but this is most evident in the case of Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA). The cost of PEA such as Bed & Breakfast facilities and hotels has risen from €1.1million in 2021 to €3.2m in 2023. With STA beds almost continually at capacity the majority of new presentations will almost inevitably be placed in private emergency facilities.

Another notable increase in service costs came as a result of the Workforce Relations Commission recommendations of October 2023 whereby staggered pay increases to all Section 10 funded NGO service providers was granted with effect from April 2023.

3. HOMLESS SERVICE PROVISION IN THE NORTH EAST REGION

This section outlines the services and initiatives provided across the North East region by the various stakeholders and agencies involved with homeless service provision. Detailed below is a brief outline of the work being carried by each service provider and agency.

3.1 LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

Louth County Council, in conjunction with the HSE and our partners in the NGO sector, provides a diverse range of services to assist those who are homeless or are in danger of becoming so. Specified support services are in place to assist in a number of areas including the prevention of homelessness, the provision of emergency accommodation and the provision of assistance to those in a homeless situation in finding and sustaining long term accommodation solutions.

In this section a summary of the services being provided, and work being carried out is outlined, as described by the relevant service provider.

3.1.1 EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

Drogheda Homeless Aid

We aim to restore dignity and hope by providing care, support and shelter in our hostel for 28 homeless men, while encouraging self-development, independent living and ultimately resettlement. We provide 22 beds in our emergency accommodation to Louth County Council and 6 to Meath County Council.

Aims:

- To provide care, support and shelter for those experiencing homelessness.
- To support clients through one-to-one key-working and empower clients to make positive life choices.
- To support and assist clients in resettlement within their community.
- To encourage clients to access education/training to gain meaningful and sustainable employment.
- To increase access to health care supports to ensure that the health needs of individuals are supported.
- To provide equality of opportunity for all citizens regardless their racial, economic and/or social status.

(c)

Drogheda Homeless Aid is an approved housing body with 4 long-term houses for families and 5 transitional houses for men moving on from the hostel. Their staff provide home supports to encourage independent living skills.

The team enables clients to address their issues through referring clients to appropriate services for a more in-depth intervention, where appropriate, or by conducting one-to-one holistic needs assessments and in implementing client care plans.

Drogheda Homeless Aid works in conjunction with HAIL through referrals from Louth County Council to support clients experiencing mental health issues sustain their tenancy. Staff visit clients in their own homes providing advice, guidance and support.

Drogheda Homeless Aid also provides the Meals on Wheels service in Drogheda, delivering three hot nutritious meals three times per week, to people in the community who are unable, due to age, illness or disability to cook their own meals.

This service caters for up to 60 meals per day for those in the local community. The Meals-on-wheels provision is a vital element of care services that enable older people to remain living in the community or to return to their own homes after hospitalisation thus supporting tenancy sustainment.

Drogheda Homeless Aid provides one to one counselling for clients one day per week within the hostel and transitional houses. The aim is to encourage clients to reach their full potential.

Drogheda Homeless Aid has over 30 years' experience of working with marginalised individuals. We believe in a holistic approach, providing advocacy support and promoting independence within an environment of equality of opportunity for all.

List of Services

- Emergency accommodation for 28 men in our hostel – 22 beds for Louth County Council.
- Four long term houses for families – 2 of which are for LCC tenants.
- Five transitional houses for men moving out of the hostel towards independent living.
- Tenancy Sustainment in conjunction with HAIL supporting those in the community with mental health issues.
- One to One Counselling service for clients one day per week within the service.
- Key-working support and Holistic Needs Assessment for individual clients.
- Meals on Wheels service for the Drogheda area

Dundalk Simon Community

Barrack Street Supported Temporary Accommodation: Barrack St STA is a 33-bed service, offering emergency accommodation to single males and females across the 3 North East Region Local Authorities: Louth, Cavan and Monaghan. Louth is the primary accommodator occupying 27 beds; Cavan have 2 beds, and Monaghan has 1 bed.

The service consists of 10 female beds, 20 male beds and 3 independent bungalows. The service is situated within walking distance of the town centre, with easy access to all amenities including Louth County Council County Hall. Barrack St STA is a 24hr staffed service, 365 days per year.

Females are accommodated in a separate area within the service, with access to shared toilet and showering facilities. Males are not permitted in this area. This accommodation is on the ground floor. The female section has shared rooms and 1 single room.

Males are accommodated on the second floor across two areas. There are toilet and showering facilities in both areas, and clients are encouraged not to enter corridors where they are not accommodated. Females are not permitted access to these areas. There is a mixture of single and shared rooms across the male accommodation.

We also have a room situated within close proximity to the staff office and is usually occupied by 1 or 2 clients who present as extremely high risk (e.g.: repetitive overdose/disability) however on occasions we will accommodate a couple within this room. This area has its own toilet and shower facilities also.

The service also incorporates 3 independent bungalows on site, which aim to offer long term support to those individuals who are unable to sustain accommodation in the community, and to enable individuals with complex needs an opportunity to assess their independent living skills, allowing the specialised services to establish a wraparound support plan which can transfer to the community when long term accommodation is secured.

All residents are placed in a STA bed when referred. Dundalk Simon operates a Care and Case Management protocol, meaning each resident is assigned a Key Worker upon entry and will manage their caseload as part of a multi-disciplinary team. The key worker will conduct this, with the support of Dundalk Simon Support Staff through:

- Developing, managing, implementing and reviewing support plans for clients, while working internally and externally to achieve service and clients' targets.
- Provide clients living in Simon with the supports they need to manage their living space and to progress through to exiting homelessness.
- Carry out risk assessments and follow safeguarding protocols for vulnerable clients
- Liaise and foster successful relationships with the council, social housing providers, landlords, and local authorities and increase the accommodation move-on options for clients.
- Advocate on behalf of clients, responding rapidly and providing practical aid in a crisis arising for the clients.
- Work from a strengths-based perspective to encourage resilience in clients and support them in feeling empowered.
- Ensure clients are consulted and involved in the support plan and progression route.
- Key workers will establish positive working relationships with external agencies such as Primary Care, Disability Services, Mental Health, HSE Addiction Services and so on
- Report and record any child protection issues to the DSC child protection officer if concerned and liaise with relevant child protection services as directed.
- Record client caseload data and update regularly. Compile statistics, update PASS and Internal IT Systems, and keep the system updated regularly.
- Attend bi-weekly team meetings, planning days, and function planning days
- Perform all administrative duties relating to the role in order to ensure that clients are supported in an effective and timely manner.
- Support the manager in the implementation of the strategic and operational action objectives.
- Carry out front-line duties as required, to ensure the smooth running of the services including the management of the quality and health and safety functions.

The Manager of the service attends monthly HATs (Homeless Action Team) meetings with Louth County Council and other external agencies and liaises with all Local Authorities on a regular basis regarding clients accommodated within the service. Further to this, the Manager attends multiple regional meetings regarding development of services within the locality and has established and nourished relationships with many key stakeholders within the region that are critical to the continued care, management and progression of the clients, service provision and the organisation.

Castle Rd Supported Temporary Accommodation: Castle Rd STA is a 4-bed service, offering emergency accommodation to single people who are registered as homeless within County Louth. Castle Rd STA is a medium support service, and specifically utilised for persons experiencing homelessness that are in education and/or employment. This service is not staffed on a 24hr basis; however staff are present five days per week with phone/visiting support on the sixth and seventh day.

Residents of Castle Rd have progressed from the Barrack St service, following identification of their independent life skills and commitment to progressing out of homelessness. On occasion, exceptions would be made in partnership with Louth Co Co for clients to enter Castle Rd without accessing Barrack Street prior. Clients in Castle Rd are supported through a Care and Case Management protocol, meaning each resident is assigned a Key Worker who supports their clients as part of a multi-disciplinary team. The key worker will conduct this through:

- Developing, managing, implementing and reviewing support plans for clients, while working internally and externally to achieve service and clients' targets.
- Provide clients living in Simon with the supports they need to manage their living space and to progress through homelessness.
- Carry out risk assessments and follow safeguarding protocols for vulnerable clients
- Liaise and foster successful relationships with the council, social housing providers, landlords, and local authorities and increase the accommodation move-on options for clients.
- Advocate on behalf of clients, responding rapidly and providing practical aid in a crisis arising for the clients.
- Work from a strengths-based perspective to encourage resilience in clients and support them in feeling empowered.
- Ensure clients are consulted and involved in the support plan and progression route.
- Key workers will establish positive working relationships with external agencies such as Primary Care, Disability Services, Mental Health, HSE Addiction Services and so on
- Report and record any child protection issues to the DSC child protection officer if concerned and liaise with relevant child protection services as directed.
- Record client caseload data and update regularly. Compile statistics, update PASS and Internal IT Systems, and keep the system updated regularly.
- Attend bi-weekly team meetings, planning days, and function planning days
- Perform all administrative duties relating to the role in order to ensure that clients are supported in an effective and timely manner.

- Support the manager in the implementation of the strategic and operational action objectives.
- Carry out front-line duties as required, to ensure the smooth running of the services including the management of the quality and health and safety functions.

The Manager of the service attends monthly HATs (Homeless Action Team) meetings with Louth County Council and other external agencies and liaises with all Local Authorities on a regular basis regarding clients accommodated within the service. Further to this, the Manager attends multiple regional meetings regarding development of services within the locality and has established and nourished relationships with many key stakeholders within the region that are critical to the continued care, management and progression of the clients, service provision and the organisation.

Louth Shared Housing (Transitional Housing): Dundalk Simon Community offers transitional housing based in Dundalk and Drogheda in Louth. These properties are not section 10 funded. The transitional housing offers people who are residing in emergency accommodation the opportunity to move on from emergency homelessness and into supported temporary accommodation. The programme is an 18-month contract under license agreement with the view for the service user to progress onto more long-term secure housing through Louth County Council, AHB or private rented. The Louth Shared Housing key worker advocates and engages with the local authority on behalf of the service users where they are deemed ready to move onto independent living.

The Louth Shared Housing consists of 7 Properties across Drogheda and Dundalk, area, comprising of 2 and 3 bed units which accommodate 18 residents in total. There is one Dundalk Simon project worker assigned to all of the 7 properties.

Louth County Council will nominate a service user for transitional housing when a vacancy arises through local emergency accommodation services such as Dublin Simon Community, Barrack Street and the Drogheda Homeless Aid along with other private emergency accommodation services in the Louth area. The keyworker interviews the service user to assess their level of support needs and readiness to engage. Service users put forward for transitional housing are deemed to have low to medium support needs and semi ready for independent living.

The service offers the service users a key worker who will support the service user to develop a support plan regarding their individual needs and a focus on tenancy sustainment to prevent the service user returning to emergency accommodation. This involves welfare checks, paying rent and utilities, participating in the upkeep of the household and accessing/sustaining training and employment. The keyworker also supports the residents with household skills such as budgeting, cleaning, nutrition and health advice along with sharing an environment and managing disputes with other residents.

The transitional housing accommodates both single adult males and females. The general needs of the service users who present for this housing are:

- Addiction recovery
- Mental Health
- Mild intellectual disabilities

- Low independent living skills

Where a transitional housing service user's support needs may become more complex due to relapses in addition recovery, unable to manage household expectations such as paying rent, utilities and food, engaging in anti-social behavior or require more intense mental health supports, their keyworker will engage with Louth County Council to explore alternative housing with higher supports. All interventions will be exhausted prior to a service user being moved out of the transitional housing.

The transitional housing provides a visiting support model during the hours of Monday to Friday 9am to 17:30pm and engages service users with appropriate alternative supports where necessary such as addiction counseling, general counselling, probation and legal support. This can involve a multi-disciplinary approach with the focus on achieving individually tailored goals for service users to lead to a better quality of life and promote their independence. The Louth Shared Housing is maintained by the Dublin Simon Community facilities team.

Across the Louth Shared Housing Project, A Project Worker's core responsibilities include.

- Develop, manage, implement, and review housing support plans while working as part of a multi-disciplinary team, to achieve service and service user's targets.
- Drive and implement care and case management processes. Liaise and stay in regular contact with stakeholders, social housing providers, landlords, management companies and local authority area offices where during the visiting support period.
- Advocate on behalf of tenants, responding rapidly and providing practical aid in a crisis arising for the tenant.
- Assist the service user with access to relevant services e.g., Housing Welfare, Social Welfare, Primary Care services, Treatment, and Recovery Services, and Rent supports.
- Provide emotional and practical support to service users who are leaving homelessness or at risk of re-entering homelessness
- Work from strengths-based perspective to encourage resilience in service users and support them in feeling empowered.
- Facilitate service users to access housing, maintenance and advice of their rights and responsibilities.
- Facilitate service users to develop positive relationships with their neighbours with best practise and social inclusion model as the basis of this work.
- Facilitate service users to access mediation services, dispute resolution or anger management training, social welfare payments, other relevant financial supports, training, education and employment schemes/ programmes, Citizens Information, Free legal Aid services, health and care facilities (GP, Mental and physical health services health, Family support services, Counselling/psychology services (clinical),
- Record service user caseload data and update regularly. Compile statistics, update PASS and Internal IT Systems.

Dundalk Family Accommodation Facility (Former Cluskeys Restaurant site)

The need for more supported emergency accommodation for families in County Louth has long been identified as a growing need within the County. In July 2023 a new supported service for homeless families was opened at the former Cluskeys Restaurant site, Little Ash, Knockbridge, Dundalk. The service provides accommodation for up to nine families and offers cooking, kitchen and car parking facilities. A 'school run' service is also provided, during the academic year, which transports children door to door both to and from their school.

Primtac Limited, who have previous experience in managing BOTP facilities, provide a 24-hour presence in the facility and all families referred into the service are assigned a tenancy sustainment and support worker by Dublin Simon Community, from the existing Regional TSS service provider framework.

Drogheda Family Hub (Peter McVerry Trust)

Drogheda family hub which was established in September 2018 provides supported temporary accommodation for families experiencing homelessness. Families are referred from Louth County Council for supported temporary accommodation in the Drogheda Family Hub for up to a period of up to 6 months with a focus to support families to progress to independent accommodation either through the Local Authority or via the HAP scheme.

PMVT Family Services believe in building quality, transparent and respectful relationships with each family and provides a supportive and safe environment with ongoing staff and key-working support. Peter McVerry Trust respect the parents/carers as the primary carers and educators of their children and the most important influence on the child/children's development.

PMVT Family services endeavour to ensure that the environment of the family hub is trauma informed due to the difficulties for children and families moving into a new and unfamiliar home and dealing with the impact of the circumstances which, resulted in how they became homelessness. PMVT Family Services strive to create a fun and positive environment for children in our family hubs.

When a family has secured long term accommodation, supports are provided during the transition into their new home

3.1.2 TENANCY SUSTAINMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Dublin Simon TSS (Tenancy Sustainment and Support)

Dublin Simon Community offer TSS services across Co. Louth and Co. Cavan, in partnership with both local authorities. The project's core element is to support clients transitioning from homelessness to independent living and to support clients residing in Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA). The support strategy is broken down into the below domains:

- Singles at Risk
- Prison Aftercare

- Families
- Addiction
- Intellectual Disability (those who do not meet criteria for Disability Services)

There are five project workers assigned to Co. Louth and one to Co. Cavan, but all staff will cover both areas when needed.

The core supports vary between those who are in or have been nominated for long-term accommodation and the support with those within PEA's. The Project Worker will remain engaged with a client/family for a minimum of 6 months after entering their own accommodation. Those within PEA may require longer depending on individual needs. Referral rights are held with the nominating Local Authority, and external stakeholders such as Tusla and Probation may engage with the Local Homeless Team to advocate for TSS supports.

The Tenancy Sustainment and Support service provides practical support for all types of tenancies through a visiting support model (LA, AHB, HAP). We provide ongoing visiting support in the home to help people manage issues with their tenancies.

Furthermore, the Tenancy Sustainment and Support service provides practical support for those residing in PEA through a visiting support model. The core element of support for clients within PEA is to identify and develop achievable outcomes through support planning, for individuals and families to progress out of homelessness into long term accommodation, whether that be most appropriate in HAP, LA, or AHB housing.

Across the TSS project, A Project Worker's core responsibilities include:

- Develop, manage, implement, and review housing support plans while working as part of a multi-disciplinary team, to achieve service and client's targets.
- Drive and implement care and case management processes and protocols whilst lone working in the client's home. Carry out risk assessments and follow safeguarding protocols to vulnerable clients and children.
- Liaise and stay in regular contact with stakeholders, social housing providers, landlords, management companies and local authority area offices during the visiting support period.
- Advocate on behalf of tenants, responding rapidly and providing practical aid in a crisis arising for the tenant.
- Assist the client with access to relevant services e.g. Housing Welfare, Estate Management, Social Welfare, Primary Care services, Treatment, and Recovery Services, and Rent sections.
- Provide emotional and practical support to clients who are leaving homelessness, at risk of homelessness or entering homeless services.
- Work from strengths-based perspective to encourage resilience in clients and support them in feeling empowered.
- Facilitate clients' access to housing, maintenance, and repair services information and advise of their rights and responsibilities.
- Facilitate clients' development of positive relationships with their neighbours with best practice and social inclusion model as the basis of this work.

- Review tenancy agreements, and contracts and refer clients to organisations that assist with this such as Threshold and RTB.
- Facilitate clients' access to mediation services, dispute resolution or anger management training, social welfare payments, other relevant financial supports, training, education and employment schemes/programmes, Citizens Information, Free Legal Aid services, health and care facilities (GP, mental and physical health services, family support services, counselling/psychology services (clinical), childcare and community-based education.
- Update clients with any tenancy legislation changes, and changes to the rent pressure zones that can directly impact their ability to upkeep their rent payments.
- Report and record any child protection issues to the DSC child protection officer if concerned and liaise with relevant child protection services as directed.
- Record client caseload data and update regularly. Compile statistics, update PASS and internal IT Systems.

HAIL Housing

Housing Association for Integrated Living (HAIL) was founded in 1985 by members of St Brendan's Mental Health Association. HAIL is an Approved Housing Body with an excellent reputation in providing high quality social housing and support services, primarily to people living with significant and enduring mental health difficulties.

HAIL currently provides over 475 homes, mainly in the Greater Dublin area but we are continuing to expand our housing stock in other counties, including Louth. In addition to providing homes HAIL also provides floating support services which support individuals with mental health difficulties to sustain their tenancies. Our floating support services are offered in the client's own home and community. Below are brief descriptions of support services which HAIL offers in Louth.

HAIL / DHA Tenancy Sustainment & Support Service:

In partnership with Drogheda Homeless Aid, HAIL provides tenancy sustainment and support to clients of Louth County Council Homeless Office who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and who have a mental health difficulty. All referrals for and to the service come from the Louth County Council Homeless Team. The overall aim of the Tenancy Support & Sustainment Service is to provide support to persons or households that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, to assist them to occupy (or continue) to occupy their accommodation and progress from homelessness or potential homelessness towards independent sustainable living.

Cara Mental Health Visiting Tenancy Support Service

As part of a nationwide service under the National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027, Cara provides visiting support to social housing tenants in Louth who have let their Local Authority know that they have a mental health support need, and that they are interested in linking in with a tenancy support service.

The service helps clients to either settle into a new Local Authority or Approved Housing Body tenancy, or to manage their existing social housing tenancy, and helps clients to link in with other services or supports if needed.

Support is provided by a HAIL Tenancy Sustainment Officer. The Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with clients in their home and in the community to identify what support is needed, and to jointly create a plan on how the service can best be of support. The duration of support can be either short-term or long-term and can be agreed between the client and the Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

The service is jointly funded by the Department of Health & the Department of Housing and is administered by the Housing Agency through the Local Authorities. HAIL Tenancy Sustainment Officers currently work with clients in 16 local authority areas over 13 counties.

Support Request Forms can be obtained from the Local Authority Housing Department.

3.1.3 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE SERVICES

Women's Aid Dundalk CLG

Women's Aid Dundalk was established in 1994 to provide a helpline and support service and emergency accommodation to women and children who were/are impacted by Domestic Violence/Coercive Control. The Refuge officially opened in 1997 as a communal refuge with five women/families sharing kitchen, bathroom and living areas.

Emergency Refuge Accommodation – Women's Aid Dundalk is a High Needs Low Threshold service but Due to Covid – 19 the refuge had to reconfigure from a communal setting to self-contained units of accommodation. As a result of this reconfiguration, we now have only two units on site where women and children can receive 24-hour high needs support. There are four units of alternative accommodation in the community operating as refuge accommodation where women/families with lower needs are supported.

Women's Aid Dundalk is currently at Stage 3 of the Capital Assistance Scheme to develop a twelve-unit refuge for women and children due to be ready by 2026.

In addition to emergency refuge accommodation, Women's Aid Dundalk has four units of Transitional Housing leased from Respond. The women/families who have availed of this next step in their journey to safety and independent living have not returned to refuge once they moved on. This indicates the benefit of continued support for women and children who have availed of refuge accommodation and support, in rebuilding independence and capacity in order to live free from violence and abuse.

Generally speaking, women have endured protracted periods of abuse and so recovery will take time, continued support has shown to help women and children to progress on from their experience and rebuild confidence, independence and capacity.

Drogheda Women and Children's Refuge

Drogheda Women & Children's Refuge (DWCR) is committed to providing support, assistance and empowering women and their children experiencing domestic violence and resulting homelessness in the Drogheda area and its environs. We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from fear, abuse and uncertainty. DWCR offers a wide range of crucial services to support and protect women and children in crisis situations. These services include:

Crisis Accommodation: we provide a safe and caring environment for women and children facing domestic abuse and homelessness. Our facility offers emergency short-term crisis accommodation tailored to the unique needs of women and children. We have a total of six self-contained units designed to accommodate families, providing a secure and private space for you and your children. In addition, we have five single bedrooms available. Our refuge is equipped with essential amenities to ensure your comfort and well-being, including a playground, playroom, and a communal area for single-room occupants. At DWCR, we understand that seeking refuge is not the only solution when you or your children are experiencing domestic abuse.

DWCR offers an Outreach Support Service that runs various outreach programs to raise awareness about domestic abuse. These programs aim to educate the community, promote prevention, and offer resources to those in need. Outreach workers conduct different clinics out in the community providing a safe space for women to engage about their specific needs. Our outreach staff also provide Legal support in assisting women in navigating the legal system. This includes help with obtaining orders, understanding custody rights, and support through court processes.

DWCR also offers a low-cost counselling service: we receive funding from the victims of crime to support women and children around the impacts of domestic abuse. Counselling helps women develop healthy coping mechanisms to deal with the stress and trauma of abuse. Techniques may include Stress management, problem-solving skills and emotional regulation.

Childcare and Educational Support: Recognising the impact of domestic violence on children, DWCR provides specialized childcare and educational programs. DWCR has an onsite registered childcare facility, drop in and after school club. Our children's activity worker also provides out-of-hours and weekend sessions, this includes our safe steps programme and parent support clinic.

24/7 Helpline: DWCR operates a 24-hour helpline for immediate support and crisis intervention. This helpline provides confidential advice, information, and emotional support to those in urgent need. DWCR have a free phone number 1800 929 999 that can be contacted 7 days a week.

Support Groups: DWCR runs a women's support group "The Freedom Programme". This is a structured educational support group designed to support individuals who have experienced domestic abuse. It aims to help participants understand the dynamics of abusive relationships, recognize the signs of abuse, and rebuild their self-esteem and confidence. We run this twice a year.

DWCR also runs a “CourAGEus” workshop aimed at young people to look at healthy and unhealthy relationships, throughout the workshops it looks at red flags and different behavioural tactics used in abusive relationships.

3.1.4 HAP PLACE FINDER SERVICE

The HAP Place Finder service provides additional financial and related supports to tenants and landlords, along with all of the benefits of the national HAP scheme. Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities and allows households that find full-time work to remain in the scheme. Under HAP, local authorities provide housing assistance for households with a long-term housing need, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients. The HAP Place Finder service specifically targets those in a homeless situation or those at risk of becoming so. The HAP place finder actively reaches out to private landlords and seeks to build up relationships within the private rented sector.

Amongst the HAP Place Finders duties are to:

- Identify properties and match them with clients from the target group
- Arrange to pay the deposit for a property to the landlord / agent on behalf of the tenant
- Arrange to pay one month’s rent in advance on behalf of the tenant
- Arrange to pay the monthly rent in advance to the landlord / agent each month

Over 360 households have been supported into tenancies through the HAP place finder service over the period of the previous Regional Action Plan 2021 -2023.

3.2 MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL HOMELESS SERVICES

Monaghan County Council Homeless Services work to prevent people becoming homeless where possible and provides support to those who experience homelessness. The primary focus is on preventative measures such as early intervention and tenancy sustainment where there is a risk of homelessness identified, and this is supported through the co-ordination of Monaghan’s Homeless Action Team. Monaghan County Council are committed to delivering an effective and holistic service to achieve best possible outcomes and have assigned dedicated resources by way of a Social Work, HAP Place Finder, Housing Administration Officer, Tenancy Sustainment Services provided by Focus Ireland, HAIL Tenancy Sustainment Services and multidisciplinary wraparound Housing First Services provided by Peter McVerry.

Upon presentation to Monaghan County Council individuals or families will be offered support appropriate to their needs as outlined in the following sections.

HAP Place Finder:

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service is a scheme providing targeted support for homeless households or households at risk of homelessness who are finding it difficult to secure HAP tenancies. This service will liaise with specific households to establish their specific needs and offer ongoing assistance, as required. The service

was introduced to assist homeless households find accommodation where the high demand and low levels of supply make the rental market very challenging, and where the provision of such a service is justified.

The Homeless HAP Place Finders role is to support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by:

- Identifying and sourcing suitable private rented accommodation for those in at risk homeless situations and support households to exit emergency accommodation into a sustainable and secure tenancy.
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with local property agents, landlords and other stakeholders.
- Providing access to deposits and advance rental payments.

Focus Ireland Tenancy Sustainment

Focus Ireland provide Tenancy Sustainment & Support Services across County Monaghan to people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. There is one project worker assigned to Co Monaghan.

Focus Ireland core services are to provide support to households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in order to assist them to occupy (or continue) to occupy their accommodation and progress from homelessness or potential homelessness towards independent sustainable living.

The key aims of Focus Ireland's role with Monaghan County Council is to make tenancy support and settlement services available to referred customers by responding to their situations quickly, openly and with actions that are relevant and practicable. Monaghan County Council will equally pursue this aspiration in a spirit of co-operation and partnership.

As the tenancy sustainment service provider Focus Ireland will:

- Assign a key worker to every client who enters the tenancy sustainment programme.
- Participate in regular Homeless Action Team meetings and Tenancy Sustainment meetings.
- Ensure that clients have speedy and appropriate referrals to all health and social services and entitlements and that appropriate referrals are made.
- Prepare clients who are:
 - in emergency accommodation and/or
 - at risk of becoming homeless
- For permanent, independent living using the Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) – develop a Personal Care Plan and case manage this plan to ensure a subsequent tenancy is sustained.
- Work formally and informally with health and housing providers on a caseload basis within current support structures to return clients to permanent, independent living.
- Co-operate with other service providers in the sector in the pursuit of outcomes for clients.

- Promote social, emotional, educational and cultural development of clients who engage with the services.
- Identify appropriate housing opportunities for clients combined with support where required.
- Through partnership working, identify clients who require specialist services and supports and who may require housing or settlement solutions outside of the mainstream provision.

Cara Mental Health Visiting Tenancy Support Service

As part of a nationwide service under the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022-2027, Cara provides visiting support to social housing tenants who have let their Local Authority know that they have a mental health support need and that they are interested in linking in with a tenancy support service.

The service helps clients to either settle into a new Local Authority or Approved Housing Body tenancy, or to manage their existing social housing tenancy, and helps clients to link in with other services or supports if needed.

From October 2024 this service is provided in County Monaghan by HAIL (Housing Association for Integrated Living) who have appointed a Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO). The Tenancy Sustainment Officer works with clients in their home and in the community to identify what support is needed, and to jointly create a plan on how the service can best be of support. The duration of the support can be either short-term or long-term and can be agreed between the client and the Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

Dundalk Simon

Monaghan County Council hold 1 Bed with Dundalk Simon's supported temporary accommodation in Barrack Street, Dundalk. The accommodation caters for both Male and Female within different sections and is staffed 24hours a day, 365 days per year. Each service user is assigned a keyworker who will work with them towards exiting homelessness. Dundalk Simon also maintain a regular line of communication with the Monaghan County Council with regard to achieving the required outcomes for the service user.

Castleblayney Trust for the Homeless Needy and Unemployed

Monaghan County Council hold a service level agreement with Castleblayney Trust for the Homeless Needy and Unemployed for the provision of emergency accommodation incorporating residential support services and Tenancy Sustainment and Support Service. This SLA provides Monaghan County Council with Short Term Accommodation capacity for 2 single adults and 1 family. The key aims of Castleblayney Trust for the Homeless Needy and Unemployed are to provide emergency accommodation for people who are homeless followed by preparation for independent living and to facilitate the return of residents to permanent, independent living. Monaghan County Council equally pursue this aspiration in a spirit of co-operation and partnership.

Safe Ireland Domestic Violence Services Network

Safe Ireland is a national development and coordination body which addresses the problem of Domestic Violence (DV). We have five distinct functions: investigating the causes and effects of coercive control based on sex, gender and sexuality; delivering frontline refuge, support and outreach services to victims and survivors; supporting the coordination and development of domestic violence member service providers; developing best practice guidelines for skilled community-led DSGSBV response; and influencing government national strategic policy, practice and provision responses and engaging civil society.

This is achieved by working directly with the thirty-seven Safe Ireland's member services alongside the provision of direct services in Cavan, Monaghan and Mayo. Safe Ireland provide a range of direct supports to women, children and young people through local crisis helplines, emotional and practical support, information, advocacy, referral to Gardai, Court and other accompaniment, therapeutic supports, housing and welfare advice.

Our core strategic focus is to change culture, transform responses to domestic, sex, gender and sexuality-based violence in communities across Ireland, and to progress towards creating a Safe Ireland for women, for young people, and for children. This includes progressing safe and stable accommodation pathways out of abuse across all housing tenures (social, private rented/ private ownership). This also highlights the need to recognise survivors of domestic violence who cannot reasonably occupy their current accommodation as homeless.

Safe Ireland has been working with Cuan the new agency for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in the development of refuge design and build for community-based responses to domestic violence. Safe Ireland's Safe Spaces model is a national blueprint for refuge which we hope will be embedded in Cavan Monaghan.

3.3 CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL

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

North-East Homeless Action Plan 2021 – 2023

The NE Homeless Action Plan specifies the measures proposed to be undertaken to address homelessness in the Region to include Cavan, Monaghan and Louth. The main objective for 2021-23 was to build on the achievements of the recent three years while continuing to develop services in Cavan, Louth and Monaghan in response to emerging need. The Region regards its current service provision as adequate to meet need and has made great strides in being innovative to meet the

housing-led policy as outlined in Government documents. Innovation has been an influential component on both the supply side of housing and on the demand side for services.

The key actions to be implemented in the 2021-23 period are based on the 4 main areas of priority:

1. Prevention of Homelessness
2. Protection of service users through emergency, accommodation and support services
3. Progression to longer term/permanent accommodation
4. Oversight and Governance

Cavan County Council – Homeless presentations

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Presentations	70	80	78	121	181
No of Adults	97 Adults	95 Adults	85 Adults	145 Adults	214 Adults
No of Children	65 Children	47 Children	54 Children	70 Children	103 Children

Cavan County Council – Households provided with Temporary Emergency Accommodation

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
No of Adults	34 Adults	32 Adults	31 Adults	37 Adults	58 Adults
No of Children	15 Children	13 Children	13 Children	17 Children	21 Children

Challenges

- A.** Lack of affordable private rented accommodation – Homeless presentations in Cavan are increasing year on year. This is caused by a number of external factors such as a lack of private rented accommodation, private market rent increases and low HAP rates for singles and couples, and cost of living crisis. Following the lifting of the eviction ban in April 2023 there has been a significant increase in termination notices registered with the RTB and the current low HAP rates add to the difficulty of households trying to source financially sustainable private rented accommodation.

The table below contains information received from the RTB website.

County Cavan - Notices of Termination Received by the RTB of Rental Address				
Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023
33	45	34	76	44

Info provided by RTB

- B. Increase in immigration/Ukrainian refugee crisis** – The influx of migration to Ireland has increased the population e.g. 100k+ Ukrainian Refugees residing in Ireland. The increase in immigration has added to the demand for affordable private rented accommodation, social housing support and homeless services (temporary emergency accommodation) and it has been a necessary step by Cavan County Council to secure private B&B rooms on retainer to ensure there is an adequate supply of emergency accommodation to Cavan County Council to meet the increase in homeless presentations. This has significantly increased the cost of the provision of private B&B for Cavan County Council. Due to the ongoing lack of affordable rental accommodation, those homeless presentations moving into temporary emergency accommodation are remaining in this type of accommodation for longer, in some instances up to 1 year, adding again to the cost of the provision of private B&B.
- C. Housing Supply** – Ireland's population has been growing steadily over the past decade, putting increased pressure on the housing market. However, the construction of new homes has not kept pace with demand, leading to a significant shortage of available properties. Cavan County Council are set to meet their build targets of 490 new homes between 2022-2026, however, there is still a low number of new private housing coming on stream to meet the demand for housing on the private market, therefore, Social Housing recipients are in direct competition for rental properties with the private market.

Cavan County Council Homelessness Services 2024 – 2026

Due the emerging housing need and challenges outlined above, it is necessary for Cavan County Council to be innovative and to develop and expand on its homeless services quickly. There was engagement with landlords and private B&B establishments which would work with Cavan County Council in the provision of emergency accommodation. It was acknowledged outreach services that targeted homeless prevention was key and as such Cavan County Council made the decision to recruit a HAP Place Finder Person in 2023 and also a Homeless Prevention and Support Officer in 2024. Cavan County Council continues to work with Dublin Simon and Peter McVerry Trust on its Service Level Agreements ensuring quality service and value for money.

Cavan County Council currently manage its Homelessness Service through exchequer funding for homeless accommodation and other related services under Section 10 Funding. This is funding is currently administered through the following services.

- Advice and Support to those presenting homeless or experiencing homelessness.
- Provision of temporary emergency accommodation either through the homeless hostel in Dundalk or Private B&Bs.
- Housing Assistance HAP Place Finder Service.
- SLA Dublin Simon Hostel Accommodation (Dundalk) & Tenancy Sustainment SLA Peter McVerry Trust Housing First Programme.

Housing insecurity has exacerbated the social and health needs of those presenting resulting in longer periods in emergency accommodation, increase in time co-ordinating and referring to services and more time engaging one to one.

Cavan County Council Housing Team are actively pursuing all social housing options through builds, refurbishments, leasing, acquisitions, loans and grants. Cavan County Council's aim is to enhance its current homeless preventative measures through:

- Social Worker support.
- Homeless HAP Place Finder.
- Housing Staff support, advice and guidance.
- Tenancy Sustainment Services.
- Housing First Programme.
- Collaborative working with all agencies with an objective to:
 - Reduce the number of households entering emergency accommodation.
 - Reduce the amount of time households spend in emergency accommodation.
 - Reduce the cost of providing emergency accommodation through private B&B providers.

The Housing Department have secured funding from Central Government for an additional post of Homeless Prevention Support Officer to help deliver on the above. The recruitment of this post will occur in 2024.

The position of the Homeless Prevention and Support Officer is key to helping Cavan County Council achieving these goals by adequately and accurately assessing the housing need of those presenting homeless and examining alternatives to emergency accommodation through:

- Referrals made to the HAP Place Finder Service.
- Intensive case management through one to one applicant/family engagement.
- Referring and liaising with services that can offer living and educational supports to individuals/families.

HAP Place Finder Service – the roll out, payment of deposits and recoupment of same are documented in Circular Housing 04.2018 & Circular Housing 12.2021. The Role of the HAP Place Finder Service is to support those homeless households to exit emergency accommodation and secure a tenancy, seeking out potential properties suitable for households currently identified as homeless, liaising with specific households to establish their specific needs, establishing relationships with local Property Agents and Landlords in order to create sustainable HAP tenancies suitable to the household needs, establishing relationships with other State Agency stakeholders e.g. HSE, Tusla, ETB, Social Welfare. The sharing of information and forging of relationships between Agencies will prove essential for Cavan County Council in carrying out its role in the provision of a Homelessness Service. Working with other Council Departments, Commercial Accommodation Providers, Landlords, Other Agencies and neighbouring Local Authorities to raise public awareness and education in order to reduce homelessness in County Cavan.

The service has immensely benefited Cavan County Council to enable its homeless prevention measures. The service commenced in September 2023 and up to the 31st December 2023, 11 households availed of Place Finder Service i.e. deposit & advance rent in 2023. These were 11 households that were either in homeless accommodation or facing impending homelessness. The service also gives advice, guidance and support to those with termination notices on their private rented properties. In the current housing crisis climate we are in, the service of time to listen and support those in insecure housing is a societal benefit.

Tenancy Sustainment Service – This Service Level Agreement is between Cavan County Council and the Dublin Simon Community for the provision of outreach support services to work on accommodation solutions for those in homelessness and/or at risk of becoming homeless. The key aims of Dublin Simon Community is to make tenancy support and settlement services available to Cavan County Council's Housing Customers (Applicants and Tenants) by responding to their situations quickly, openly and with actions that are relevant and practicable.

Cavan County Council hold two service level agreements with Dublin Simon dating from 2017. Procurement is administered by the lead authority (Louth County Council) in the North-East Region and contracts are renewed by Cavan County Council on an annual basis.

Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA) – the offer of this service is categorised into 2 types of emergency accommodation:

- (a) private emergency accommodation run by private establishments e.g. B&Bs/Hotels/Hostels; and
- (b) serviced accommodation (2 Beds) provided through a Service Level Agreement with Dublin Simon Dundalk Hostel. TEA is offered to those who present homeless, complete a Homeless Assessment and offered the most appropriate type of TEA. This service commissioned by Cavan County Council for serviced accommodation is vital in the provision of homeless services for Cavan. The 2 beds in Dundalk are continuously occupied and there is currently a waiting list for this service. As the accommodation is serviced (i.e. access to supports), it is the only type of accommodation that Cavan County Council has access to that can cater for high needs/complex clients.

Housing First – provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing homelessness for people experiencing mental health, physical health, substance misuse, social, behavioural and other challenges. The programme consists of three major components:

- Permanent, Affordable Housing.
- Mobile case management and treatment services (mental health, health, and addiction services).
- A programme philosophy based on client choice and recovery.

Cavan's initial target was reviewed in May 2021 and amended to 7 over the same 3-year period (2019-2021). A new National Directorate for Housing First was put in place and an implementation plan for the years 2022-2026 was published,

increasing targets from the original plan. Cavan's target for this period is 7, increasing the overall target to 14 to 2026, yearly breakdown as follows.

Housing First implementation plan 2022-2026

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Cavan County Council	1	2	2	1	1	7

The SLA for Peter McVerry Trust is extended for this period until a full review and procurement process is concluded. Cavan currently have 9 Housing First tenancies in place, 8 created between 2019 and 2022 and one in 2023.

Interagency Work - includes engaging with An Garda Síochána, the Prison Services, Tusla, Education & Training Board, the Traveller Consultative Committee, HSE and Tusla. The Senior Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, Social Worker and HAP Place Finder Person sit on a number of Committees that include North-East Housing Forum, Housing First Monitoring Committee, SORAM (Sex Offenders Risk Assessment & Management), DHSG (Disability & Housing Steering Group), Mental Health Action Team, Disability Action Team and HAP Place Finder Network. When required the Team also partake in case conferences for interagency approaches for accommodation solutions to complex housing/homeless cases.

3.4 HEALTH SERVICES

Detailed below are examples of the contribution made by various branches of the HSE in the area of homeless services throughout the Northeast.

3.4.1 HSE SOCIAL INCLUSION/ADDICTION SERVICES NORTH EAST REGION

The following are a number of the services and initiatives provided through HSE Social Inclusion across the region.

Dundalk Simon Community: Dundalk Simon Community operate predominantly out of Barrack Street in Dundalk operating a 33-bed short term accommodation service for clients experiencing homelessness and complex health and social care needs. The facility currently has 27 beds allocated to Co Louth, 2 for County Cavan and 1 for County Monaghan. Additionally, Dundalk Simon has 3 independent bungalows on site for those registered with Louth County Council. The Barrack Street facility supports clients with complex health needs, ranging from physical and mental health to frontline addiction supports. The service also supports client's access Housing supports and liaise regularly with the local authority to provide suitable move on accommodation for the clients. The service is accessible to both male and female, is 24-hour service and has a service manager along with 1 team leader/supervisor, 3 project workers and 4 support workers, night support workers and an imbedded flexi team to manage the facility. The Simon Community also have a drop-in service located on Seatown road which offers clients who are rough sleeping a service to access accommodation or other social care supports. Dublin Simon operates an additional 4 bed medium support STA service (Castle Rd) and a number of transitional/shared house properties across the Country.

Drogheda Homeless Aid: Provides a 22 bed Emergency accommodation to male clients experiencing Homelessness and complex health and social care needs. The facility operates a 24-hour service and has 18 beds assigned to Louth and 4 beds assigned to Meath County Council. The service has a centre manager, two project workers and a team of support workers. They have also a tenancy sustainment manager supporting clients in two community houses, one which supports males, and the other facility supports four females transition into independent living. Recently as of 2023 two new positions have been added to the team in the form of care assistants who support clients with high care needs and physical health issues. Referrals for this Drogheda Homeless Aid comes directly from local authority.

Red Door Project: Drop-in service supporting clients in Drogheda experiencing addiction and other social difficulties. Operates a Recovery CE scheme as well as offering social work support. The client group accessing these services are from age ranging from 18 upwards and operates a number of Tier 3 addiction supports as well as counselling and referral pathways to residential treatment and aftercare groups.

Turas Project: Located in Dundalk, Turas offers comprehensive supports for clients with active addiction or in recovery from addiction to substances like drugs, alcohol, and gambling. Services include one-on-one counselling, community alcohol detox, aftercare support, and diverse recovery capital programmes including a weekly Recovery Café, mixed and women-only support groups, sailing, art, and drama therapy. Referrals to Turas come from a range of sources, including self-referrals, the HSE, and the voluntary and community sectors.

HSE Addiction Services. Health Services Executive operate two facilities for clinical supports in Louth, one operating from Market Street Dundalk and the other from Donore Road Drogheda. The clinics provide methadone Maintenance supports in Dundalk on a Wednesday from Market Street and on Friday from Donore Road for Drogheda based clients. The service also provides a counselling service, has nursing supports and also has outreach supports operating from both services. The clinic has also a full-time medical practitioner who provides clinical supports to the clients. Outreach support clients with advice and supports and are heavily involved in the clients care plan, often co-ordinating treatment and rehabilitation referrals and aftercare. Referrals for both the clinic and the counselling service come from multiple stakeholders including primary care services, GP and from the community and voluntary sector.

Merchants Quay Family Support Service: Service is based out of HSE Market Street premises and provides family support services to affected family members of a relative in addiction. The service covers Louth/Meath and has a full-time co-ordinator and a project worker. Referrals come from multiple stakeholders such as local authority, HSE and Community and Voluntary sector.

Housing First Supports: The Housing First programme is a collaborative and integrated housing support programme which assist client's access own front Door accommodation and includes the provision of Health supports. The Housing First programme is a national strategy to eradicate homelessness and is joint funded by the local authorities and Health service Executive. It supports clients who have a long history of entrenched rough sleeping and complex health and social care needs

live independently in the community. The service has one team leader, FOUR case manager based between the North East regions and has also a nurse on the team. The service is provided by section 39 organisation and referrals to the programme come from local authority and the Health Service Executive

Family Addiction Support Network (FASN): offers support services to family members and friends (aged 18 and over) of individuals affected by addiction and substance misuse issues across Louth, Meath, Cavan, and Monaghan. The organisation provides emotional and educational support through one-on-one sessions, educational programs, counselling, and peer led support groups in the four counties. FASN offers both face-to-face and online services to ensure accessibility. Individuals can self-refer by contacting the 24-hour helpline at 087 904 6405. Alternatively, other organisations can refer individuals either by phone to the same number or through our referral form, which is available at www.fasn.ie. FASN provides client-centred support services tailored to meet each person's individual needs. Following an initial assessment, clients will be referred to the most appropriate support service. Additionally, FASN can provide referral pathways to other organisations for both the individual and their family members.

MQI CAMDAS: is a community-based drug and alcohol service working within the National Drug Rehabilitation Framework (NDRIC). The services deliver evidence-based psychosocial interventions and supports to individuals, families, and the wider communities impacted by substance use. Their trauma-informed, person-centred, and holistic approach seeks to ensure accessible and responsive treatment for individuals aged 18 and over. Referrals are accepted from individuals, family members, and agencies, promoting inclusive access to the service (049-4379160/info.cavan.monaghan@mqi.ie).

3.4.2 HSE ADDICTION SERVICES

The HSE Addiction Services provides a free confidential, drug & alcohol treatment support service across CHO8 Healthcare region. The overall purpose of the service is to seek to minimise drug and alcohol related harm in order to have a positive impact on individuals, families and communities. The service works under the actions of the National Drug & Alcohol Strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – A health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 & the OST (Opioid Substitution Treatment) programme and supports the ethos of the Housing First National Implementation Plan 2022-2026.

The HSE Addiction Services provide a range of services including but not exhaustive - OST (Opiate Substitution Treatment) services, Addiction Homeless supports, Outreach support and Counselling

As part of this service, the HSE have developed an Addiction Homeless service led by the Social Care Lead and the Social Care Worker for Louth Meath. The Addiction Homeless team support those who are in addiction or at risk of becoming addicted and are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to their addiction. The priority target group are those with an addiction who have a history of sleeping rough and long-term users of emergency homeless services due to their addiction

The service provides the following:

- Drug and alcohol treatment supports to service users, as required, in the planned interventions for the person and/or family members in line with best practice.
- We work in a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary manner with both internal and external stakeholders.
- Our aim is to deliver a quality service ensuring professional standards are maintained in accordance with professional, national and local requirements.
- We work in accordance with the principles, values and actions as detailed in the National Drug & Alcohol Strategy – Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery. A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 and the HSE Service Plan.
- The service will treat all service users with dignity and respect, promoting a culture of unconditional positive regard at all times.
- Contribute to the promotion, creation and maintenance of a welcoming, safe, caring, stable and therapeutic environment.
- Proactively identify and engage with individuals who are sleeping rough and assess how the Service can assist rough sleepers and prioritise their support needs.
- Complete screening/initial assessment, develop and implement support plans and conduct regular key working appointments as appropriate to the service users' needs.
- Attend Homeless Action Team meetings as required across the Louth Meath area.
- Assess the needs of service users and match their needs with the appropriate evidence-based interventions and arrange input from other relevant agencies where appropriate.
- Work with complex service users and quality intervention within the continuum of care and case management.
- Participate in interagency meetings in relation to the care and development of the service users
- Promote the rights and responsibilities for our service users.
- Advocate on the behalf of the service users as required.
- Support service users through the process of regaining their capacity for daily life from the impact of problem drug and/or alcohol use and reintegrating into their communities.
- Work closely with community, voluntary and statutory sectors to ensure that service users can access support in relation to their needs i.e. housing, employment etc.
- Work in partnership to maximise benefits that can be achieved for individuals and families by utilising wider resources and support networks that are available locally.
- Provide care and support that offer both a harm reduction and recovery ethos reflecting a person-centred approach to care.
- Refer onwards as appropriate.
- Secure Tier 4 residential treatment as required.

3.4.3 COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – COUNTY LOUTH

The Louth Meath Mental Health Service is delivered through specialist mental health multidisciplinary teams from childhood to old age. If you live in Co. Louth, the Louth CMHT are based in:

- Singleton House, Laurence Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth. Eircode: A92 F5DD. Phone: 041 989 3400 or 041 989 3401
- Ladywell Centre, Louth County Hospital Campus, Dundalk, Co. Louth. Eircode: A91 RY6H. Phone: 042 932 6156

To get an appointment with the service, ask your GP to refer you. When the team receives the referral from your GP, if appropriate, they will arrange an appointment with you for assessment and plan any identified treatment.

The Community Mental Health Team is a multidisciplinary team (CMHT). This means it is made up of many different professionals, such as doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, family therapists and psychologists. It provides a holistic adult mental health service for counties Louth and Meath. This means the service considers your physical, emotional, psychological and social needs. The CMHT offers:

- An integrated system of care and support that meets the individual person's needs.
- Support to services users and their carers in times of stress.
- A comprehensive care programme that enables the person to continue with their lifestyle without disruption, wherever possible.
- An agreed individual care plan with a focus on the strengths and needs of the person.

Within the Community Mental Health Teams there are day hospitals. A Day Hospital is an alternative to being admitted to hospital and staying there at night. You can attend a day hospital if you're currently unwell or if you're starting a new medication regime.

First, you'll get a comprehensive assessment followed by ongoing support and education. You will develop your own individual Care Plan with your Key Worker which will be reviewed at regular intervals.

Your prescribed treatment can be provided and monitored by qualified staff. Using the day hospital varies depending on your needs. It's generally for a period of 1-6 weeks but it can be extended if the team think you need longer treatment.

- Drogheda Day Hospital, Laurence Centre, Drogheda, Co Louth. Eircode: A92 PH32. Phone: 041 987 5700
- Ladywell Day Hospital, Dublin Road, Dundalk, Co Louth. Eircode: A91 RY6H. Phone: 042 932 6156

In-Patient Care - Drogheda Department of Psychiatry

The Drogheda Department of Psychiatry is a registered 46 bed integrated acute admission unit on the campus of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, Co. Louth. The unit consists of 46 single bedrooms with en-suite facilities.

Of the 46 beds there is a separate 8 bedded unit for Psychiatry of Old Age or Mental Health Services for Older People. We provide multi-disciplinary mental health services to older patients under our care, whose needs cannot be met in the community.

The acute admission unit provides in-patient specialist assessment and treatment for individuals during an acute phase of their mental health illness. The unit offers acute in-patient services to the population of County Louth and Meath from age 18 upwards presenting with acute mental health difficulties.

Emphasis is placed on a holistic approach to care provided by a multidisciplinary team consisting of medical, nursing staff, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, healthcare assistants, pharmacist and a range of counsellors. Admissions are usually of short duration and follow-up care is provided by the appropriate community mental health teams.

3.5 HOUSING FIRST IN THE NORTH EAST REGION

Housing First Overview

Housing First provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing homelessness for people experiencing mental health, physical health, substance misuse, social, behavioural, and other challenges. The programme consists of three major components:

- Permanent, affordable housing.
- Mobile case management and treatment services (mental health, health, and addiction services).
- Programme philosophy based on client choice and recovery.

Ireland's national Housing First programme is based on the Pathways Housing First programme, which is the model that has produced the research evidence for the effectiveness of Housing First. The Housing First programme philosophy is based on psychiatric rehabilitation, and support services which emphasise client choice and recovery.

Housing is provided in accordance with client preference, which almost always means an independent home in the community. The required housing stock for Housing First comes from social housing (i.e. publicly funded housing managed by Local Authorities and AHB's), as well as housing that is rented from private landlords with the aid of a subsidy, however this is not as common.

The case management support service is provided by NGOs (which are contracted to provide this service) and treatment is provided by the HSE, General Practitioners (GPs), and other social service providers. The programme philosophy of Housing

First should inform the practice of staff across all agencies participating in the initiative, including external agency partners.

Why Housing First?

Housing First provides communities with an effective approach to housing a chronically homeless segment of the population, and to keeping them housed. Those who are chronically homeless tend to go through cycles of living on and off the streets (rough sleepers) or are frequent users of shelters, emergency rooms, detox facilities and hospitals. Housing First provides an effective solution for individuals who have repeatedly tried and failed to exit homelessness, who have given up on the treatment-then housing 'staircase' approach, or who have been given up on by systems that regard them as 'treatment resistant', 'hard to reach', 'not housing ready', or 'homeless / rough sleeping by choice'. Housing First successfully engages these individuals by offering and providing immediate access to an apartment of their own, as well as access to person-centred, community-based, recovery-oriented visiting supports. The proper implementation of Housing First can serve to: Expand the current practice of housing providers and clinicians:

- Embolden policymakers.
- Expand existing Housing First programmes.
- Introduce new policies and funding to bring Housing First to scale.
- and introduce a shift to effective consumer driven, person-centred supports and treatment for people experiencing homelessness and diagnosed with mental illness and substance use disorders.

By providing a person with a home, Housing First offers dignity and ignites hope in individuals who have often been treated in an undignified manner, who have remained homeless and who have felt hopeless for years. The transformation of moving out of homelessness into a home of one's own begins a process of physical and psychological healing and instantly changes that person's social status from an outcast on the streets to a member of a community.

Housing First's proven success factors include the following:

- Housing First consistently shows significantly better outcomes than standard care in reducing homelessness, increasing housing stability, and improving quality of life.
- The Housing First client-directed approach empowers clients to make their own choices, direct their own course of action, and experience a sense of mastery that serves as a pillar in their recovery process.
- Housing First can be implemented quickly because engagement with clients is accelerated by the offer of immediate access to housing. Housing First does not require years to build. The programme secures housing from the existing vacancies in social housing or by renting units from private landlords. On average, clients move from homelessness into their own apartment in a period of four to six weeks.
- Housing First case management and treatment services take a holistic, recovery-oriented approach that supports community integration and social inclusion.

Who is Prioritised for Housing First?

Individuals prioritised by Housing First are people who experience rough sleeping and those who have long stays in emergency accommodation, with accompanying high support needs around mental health and substance use disorders. Rough sleepers are the most visible group amongst people experiencing homelessness and, in the public mind, they often represent the totality of homelessness. For this reason, they also draw the attention of policymakers. From a management of health services perspective, rough sleepers attract attention because, even though they comprise only a minority of those experiencing homelessness at any point in time, based on international evidence, they utilise about 50% of all available homeless services.

This is a consequence of having multiple untreated problems, including physical and mental health problems, substance use disorders, nutritional deficiencies and trauma, all of which are exacerbated by homelessness, and result in this group's frequent use of emergency rooms, inpatient services, admissions for stabilisation or detoxification, police transports, prison time, shelter bed-use, and other acute care services. This pattern of high service utilisation is very costly, ultimately resulting in a cyclical pattern of acute care service use with poor outcomes for both the system and the individual.

Why Housing First Works

Most clients who have been homeless for years have experienced failure (either voluntarily or involuntarily), and sometimes on several occasions, to engage in 'treatment first' programmes. For this group, using housing as leverage or coercion for treatment participation has not proven effective. Before there was a Housing First programme, the 'treatment-then-housing' or 'staircase' model was all that was available for people experiencing homelessness. The 'treatment-first' model was likely developed from the outdated traditional medical model and the clinician's perspective, rather than the perspective of the service users. The move to more holistic practice plus incorporation of new research findings on treatment effectiveness have been adopted in the field of addiction treatment, but they are not

as widely in use in the homeless service sector. Now, Opioid Substitute Treatment (OST) is offered to clients to support them in recovering from opioid dependence, with clients being fully involved in the development of their care plans. In addition, the harm-reduction approach has been a key component of addiction services for several years. The 'treatment-first' model was based on several erroneous assumptions about the needs and competencies of people experiencing long-term homelessness, struggling with substance use disorders, or diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities. Some of these assumptions are manifest as programme requirements in traditional homeless service programmes, including the beliefs and practices that:

- Clients must first demonstrate they can live successfully in transitional housing before they can manage independent housing such as a place of their own.
- Clients with addiction problems must first be sober before they can be housed.
- Clients with psychiatric problems must first be treated or free of symptoms before they can be housed.
- Clients will value housing more if they must earn it (i.e., housing as a reward) by demonstrating compliance with treatment, sobriety, and following programme rules.
- Clinicians must set goals for clients because they are incapable of making choices or setting goals for themselves.
- Clients with psychiatric disabilities need to live in group homes with on-site staff because they require round-the-clock supervision.

These beliefs persist even in the face of empirical evidence from numerous quantitative and qualitative studies showing that, in Housing First programmes, clients diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities can set their own goals and, when provided with the right support, can live independently in the community attaining sobriety or completing a series of transitional or preparatory programmes. The evidence from studies of Housing First also indicates that clients are more likely to remain housed when programmes allow them greater choice. These findings are consistent with research on psychiatric rehabilitation, which indicates that the most effective way for a person to learn the skills necessary for living independently in the community is not in a group home or a shelter, but in an independent housing unit where support can be provided for these skills to be developed and put to use.

Housing First is a Values-Based Programme

Housing First is strongly values-based. The programme interventions are built upon a core set of values about human rights, dignity and empowerment. The many interventions that comprise the Housing First programme are better understood and easier to grasp if programme staff and the agencies involved endorse these beliefs and values

The core values of Housing First are:

- All people have a right to housing; housing is a basic human right.
- People with psychiatric disabilities and substance use disorders should not have to prove they are 'housing ready' or have to 'earn the right to housing' by first complying with psychiatric treatment or attaining sobriety.

- The programme is strengths-based. Strengths are recognised and appreciated, and each person's potential for creativity, growth, and recovery is acknowledged, honoured, and encouraged.
- Respect, hope, and creating possibilities are the foundations of helping.
- People have the power of choice, and their life choices are honoured and upheld.

The Housing First approach does not view the root causes of homelessness (e.g., mental illness or substance use disorders) as evidence of individual failings. Rather, homelessness is understood in the context of national policies that result in income disparity, poverty and lack of affordable housing.

Housing First programmes, house the so-called 'hard-to-house', 'homeless by choice' or 'treatment-resistant' clients generally show a dramatically different and very positive response, and engage with the Housing First programme. Clients quickly grasp that this programme respects that they have wishes and plans of their own, and it is not designed to demand that they must change. Rather, it is there to actually listen to them and support them in meeting their own, self-defined needs.

Programme Culture

Internationally, the Housing First model is underpinned by the following ethos:

- Housing as a basic human right.
- Warmth, respect, and compassion for all clients.
- A welcoming and trauma-informed programme culture.
- Recovery-focused services.
- Active engagement and relationship-building.
- Social inclusion using a 'scattered-site' housing model.
- Separating housing from treatment.
- Harm reduction.
- Social prescribing.

In the Housing First programme, housing is not offered as an enticement to get an individual into treatment or as coercion to get an individual to sober up. It is instead offered as a matter of right. The Pathways Housing First programme has an 85% success rate for housing – and for keeping housed – people who have been homeless for years. This rate has been verified by numerous scientific and empirically sound studies.

However, even after years of operation, and after thousands of people have been housed, it is not possible to predict which tenant will succeed in housing and which one will fall into the 15% for whom the programme does not work well. Therefore, every person who meets the admission requirements of Housing First is provided housing and a chance (multiple chances, if required) to succeed in living in a home of their own.

Housing First is underpinned by 5 principles:

1. Consumer Choice
2. Separation of Housing and Services

3. Matching Services to Client Needs No Wrong Door and Active Engagement
4. Recovery Focused Services
5. Social Inclusion and Scattered-Site Housing

Housing First North East Targets 2022-26

PMVT Housing First North-East	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Louth	6	6	6	6	6	30
Cavan	1	2	2	1	1	7
Monaghan	1	1	1	0	0	3
Total	8	9	9	7	7	40

Housing First North East Tenancies Achieved

PMVT Housing First North-East	2022	2023	2024
Louth	15	11	3
Cavan	2	3	1
Monaghan	3	4	1
Total	20	18	5

3.6 FAMILY AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

3.6.1 TUSLA CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY:

“The Importance of Working Together”

Protecting children and young people and promoting their welfare underpins the work of the Child and Family Agency, Tusla. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, some parents cannot adequately care for their children or safeguard them from harm. When needs are not being met, then a decision is made either with the agreement of the parent /s or by direction of the Court, that those children are received into the care of the Child and Family Agency.

The Child and Family Agency has a huge responsibility for these children, many of whom when received into care remain in care for most of their childhood. That responsibility entails working collaboratively to ensure that childhood needs are met, that care is at the highest standard and that Tusla work collaboratively to better support young people into adulthood, helping create a bright future with opportunities to flourish.

Tusla’s National Policy Framework sets out 5 outcomes for children and young people:

- Be safe and healthy, with positive physical and mental wellbeing
- Be achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Be safe and protected from harm
- Have economic security and opportunity
- Be connected, respected and contributing to the world

The Government aims to achieve this through:

- Supporting parents
- Early intervention and prevention
- Establishing a culture that listens to children
- Quality services
- Effective transitions
- Cross government and interagency collaboration and co ordination

Aftercare

The Ryan Report 2009 to Inquire into Child Abuse made specific recommendations with respect to aftercare provision. It states that the: *provision of aftercare by the HSE should form an integral part of care delivery for children who have been in the care of the state. It should not be seen as a discretionary service or as a once-off event that occurs on a young person's 18 birthday. It recommended that:*

- The HSE will ensure the provision of aftercare services for children leaving care in all instances where the professional judgement of the social worker determines it is required (by November 2009).
- The HSE will, with their consent, conduct a longitudinal study to follow young people who leave care for 10 years, to map their transition to adulthood (starting in 2010).
- The HSE and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will review the approach to prioritizing identified 'at risk' young people leaving care and requiring local authority housing (by December 2010).
- The HSE will ensure that care plans include aftercare planning for all young people of 16 years and older (by June 2010).
- The HSE will ensure that aftercare planning identifies key workers in other health services to which a young person is referred, for example, disability and mental health services (by June 2010).
- The OMCYA, in conjunction with the HSE, will consider how best to provide necessary once-off supports for care leavers to gain practical lifelong skills (by June 2010).

It was this report that highlighted the difficulties that young people leaving care were faced with and it was this Report that instilled action to ensure that aftercare was provided in a planned way, as part of the care continuum and in partnership explicitly naming the joint work that was needed with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. In response to this Tusla developed its first Aftercare Policy in 2011 and its implementation led to the development one of Tusla's first inter departmental Joint Protocols "Young People Leaving State Care- Joint Working Protocol between Tusla and Housing Authorities 2014"

This Protocol is very embedded in Louth as Louth Housing Department personnel participated actively in its development together with the County and City Managers group who endorsed it. It has created a process and has contributed enormously to fulfilling our joint objectives as set out in our respective policy frameworks. It

promotes early intervention to minimize homelessness for vulnerable young adults who need a coordinated and sensitive response.

This Protocol has nurtured our working relationships to improve outcomes. This is reflected in Aftercare staff being represented at HAT. The most significant development in our collaborative work in 2023 was the development of The Laurels Aftercare Service in Dundalk. This is unique to any other aftercare service Tusla provides and evidences the commitment of both agencies to supporting care leavers transitioning from care.

Louth County Council Housing staff are also represented on the Aftercare Steering Committee in Louth. The key objective of this Committee is to monitor the progress of young people in care in Louth to aftercare and adult services. Considering housing and supports is an integral part of this planning.

Louth County Council have too been instrumental in supporting young people leaving care and who require tenancy support to assist them with the practicalities and responsibility of living independently and accessing this service for care leavers transitioning is an additional resource needed.

As of 31/07/2024 there are 5,676 children in care of Tusla. In the Louth/Meath area this totals 419, 226 children are in care in Louth. For the most 5,042 of children were placed in general foster care or relative foster care. With respect to Aftercare there are 2,932 18–22-year-olds receiving an Aftercare Service from Tusla. 76% are being supported in education/training/college course. There are 156 young adults are receiving an Aftercare Service. in the Louth/Meath Area.

The Cavan Monaghan Aftercare Service submits the projected numbers of young people leaving care in both counties to both local authorities' Homeless Services team as per the joint housing protocol. Representatives from both local authorities sit on the Aftercare Steering Committee. The Cavan Monaghan Aftercare Service in partnership with both local authorities are currently setting up a housing pilot which will provide transitional housing for three care leavers at a time.

3.6.2 NATIONAL CHILDCARE SCHEME

The National Childcare Scheme provides financial support to help families with their early learning and childcare costs for children aged between 6 months and 15 years. Families may avail of subsidised funding for up to 45 hours of childcare per week.

In accordance with Section 14 of the Childcare Support Act 2018 (Provision for vulnerable children) the three North East Local Authorities have entered into an agreement with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to assist children who are homeless or moving out of homelessness to access childcare services.

The Local Authorities serve as the referring body and will directly refer children residing in emergency accommodation to the scheme. All participating childcare providers and childminders are vetted by and registered with Tusla.

The National Childcare Scheme is administered by Pobal.

4 KEY FINDINGS, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND TARGETED ACTIONS

This section examines selected key findings arising from the previous Action Plan along with the proposed objectives and actions to be implemented over the duration of this plan, which runs from 2024 to 2026. It is important that the relevant agencies use the data and information collected over the previous 3 years to assist in adapting strategies and procedures to address the continually evolving situation. All actions and objectives should be cognisant of the current policy context as set out in section 1.3 of this plan with particular emphasis on Pathway 2 as laid out in national policy document 'Housing for All'.

4.1 KEY FINDINGS

1. **Homeless Presentations:** The past 3 years have shown a marked increase in presentations to Homeless Services. Presentations have been at a persistently high level, averaging approximately 3,000 presentations per annum over the period 2021 to 2023. This is up from the yearly average of 1,500 presentations recorded over the preceding three years. This has placed an ever-increasing strain on homeless service providers, most especially in terms of immediate availability of beds. The requirement for enhanced early intervention initiatives with a clear focus on prevention is apparent and this would act as a key mechanism in addressing the increased number of presentations and ensuring that solutions are found that do not necessitate placement in emergency accommodation.
2. **Family Homelessness:** The data measuring family homelessness throughout the state over the past 3 years has shown a steady and somewhat steep upward curve. This has been no different in the North East Region. In 2021 there were 4 homeless families across the region, but this figure had increased to 38 by the end of 2023. The issue of child homelessness is of particular concern with the number of homeless children in the region increasing from 9 to 75 between 2021 to 2023. This upsurge was due largely to the end to the Covid-19 restrictions, most especially the eviction ban from private rented accommodation. Whereas housing solutions are the ideal long-term aspiration, the necessity for emergency accommodation for families is clearly apparent. In the North East Region two additional facilities were opened in 2023-In Louth the family facility at Little Ash, Dundalk which accommodated 8 families and in Monaghan the Waterside apartment which contains a two-bed facility suitable for 1 family. Another supported family facility situated in Drogheda, with capacity for up to 18 families, is due to commence operating in 2024.
3. **Reliance on Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA):** The preferred form of emergency accommodation is Supported Temporary Accommodation with onsite supervision and key working supports. However, as detailed in the report above, the preponderance of homeless clients is currently placed in PEA. Clients in PEA accounted for 28% of the overall total in 2021 but this had risen to 59% by the end of 2023. This must be considered less than ideal as private emergency accommodation does not have inbuilt onsite supervision, nor does it provide 24-hour social care supports. Furthermore, this accommodation, while necessary in the current climate, tends to be less cost efficient and generally provides less value for money.

4. **Housing First:** Housing First continues to play a central role in the accommodating of people with a history of entrenched homelessness and complex needs. The programme is a cornerstone of the regional homeless service provision and currently consists of 51 active tenancies across the 3 Counties. The implementation of Housing First in the region has clearly demonstrated the benefits of a multiple agency approach when addressing the issue of homelessness. The terms of National Housing First tender are due to be published in mid to late 2024 and the North East region will retender for the service on this basis. In accordance with the Housing First National Implementation Plan the service will further expand over the next three years (2024-2026). Key aspects to the enhancement of the service include the need to acknowledge the geographic structure of the region when establishing the definitions of adequate staffing numbers and the requirement for Local Authorities and NGOs to continue to provide the requisite number of properties to meet targets as set out in the National implementation plan.
5. **Rough Sleeping:** Instances of rough sleeping have continued to remain low in the North East Region and any reported cases are acted upon and addressed through outreach work as a matter of priority. As homeless numbers increase and the strain on bed capacity intensifies, the risk of rough sleeping potentially rises. Early response to such cases is essential and the continued implementation and expansion of the existing regional cold weather response is a key initiative in addressing this issue.

4.2 KEY OBJECTIVES AND TARGETED ACTIONS 2024-2026

The key actions to be implemented in the 2024-26 period are noted in the tables below and are based on 6 primary objectives and areas of priority. These key objectives are detailed as follows:

1. Prevention of homelessness.
2. Protection of service users (i.e. through emergency, accommodation and support services).
3. Maximise progression from homeless services (i.e. progress service users to longer term/permanent accommodation).
4. Oversight and governance.
5. Enhance and expand multi agency approach to homelessness.
6. Public sector duty

In accordance with Department Circular 44/2021 the objectives and actions of this plan are informed by 'Housing for All' and reflect current policy and actions.

4.2.1 TABLE OF ACTIONS

Objective 1: Prevention of Homelessness

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
1.1	Prevention of homelessness through specifically targeted Tenancy sustainment and Support Services	Local Authorities/Contracted TSS Service Providers/HSE/Prison & Probation Services	2024-2026
1.2	Prevention of Child Homelessness	Local Authorities/Contracted TSS Service Providers/HSE/Tusla	2024-2026
1.3	Source accommodation and financially assist persons/families at risk of homelessness through the HAP Place finder model	Local Authorities/Contracted TSS Service Providers	2024-2026
1.4	Prevention of homelessness through the purchase of properties.	Local Authorities/Housing Agency	2024
1.5	Enhance connectivity between Local Authorities and Tusla so that those leaving care do not become homeless.	Local Authorities/HSE/Tusla	2024-2026

Objective 2: Protection of Service Users

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
2.1	Provision of Emergency accommodation of requisite standard for persons in need.	Local Authorities/Contracted Homeless Service Providers/PEA Providers	2024-2026
2.2	Provide Emergency Accommodation of requisite standard for families in need	Local Authorities/Contracted Homeless Service Providers/PEA Providers	2024
2.3	Provide dedicated support services for those in Emergency Accommodation	Local Authorities/Contracted Homeless Service Providers/TSS Service Providers/HSE/Tusla	2024-2026
2.4	Provide supports for parents in Emergency accommodation through National Childcare Scheme	Local Authorities/Childcare Providers/Pobal	2024-2026

Objective 3: Maximise Progressions from Homeless Services

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
3.1	To provide permanent homes for Homeless individuals and families	Local Authorities/AHBs/Housing Agency	2024-2026
3.2	To assist exits from homelessness into private rented accommodation through the HAP Place finder model	Local Authorities/TSS Service Providers	2024-2026
3.3	To provide a home and a stable environment for the long term homeless and the most vulnerable through Housing First.	Local Authorities/ Peter McVerry Trust/HSE	2024-2026
3.4	To provide transitional accommodation for the long term homeless in preparation for independent living	NGOs/Local Authorities	2024-2026

Objective 4: Oversight and Governance

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
4.1	Report to Central Government on the progress of the actions and commitments set out in the Homelessness Action Plan.	Local Authorities	Quarterly
4.2	Monitor the efficiency of Homeless Service provision in the region through the NQSF.	Local Authorities/Homeless Service and TSS Providers	Quarterly
4.3	Ensure Service Level Agreements are in place with all Homeless Service providers in the region.	Local Authorities/NGO	Annual
4.4	Submit transparent financial reporting on all Section 10 funded activities to central government.	Local Authorities	Quarterly
4.5	Ensure that all data in relation to Homeless Services in the region is recorded accurately and efficiently, with particular emphasis on the roll out of the PASS 2 system.	NGOs/Local Authorities	2024-2026

Objective 5: Enhance and expand multi-agency approach to Homelessness

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
5.1	Ensure that all relevant agencies are Represented at the HAT meetings and continue to review membership to reflect an ever changing and evolving situation.	Local Authorities/HSE/NGO/ Tusla/DV Refuges	Monthly
5.2	Engage with SORUM [Sex Offenders Risk Assessment and Management] in relation to planned discharges where the person is identified as homeless or likely to be homeless	Local Authorities/ Garda Siochana/ Prison Services/ Probation Services	Quarterly
5.3	Commit to multi agency approach to addressing complex case clients with multi-disciplinary needs most especially in areas such as mental health, intellectual disability, domestic violence, and addiction.	Local Authorities/ Garda Siochana/ Prison Services/ Probation Services /NGOs/DV Refuges	Review at HAT
5.4	Maintain robust protocols in relation to discharges from medical facilities such as hospitals and mental health facilities into homeless services.	Local Authorities/HSE/NGOs	2024-2026
5.5	Engage closely with IPAS to ensure minimal numbers of direct transfers from Direct Provision to homelessness.	Local Authorities/ IPAS/Department of Justice	2024-2025

Objective 6: Public Sector Duty

Action No	Continuing Key Action	Responsible	Timeline
6.1	Ensuring that public bodies have regard, in carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality & diversity and protect human rights for service users and staff.	Statutory Management Group	Review Annually