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Pathway to
Eradicating
Homelessness,
Increasing Social
Housing Delivery
and Supporting
Social Inclusion

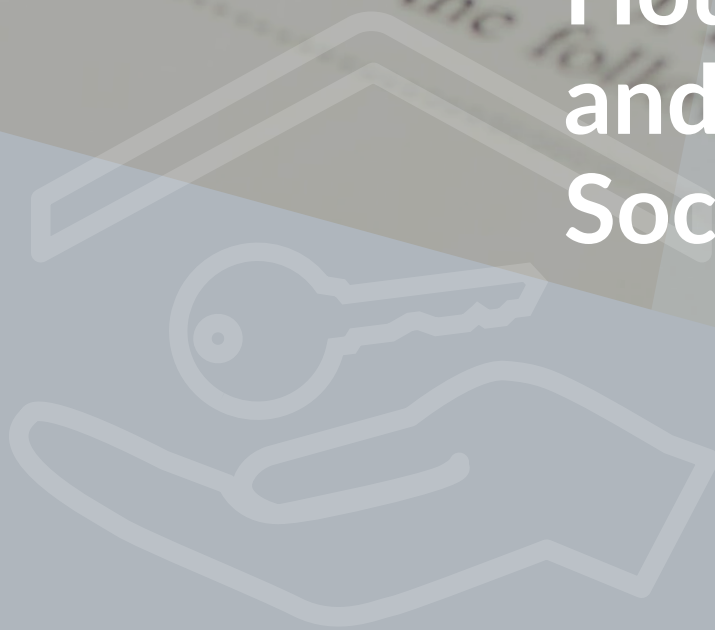




Figure 10:
Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social
Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion

2 Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion

- Work towards eradicating Homelessness by 2030.
- Increased *Housing First* Targets to 1,200 tenancies over the next five years.
- Deliver 90,000 social homes by 2030. This includes over 10,000 social housing homes each year over the next five years, with an average of 9,500 of those being new-build social homes.
- End long-term leasing through phasing out new entrants to the current leasing arrangements and focussing on new-build to provide social homes.
- Continued funding for Local Authorities to acquire additional land for new-build public housing.
- Enhanced role for Approved Housing Bodies in social housing provision.
- Strengthened *Mortgage to Rent* scheme to ensure that it meets the needs of those in long-term mortgage arrears.
- Improvements in the quality and quantity of Traveller-Specific Accommodation.
- Increasing the housing options available to older people to facilitate ageing in place, with dignity and independence.
- Deliver an appropriate range of housing and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner, which promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with a disability.
- Continued support for social inclusion through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and other social housing support programmes.



Housing policy must address the needs of socially excluded members of society. The prevalence of homelessness and the restricted options for older persons or people with a disability are among the most pressing issues of our time and we are committing in this policy to taking further action to address needs in these areas. We will increase the protections available across all tenures to ensure that those with the most pressing housing needs are supported, whilst providing the right temporary and long-term supports to ensure that people have a secure home. We will support continued implementation of the current *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021*, and actions to be identified in the successor to that strategy.

The actions in this Pathway will also contribute towards State efforts to meet Sustainable Development Goals relating to ending poverty, including Target 1.5⁶: “By 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters”, as well as other Goals where housing has a role.

2.1 Eradicate Homelessness

Reducing and preventing homelessness remains a top priority for the Government. Recognising the particular challenges of homelessness, for families and for individuals, the Government will focus its efforts on reducing the number of homeless families and individuals and work with Local Authorities, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) and

the HSE, to support people experiencing homelessness into long-term sustainable accommodation. Underpinning all elements is the criticality of inter-agency supports to address the complex combination of social, health and economic needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness, in addition to their specific housing need.

Housing for All recognises that many households experiencing homelessness have additional support needs and includes specific measures to address these needs. These include measures to engage with and support rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation, the continued expansion of the *Housing First* model, a focus on the construction and acquisition of one-bed homes, and, importantly, ensuring provision of the necessary health and mental health supports required to assist homeless people with complex needs.

The Government will establish a new National Homeless Action Committee. This will be a cross-governmental and inter-agency oversight group to ensure better coherence and coordination of homeless related services in delivering policy measures and actions. The work of the group will be informed by **Housing for All** and will oversee the implementation of the interagency elements.

The Government is committed to a housing-led approach as the primary response to all forms of homelessness. It includes the prevention of loss of existing housing. It also incorporates the provision of adequate support to

⁶<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/ff4201-17-sustainable-development-goals/>

people in their homes according to their needs and the provision of high levels of additional social housing.

There will be an emphasis on the development of emergency accommodation through Local Authority or AHB owned facilities for those who are homeless. Such developments will include the acquisition of existing properties for conversion, and land or sites to develop purpose-built facilities, using the capital funding streams available to Local Authorities and AHBs. Looking to the future, such facilities in the ownership of Local Authorities and AHBs have the scope in time to be repurposed to support social housing delivery.

People who are rough sleeping are at the sharp end of homelessness. Street Outreach Services, which will persistently engage with people who are rough sleeping, will be expanded nationwide into urban areas where rough sleeping is a concern.

The availability of social housing is one of the key factors in addressing homelessness and the availability of one-bed homes for individuals that are homeless needs to be addressed. Local Authorities will set out delivery targets, including targets for one-bed homes, in their new Housing Delivery Action Plans (see section 2.2.2) which **Housing for All** mandates them to prepare and which will be available by December 2021.

2.1.1 Support the Lisbon Declaration on Combatting Homelessness

On 21 June 2021, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, with the support of the Government, signed the 'Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness'. The Declaration commits all signatories, Ireland included, to working towards the ending of homelessness by 2030. This will now be an important national strategic goal. In **Housing for All** we are reaffirming the commitments made through the Declaration.

In signing the Declaration, Ireland has agreed to promote the prevention of homelessness, access to permanent housing and the provision of enabling support services to those who are homeless. We have confirmed that we will welcome the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of policy measures. We are committed to supporting our policy measures with adequate funding and to sharing our good practices in combatting homelessness. A new European Platform on Combatting Homelessness has been established. Ireland will actively participate in this structure. We will collaborate with other EU Member States, the European institutions as well as international organisations that support homeless persons, in working towards a shared goal of eradicating homelessness.

2.1.2 Expand *Housing First*

Housing First is a housing-led approach that enables people with a history of rough sleeping or long-term use of emergency accommodation, and with complex needs, to obtain permanent secure accommodation, with the provision of intensive supports to help them to maintain their tenancies. The *Housing First* National Implementation Plan 2018-2021 was designed to provide this response, and contains tenancy targets for each Local Authority, with an overall national target of 663 tenancies to be delivered by the end of 2021. Local Authorities are on schedule to achieve this target.

An updated National Implementation Plan will be published by year end. It will extend the programme and expand *Housing First* targets, with an aim to achieve 1,200 new *Housing First* tenancies over the next five years. This will involve an average of 240 tenancies per annum, with the specific targets for each region to be set out in the new national plan, based on analysis currently underway involving all key stakeholders. The implementation of these plans is a joint initiative of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), the Department of Health, the HSE and Local Authorities, in conjunction with NGO partners.

Housing for All recognises that prisoners and other persons convicted before the courts frequently present as homeless with high and complex support needs and that homelessness poses a significant risk for many post release. The updated National Implementation Plan will build upon the existing Dublin-based pilot scheme aimed at those from the criminal justice system by expanding the scheme nationally.

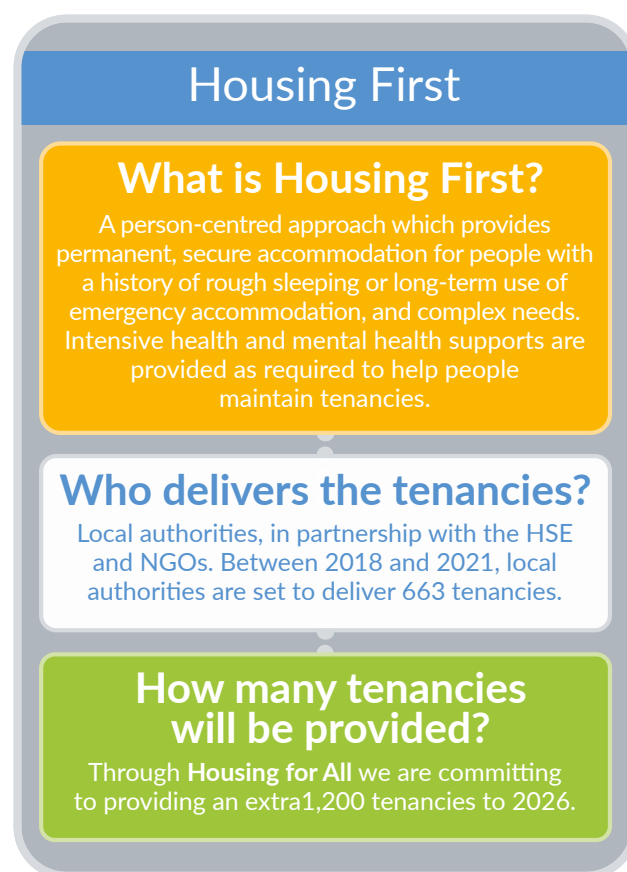


Figure 11:
Housing First

2.1.3 Support the health needs of people who are homeless

Suitable housing conditions are a key social determinant of health. Collaborative delivery of housing and health supports will ensure that no person is excluded from either housing or health support and that health support will be an integral component of settlement and a person's return to independent living.

The Government is committed to maintaining and consolidating the enhanced health service supports for homeless persons which were put in place in 2020 and 2021 in response to the pandemic. As part of the public health response to Covid-19, access to health services for people who are homeless was significantly enhanced, initially in the HSE Winter Plan and subsequently extended to cover all of 2021, with additional expenditure of €11m.

Under *Housing for All*, we will build on the co-operation and co-ordination and actions already in place and developed in minimising the impact of Covid-19 on homeless persons. These include:

- individual health care plans;
- tailored drug and alcohol treatment services; and
- mental health supports, especially for rough sleepers.

In addition, long-term funding of €4m is being provided in 2021 to provide further improvements in health services, including mental health, integrated care plans and *Housing First*.

The *Inclusion Health Model* is central to meeting the complex health needs of homeless persons. It provides a model of care that delivers integrated care for people who are homeless in primary and acute settings, in line with *Sláintecare*.

It is recognised that Traveller and Roma communities are represented amongst the homeless population. We will support continued implementation of the current *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021*, and actions to be identified in the successor to that strategy.

The Programme for Government details a number of commitments to improve health outcomes for people who are homeless. The National Drugs Strategy identifies people who are homeless as at high-risk of drug and alcohol addiction. Consistent with these, a key commitment is for the Department of Health and the HSE to work with the DHLGH to assess and commit dedicated multi-annual funding and resources to deliver the required health and mental health supports.

The Government is also committed to working collaboratively to provide enhanced and improved supports to those who require access to healthcare and addiction treatment services. An example of this is the commitment by the DHLGH to provide capital funding to Dublin Simon Community to construct a new 100 bed Medical Treatment and Recovery Facility at Ushers Island. Once constructed, a suite of core and complementary services will be delivered to respond to the need for healthcare, treatment and recovery services for homeless individuals. The Department of Health and HSE have committed to provide funding towards the ongoing operational costs of the facility.

This new facility will help to meet the Programme for Government commitment to increase the number of residential treatment beds for those stabilising, detoxing, and/or seeking drug-free services.

2.1.4 Prevent and address Family, Child and Youth Homelessness

Family homelessness has seen an appreciable reduction since 2019, but still remains a key challenge. The overriding objective is to provide homes to those households at risk of or experiencing homelessness through the various social housing supports available. In the first instance, it is critical that targeted prevention and early intervention services are provided to families and children who are at risk of homelessness. For those families and children in emergency accommodation it is critical that appropriate supports are provided in order to secure pathways out of homelessness. One notable issue that is evident concerns the length of time that some families (many with support needs requiring a multi-agency approach) spend in emergency accommodation. We will

work with Local Authorities and NGOs to identify families experiencing long-term homelessness that have complex support needs. Those that do will be provided with enhanced tenancy sustainment supports to help them exit homelessness and maintain their homes.

These further interventions will work in tandem with the continued provision of Homeless HAP. We will also build on the child and family supports and co-ordination provided through Tusla, and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) and through targeted initiatives, such as that provided through the National Childcare Scheme which supports homeless households with children to access childcare services. The DHLGH will work on a cross-departmental and agency basis and with Local Authorities and NGOs.

Supporting young people at risk of becoming homeless through strategic interventions can help avoid a cycle of longer-term homelessness. A Youth Homelessness Strategy is being prepared to be launched in early 2022.

Housing Policy Objective 3: Work towards Ending Homelessness by 2030

No.	Timeline	Lead	
3.1	Actively participate through the newly established European Platform on Combatting Homelessness to advance the Lisbon Declaration on Combatting Homelessness signed in June 2021	Ongoing	DHLGH
3.2	Establish the National Homeless Action Committee	Q4 2021	DHLGH, DoH, DCEDIY, DSP, DoJ, DoE, LAs, HSE, Tusla
3.3	Publish a new <i>Housing First</i> National Implementation Plan	Q4 2021	DHLGH, DoH, HSE, LAs
3.4	Target 1,200 new <i>Housing First</i> tenancies from 2022 to 2026	2022 to 2026	DHLGH, DoH, HSE, LAs

3.5	<i>Housing First</i> will be underpinned by the delivery of additional one-bed social housing homes	Q4 2021 and ongoing	DHLGH
3.6	Provide capital funding to develop further supported emergency accommodation for families and individuals experiencing homelessness	Q4 2021 and ongoing	DHLGH
3.7	Prepare and publish guidelines with standards for the development and refurbishment of emergency accommodation	Q2 2022	DHLGH
3.8	Issue guidance to Local Authorities on their Homeless Action Plans prepared under section 37 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009; this guidance will link directly with, and be informed by, Housing for All and reflect current policy and actions	Q4 2021	DHLGH
3.9	Support the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) to pilot a scheme to convert Local Authority and AHB owned emergency accommodation facilities to own-door permanent social housing tenancies	Q2 2022	DHLGH
3.10	Maintain Covid-19 public health measures for people who are homeless and consolidate improvements in health care delivery	Ongoing	DoH, HSE
3.11	Continue to increase access to health supports and protections for homeless individuals, with an individual health care plan to be provided for all homeless individuals that need one and improved access to mental health services	Ongoing	DoH, HSE
3.12	Finalise a model of health care for people experiencing homelessness, including a health / vulnerability assessment tool to assist in determining suitability for <i>Housing First</i> and level of support needed	Q2 2022	DoH, HSE
3.13	Strengthen integrated care pathways for people who are homeless with chronic health needs based on an inclusion health model, to achieve better health outcomes and to reduce the incidence of premature death	Ongoing	DoH, HSE
3.14	Expand the case management approach for homeless people living with drug or alcohol addiction and enhance treatment options	Q2 2022	DoH, HSE
3.15	Develop a Youth Homelessness Strategy	Q1 2022	DHLGH, DCEDIY, Tusla, LAs
3.16	Enhance family support and prevention and early intervention services for children and their families through a multiagency and coordinated response, and disseminate innovative practice	Ongoing	DCEDIY, Tusla, DHLGH, LAs
3.17	Expand Street Outreach Services to engage with rough sleepers in other key urban areas outside Dublin	Q4 2021 and ongoing	DHLGH, LAs
3.18	Identify and provide enhanced tenancy sustainment supports to families experiencing long-term homelessness to help them exit from homelessness and maintain their homes	Ongoing	DHLGH, LAs, DCEDIY, Tusla

2.2 Increase Social Housing Delivery

The Government is committed to increasing social housing delivery and will work with our delivery partners to ensure that housing is available to the most vulnerable in society. Local Authorities have a key role in the delivery of homes and targets will be set for delivery by them with new Local Authority Housing Delivery Actions Plans, setting out how they plan to deliver on the objectives of *Housing for All*.

We will roll out the largest house building programme in the history of the State by getting Local Authorities and AHBs back building at scale. Long-term leasing will be ended through phasing out new entrants with a renewed emphasis on building, not buying, social houses.

2.2.1 Deliver More Social Homes

Social housing is provided to meet the needs of low-income families across the country and is a key enabler of people moving out of homelessness. While immediate supports are available through the HAP, the Government plans to rapidly increase the numbers of houses owned by Local Authorities and Approved Housing bodies so that the most vulnerable in society will have access to a home.

The Government plans to deliver more than 90,000 social homes to 2030, with a range of delivery mechanisms being employed to get families and individuals housed as quickly as possible.

The focus of the social housing programme will be to increase the number of new-build homes, with a target to reach delivery of more than 9,500 new-build homes on average each year for the next five years to 2026.

The Government plans to deliver this through greater investment than ever before. Through the National Development Plan, the Government will fund new social homes, which will be delivered over the next five years to meet the needs of thousands of households across Ireland.

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have been significant partners in social housing delivery and have played a key role in increasing the level of new social housing in recent years. Under *Housing for All*, AHBs will have a central role, with a multi-annual focus for AHBs set out in new Local Authority Delivery Action Plans (see 2.2.2 below). Increased funding will be made available to AHBs through increases in the budget available for the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), the DHLGH will review the structure and operation of CALF to assess whether any refinements to the facility are required to support delivery of social housing by the AHB sector across a wider range of Local Authority areas. Recognising the track record of AHBs in Estate Management, we will support increased strategic partnerships between Local Authorities and AHBs to

increase the role of AHBs in providing housing management services, including through Public Private Partnership (PPP) housing developments.

Building on the successful model of social housing PPPs introduced in recent years, which is delivering in the region of 1,500 social homes across three bundles nationally between 2020 and 2024, we will increase their use to deliver social housing. The PPP model provides a delivery structure whereby social housing homes remain in State ownership throughout. The PPPs will be focussed in cities, in particular Dublin, to support the acceleration of delivery from current levels to the levels required under **Housing for All**. The PPPs will be delivered in partnership with the National Development Finance Agency and experienced tenancy management service providers such as the Approved Housing Bodies, who will provide the required management services for the PPP developments over the operating period.

In addition to the existing acquisitions under the Housing Agency Acquisitions Fund, the Government will fund Local Authorities and AHBs to acquire 200 existing properties each year to provide Local Authorities with the flexibility to provide specific housing solutions aligned with local need, which are otherwise challenging to deliver for location specific, cost, timing or design reasons.

The Government will phase out the use of current leasing models by 2025 through phasing out new entrants to the current leasing arrangements for long-

term delivery and enhanced leasing, in favour of delivery models which ensure long-term ownership of social housing homes. This will be achieved by a shift towards new-build social homes on an unprecedented scale financed by an historic capital commitment. The DHLGH will retain flexibility for Local Authorities to use short term rental availability agreements (RAS-Type) in order to accommodate people on the waiting list in the most appropriate way possible, an annual projection of 200 homes over the course of the Plan is envisaged.

The LDA will assume responsibility for the National Asset Residential Property Services DAC (NARPS) from NAMA, to provide a certain and secure base for the associated social housing which is leased to Local Authorities.

The Government will support Local Authorities to acquire additional land to deliver a housing programme, adding to their existing land banks, in line with the level of social housing to be delivered under **Housing for All** and Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans.

The *Mortgage to Rent* (MTR) scheme assists those in mortgage arrears and who are at risk of losing their homes. It is targeted at supporting households in mortgage arrears who have had their mortgage position deemed unsustainable by their lender under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), and who agree to the voluntary surrender of their home and qualify for social housing support. The property in question must also meet certain eligibility criteria. AHBs are an integral

part of the MTR scheme and their participation in the scheme has enabled and continues to enable a significant number of borrowers to remain in their homes as social housing tenants.

The Government will also strengthen the MTR Scheme to ensure that it is helping those that need it, with delivery of an average of 1,000 solutions every year. The principal improvements to the scheme are:

- An increase in the positive equity limit to better align the limits with the range of house prices across the regions;
- Updated purchase price thresholds for properties under the MTR scheme to align them with the Department's acquisition thresholds for social housing generally;
- Additional flexibility in terms of bedroom numbers for borrowers aged 65 and over or where the borrower or one of the joint borrowers or dependents has a disability and the property has had to be adapted to their needs, or the property is specifically suitable to their need without adaptations; and
- Continued oversight to ensure that properties meet private rental standards.

Given the current supply challenges, it will be necessary to continue to provide social housing in parallel via the private rental market for now to ensure that those who are most vulnerable in society can access support immediately. As new-build supply of social housing ramps up, there will be a reducing reliance on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

The State will continue to support the over 60,000 households currently in Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) supported tenancies and to provide funding to support households on social housing waiting lists to secure a HAP supported tenancy, while we increase the levels of housing stock managed by Local Authorities and AHBs.

In addition to the provision of continued support, and in order to safeguard the ability of Local Authorities to assist households source and retain accommodation in the private rented sector under the HAP scheme, the Department will analyse the need to amend the level of discretion available to Local Authorities under the scheme. This analysis will take into account the upward rent pressure seen in recent years in the rental market and the increased use of discretionary powers by Local Authorities to exceed HAP limits, with a view to ensuring adequate levels of support continue to be provided in specific areas and for specific household types. The State will also continue to support existing and new tenancies under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Housing Policy Objective 4: Increase Social Housing Delivery

No.		Timeline	Lead
4.1	Deliver over 10,000 social housing homes each year to 2030 and increase the stock of available social housing	Ongoing	DHLGH, LAs, AHBs
4.2	Enhance Local Authorities and AHBs to reach delivery of over 9,500 new build homes on average each year	Ongoing	DHLGH, LAs, AHBs
4.3	Increase the use of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to deliver social housing	From 2024	DHLGH, LAs, AHBs, NDFA
4.4	End long-term leasing of social housing by Local Authorities and AHBs through phasing out new entrants and focussing on new-build to provide social homes	End 2025	DHLGH
4.5	Support Local Authorities to acquire suitable land to deliver a housing programme, based on existing land banks, the level of social housing to be delivered under <i>Housing for All</i> and Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans	Ongoing	DHLGH
4.6	Continue to support households through the HAP and RAS Schemes while levels of social housing stock are increased	Ongoing	DHLGH
4.7	Strengthen the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) Scheme to ensure it supports those who need it	Q4 2021	DHLGH
4.8	Undertake an analytical exercise to examine whether an increase in the level of discretion available to Local Authorities under HAP is required, in order to maintain adequate levels of HAP support	Q4 2021	DHLGH
4.9	Carry out a review of the Rental Accommodation Scheme to consider the role of the Scheme in the private market, taking account of the impact of HAP and AHB participation by end 2022	Q4 2022	DHLGH
4.10	Carry out a review of the structure and operation of CALF to assess whether any refinements to the facility are required to support delivery of social housing by the AHB sector across a wider range of Local Authority areas	Q4 2022	DHLGH
4.11	Review the operation of the Housing Agency Acquisitions Fund	Q1 2022	DHLGH

2.2.2 New Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans

The Government will ensure that the ambition of **Housing for All** is translated into clear, target driven Local Authority delivery action plans. Local Authorities will be provided with multi-annual targets for social housing delivery over the lifetime of the Plan.

Housing for All outlines the enhanced level of resources that will be made available by the Government to deliver social housing. Based on all of the information available, including the resources made available under the Plan, information available from the Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) Tool and the annual Summary of Social Housing Assessments (SSHA), housing targets will be prepared and issued to Local Authorities following the publication of **Housing for All**.

No later than December 2021, Local Authorities will develop and submit to the Minister their Housing Delivery Action Plans covering the next five years. The HNDA Framework and associated tools and data repository are available to inform this work. These Action Plans will be consistent with the relevant adopted Development Plan for that area and any associated environmental assessments. The Plans will set out details on how and when Local Authorities will deliver their housing targets, including the delivery of affordable homes, in the following areas:

- The alignment of the Housing Delivery Action Plan with the National Planning Framework, in particular compact growth objectives;
 - An outline of locations where housing will be delivered (e.g. towns, villages, urban areas, rural areas, etc.) and the planned numbers of homes to be delivered in each area and by year;
 - Details of existing land holdings and land acquisition required to deliver the targets in the Plan;
 - An outline of planned delivery streams used to meet the targets, including the role of the Approved Housing Bodies / LDA or other partners with a focus on delivery through new build;
 - An assessment of housing types and sizes, in accordance with local need, including
 - the adequate proportion of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4- bedroom homes aligned with those needs
 - the provision of housing for people with a disability and
 - the provision of Age Friendly Housing
- and;
- Targets for the use of vacant properties as social housing through Buy and Renew, Construction and Repair and Leasing schemes.

In recognition of the proportion of new housing required across all tenures in the Dublin region, the Dublin Housing Delivery Group (DHDG) has been set up to coordinate and drive delivery of social and affordable housing in the region. The DHDG is led by the four Dublin Local Authority Chief Executives,

who will prepare the Housing Delivery Action Plans for the four Dublin Local Authorities, with support from the DHLGH and Housing Delivery Coordination Office (HDCO). The DHDG will furnish quarterly reports to the Minister setting out progress against the Action Plans.

Housing Policy Objective 4: Increase Social Housing Delivery

No.		Timeline	Lead
4.12	Local Authorities will prepare Housing Delivery Action Plans to include social and affordable housing delivery	December 2021	LAs

2.3 Reform the Social Housing System

Social housing performs a key function in society, ensuring that households, who do not have sufficient resources to meet their housing needs, are provided with social housing supports. The DHLGH is tasked with ensuring that there is a framework for providing housing supports that are flexible and responsive to people's current and future needs. It is a priority to ensure that the system efficiently delivers social housing supports that are fair, sustainable, and prioritise those most in need.

The social housing waiting list stood at 89,872 households in 2013, rising to 91,600 in 2016 but declining to 61,880 in 2020. The Government plans to reach delivery of an average of over 10,000 social housing homes every year for the next five years and we will continue to

build social housing right out to 2030. Given the current supply challenges, it will be necessary to continue to provide social housing via the private rental market for now to ensure that those who are most vulnerable in society can access support immediately. As new-build supply of social housing ramps up, there will be a reducing reliance on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Given the waiting lists for social housing, it is appropriate that ongoing review and reform takes place to ensure that social housing supports are targeted appropriately and managed efficiently. There is also a need to ensure that the interests of current tenants in social housing are protected and that a fair and equitable system is in place to respond to their needs.

2.3.1 Reform Differential Rents

Local Authority tenants pay a differential rent, which is set by reference to household income. There are 32 differential rent schemes in operation across 31 Local Authorities, which means that Local Authority tenants in different areas on similar incomes do not pay the same rents. This can lead to unfairness. For example, in 2018, the median rent paid by tenants in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown was 63% higher than their counterparts in nearby South Dublin, and the median rent paid by tenants in Carlow was 13% higher than tenants in the neighbouring county of Laois. We will reform the differential rents system and will introduce a national scheme that will standardise differential rents across the country to ensure fairness. Proposals are currently in development regarding the type of model to be adopted. Support will be provided by the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) where necessary.

2.3.2 Reform Tenant Purchase Scheme

Local Authority tenants can seek to purchase the property they live in if they meet the criteria set out in the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme 2016. The Government will maintain the right of social housing tenants to purchase their own home and change income eligibility to allow older tenants to buy their homes if they have the means. It will also be required that tenants have been in situ for 10 years. The maximum discount will be reduced to a maximum of 25%. This will

ensure that we strike a balance between enabling tenants to purchase their homes and replenishment of the social housing stock to make homes available for those on the waiting list.

2.3.3 Roll Out of Choice Based Letting for Social Housing

Choice Based Letting (CBL) is a method whereby available social housing stock is let by being openly advertised by Local Authorities to persons on the social housing waiting list. This allows qualified applicants to 'register an interest' in available homes. While many housing authorities have adopted CBL, it is not yet in operation in all Local Authorities. The DHLGH is working with the Local Authority sector, through the Local Government Management Association (LGMA) and the County and City Managers Association (CCMA) to progress this and funding has been made available in 2021 to encourage Local Authorities to adopt this method of letting. The Department will continue to work with Local Authorities who do not yet have CBL to progress the standardisation of the CBL systems in place across Local Authorities.

2.3.4 Review & Reform Income Eligibility for Social Housing

The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for eligibility for social housing supports in each Local Authority area. Different income bands exist in different areas, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy (HMP). The thresholds for the three bands are currently set at €35,000 (Band 1), €30,000 (Band 2) and €25,000 (Band 3).

As part of the review, the efficiency of the banding model and its application to Local Authorities will be considered. Equivalisation as between singles and families will also be considered. The review will also have regard to new initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and Cost Rental detailed in Pathway 1 and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

2.3.5 Examine Regulation of Social Housing

Current social housing tenants have existing rights under the Housing Acts 1966-2019 and the provisions of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 apply to all Local Authority dwellings. While social housing is regulated under the above Acts, private rental tenancies are regulated under Residential Tenancies legislation and the private sector benefits from a Rental Sector Regulator, which is the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). It is intended to establish a Commission on Housing later this year and the Commission will be tasked with examining whether the social housing sector requires independent regulation and to make recommendations to the Minister.

Housing Policy Objective 5:

Reform the Social Housing System and support Social Housing Tenants

No.		Timeline	Lead
5.1	Reform the differential rents system and introduce a national scheme, which will standardise differential rents across the country to ensure fairness	Q1 2022	DHLGH
5.2	Review the Tenant Purchase Scheme and bring forward changes through legislation	Q4 2021	DHLGH
5.3	Roll out Choice Based Letting (CBL) across all Local Authorities	Ongoing	DHLGH
5.4	Review income eligibility for social housing	Q4 2021	DHLGH
5.5	Task the Commission on Housing to examine the potential for independent regulation of the social housing sector	Q4 2021	DHLGH

2.4 Support Social Inclusion

The core aims of our social inclusion policy are to:

- Increase the housing options available to older people to facilitate ageing in place with dignity and independence;
- Deliver an appropriate range of housing and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner, which promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with a disability;
- Provide high quality Traveller-specific accommodation solutions;
- Provide accommodation for and integration into the community of Programme Refugees and those granted status under the International Protection Process; and
- Support inclusion through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and other housing supports.

2.4.1 Expand the Housing Options for Older Persons

Under *Housing for All*, we will increase the housing options available to older people to facilitate ageing in place with dignity and independence, including policies and operational supports for older people considering right-sizing to smaller housing homes. We will be informed in this regard by the work of the national *Implementation Group on the Housing Options for our Ageing Population Policy Statement*⁷ and its reports.

With the assistance and co-operation of the Department of Health and HSE, the Government will work to ensure that older people are supported to stay in their homes and communities for as long as possible, fulfilling the Programme for Government vision of an age friendly Ireland in which older people can live long and healthy lives, participate in their communities and have a range of housing options and health supports to make this possible.

It is imperative that we plan for our ageing population. Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans (see section 2.2.2) will set out how dedicated social housing provision appropriate to the needs of older people will be delivered, matching the scale and extent of housing need for older people identified. This will focus specifically on delivery of housing appropriately sized and located for older people (drawing on a GIS mapping tool being designed) and working with the existing network of Age Friendly Technical Advisors.

Local Authorities must also consider the needs of older people in the wider planning process. In this regard, the new HNDA Framework, published in April 2021, specifically requires consideration of the housing needs of older people. The evidence considered in the HNDA is then used when making Local Authority Housing Strategies as part of the Development Plan process, thereby ensuring that the planning process fully considers how to provide for the housing needs of the ageing population.

⁷<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ea33c1-housing-options-for-our-ageing-population-policy-statement/>

We must also work to deliver housing for older people in line with Age Friendly and Universal Design principles. The Age Friendly Homes website⁸, a joint initiative of the DHLGH, DoH, the Housing Agency and Age Friendly Ireland, provides a central hub for resources, guidance and information on the provision of homes for older people – from Local Authorities and AHBs to architects, other construction professionals and the wider public. This website will be further developed to encourage those involved in the provision of homes for older people to think more closely about the needs of our citizens as we grow older.

We will review the existing grant programmes to assist older people to live independently. Among the options older people may wish to consider, are possibilities of adapting homes in

versatile ways to suit future needs, while also supporting efficient use of existing stock across the State. These innovative forms of housing redesign and re-organisation not only provide financial benefits but can also provide a sense of security and community for the older homeowners. We will support pilot schemes in this regard.

As the work of the Implementation Group on Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy statement reaches its conclusion, we will work with all of the stakeholders, and particularly the Department of Health and the Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service, to develop a new co-operation and co-ordination framework, nationally and locally, and implement Housing Options for Our Ageing Population actions and the new actions set out here.



⁸www.agefriendlyhomes.ie

Housing Policy Objective 6:

Increase and improve housing options for Older People

No.		Timeline	Lead
6.1	Continue to support the development of the Age Friendly Homes portal and website, which promotes awareness of age friendly housing	Ongoing	DHLGH, DoH, Age Friendly Ireland, Housing Agency
6.2	Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans will set out how dedicated social housing provision appropriate to the needs of older people will be delivered matching the scale and extent of housing need for older people identified	Q4 2021	LAs
6.3	Local Authorities will consider the housing needs of older people through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Framework and feed that into their Housing Strategies as part of their Development Plan process	Ongoing	LAs
6.4	Review the range of housing grants for the suitable adaptation of existing housing	Q4 2021	DHLGH
6.5	Continue delivery of the Age Friendly housing and public realm training modules to cross sectoral stakeholders to promote greater awareness and foster knowledge transfer across the sector	Ongoing	DHLGH, DoH, Age Friendly Ireland
6.6	Support pilots of innovative forms of housing redesign/ reorganisation to deliver additional rental accommodation supply along with support for older homeowners	Ongoing	DHLGH
6.7	Implement the actions under the Housing Options for our Ageing Population Policy Statement, having regard to the Reports of the National Implementation Group	Ongoing	DHLGH, DoH

2.4.2 Increase Housing Supports for People with a Disability

The 2016 Census tells us that 643,131 people or one in seven of the population in Ireland has a disability.

Delivering an appropriate range of housing types and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner, is critically important in order to promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with a disability.

The current National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability will come to an end in 2021 and work is already advanced on a new strategy, building on the progress made to date. The strategy and implementation plan will represent a roadmap to facilitate access, for people with a disability, to a range of housing and related support services, delivered in an integrated and sustainable manner, and promoting equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living.

Under the guiding principle of **Housing for All** and underpinned by the new Strategy, we must work to deliver appropriately designed and specified housing for people with a disability, in line with the vision and principles of universal design.

Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans will set out how dedicated social housing provision for people with a disability will be delivered by themselves and social housing delivery partners, matching the scale and extent of housing

need identified, and having regard to forecasts in the Department of Health's July 2021 Disability Capacity Review.

Local Authorities must also consider the needs of people with a disability in the wider planning process. In this regard, the new HNDA Framework, referenced above, also specifically requires consideration of the housing needs of people with a disability. The evidence garnered through the HNDA process on disability can then be used when making Local Authority Housing Strategies as part of the Development Plan process, thereby ensuring that the planning process fully considers how to provide for the housing needs of people with a disability.

Together with the Department of Health, the DHLGH will continue to support the transition of people with a disability from congregated settings to community-based living, in particular by providing continued funding through the Capital Assistance Scheme (see section 2.4.5).

For those living with a disability, the co-ordination of appropriately adapted housing provision with the delivery of key health and social care supports is particularly important. Strengthening and supporting such co-ordination frameworks will be a particular focus of the new national housing strategy for people with a disability.

Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs) have been established in each local authority area. Chaired by the Director of Service for Housing, they consist of representation from the HSE

(both Mental Health and Disability), Approved Housing Bodies operating in the area, and representatives from organisations dealing with different types of disability, including physical, mental health, sensory and intellectual disabilities. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability, emphasis has been placed on the key need to include Disabled Persons' organisations. The HDSGs are responsible for the implementation of national policy on

disability and housing at local level and the development and implementation of Local Strategic Plans.

To strengthen their mandate and further develop inter-agency implementation partnership, we will require HDSGs to report quarterly, both to the Chief Executive of the Local Authority and to the Housing Strategic Policy Committees, regarding progress on implementing their local strategic plans and the applicable elements of Local Authority Housing Delivery Plans.

Housing Policy Objective 7:

Increase and improve housing options and supports for people with a disability

No.		Timeline	Lead
7.1	Deliver a new National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2022 – 2027) following stakeholder and public consultation and with a range of actions which will detail co-ordination and alignment of housing, health and community supports	Q4 2021	DHLGH, DoH
7.2	Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans will set out how dedicated social housing provision appropriate to the needs of people with a disability will be delivered matching the scale and extent of housing need identified for people with a disability	Q4 2021	LAs
7.3	Local Authorities will consider the housing needs of people with a disability through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Framework and feed that into their Housing Strategies as part of their Development Plan process	Ongoing	LAs
7.4	Review the range of housing grants available to assist with meeting specific housing needs, including the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, and implement relevant changes	Q4 2021	DHLGH
7.5	Nominate Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisors in each Local Authority	Q4 2021	LAs
7.6	Housing and Disability Steering Groups will report quarterly on the implementation of their local strategic plans regarding housing for people with a disability to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Policy Committee	Q1 2022	DHLGH, LAs

2.4.3 Support Traveller Accommodation

Addressing Traveller accommodation needs is a priority. In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, Local Authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. The TAPs currently in place across all 31 Local Authority areas cover the period 2019-2024.

The Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist Local Authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding. A Traveller specific new-build accommodation pipeline is being developed by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies. The Local Authorities will continue to support the travelling community through dedicated Traveller Accommodation Liaison Officers and Social Worker posts, and the management and maintenance of existing halting sites and group housing scheme accommodation, the financial support for which increased by 50% in 2021.

An annual count/estimate of Traveller households is carried out by Local Authorities. The most recent audited count (2019) indicates that there were just under 11,000 Traveller households in the State, 78% of whom live in standard accommodation. This includes:

- 53 % in Local Authority or approved housing body tenancies;
- 18% in supported tenancies in the private rental sector ;
- 7% in accommodation provided by Travellers from their own resources; and
- 22% of Travellers live in Traveller specific accommodation, broken down as follows:
 - 8% within group housing schemes
 - 9% on authorised halting sites and
 - 5% on unauthorised halting sites

In response to the global pandemic the Department made funding available to Local Authorities to implement measures in relation to Traveller-specific accommodation to help alleviate, where possible, the risk from and spread of Covid-19. This allowed for the purchase of additional mobile homes, touring caravans and demountable dwellings and the development of temporary sites to alleviate overcrowding and facilitate isolation, as required. We will work with Local Authorities to retain and build on the improvements made during the pandemic.

The DHLGH has established a Programme Board to oversee implementation of recommendations of the Expert Group Report on Traveller Accommodation. The Programme Board has already met and agreed a work programme for 2021.

The DHLGH will develop a new and improved preferential caravan loan scheme, initially on a pilot basis in four Local Authorities in 2021, with a view to a full national rollout in 2022. This has the potential to significantly increase the quality and comfort levels of the accommodation available to Travellers living on halting sites.

Housing Policy Objective 8:

Increase and Improve accommodation for the Traveller Community

No.		Timeline	Lead
8.1	Work with Local Authorities and AHBs to improve the quality and quantity of delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation	Ongoing	DHLGH, LAs, AHBs
8.2	Introduce a new preferential Caravan Loan Scheme on a pilot basis in four Local Authorities in 2021 with a view to a full national rollout in 2022	Q4 2021	DHLGH, LAs
8.3	Prioritise the implementation of recommendations contained within the Traveller Accommodation Expert Group Report	Ongoing	DHLGH
8.4	Prioritise implementation of the recommendations of the 'Independent Review of the Role of Social Workers and Personnel Employed by Local Authorities Specifically to Assist Travellers with their Accommodation Needs'	Ongoing	DHLGH
8.5	Explore with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) the feasibility of an all island approach to the provision of a network of Transient Sites across the island of Ireland	Q1 2022	DHLGH, NIHE

2.4.4 Support International Protection and Refugee Accommodation

Local Authorities played a central role in the successful first round of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, with 2,871 persons (571 families) accommodated across 23 counties. Local Authorities will agree national spatial distributions for the accommodation of the 2,900 refugees under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme 2020-2023 and will source and provide accommodation, as well as supporting integration of refugees and their families into local communities.

Local Authorities, the DHLGH, and agencies under its remit, will also support the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) in its implementation of the *White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection*

Support Service policy proposals and the IRPP Programme 2020-2023.

In relation to the White Paper, The Housing Agency will provide expert advice on sourcing, delivery and management of accommodation. Local Authorities will work to agree a national spatial distribution key for accommodation and will also play an important role in community and service access integration. Applicants for International Protection who are granted status may become eligible for social housing and will be assisted by Local Authorities in this regard.

Local Authorities and The Housing Agency will be supported by DCEDIY with the resources required to carry out the work arising from implementation of the provisions of the White Paper and the IRPP 2020-2023.

Housing Policy Objective 9:

Provide housing and supports to facilitate community integration for Refugees

No.		Timeline	Lead
9.1	Local Authorities will agree a national spatial distribution key with DCEDIY for the accommodation of the 2,900 refugees under IRPP 2020-2023. They will also source and provide accommodation and support integration of the new arrivals under the IRPP through the ongoing work of the existing county wide interagency working groups	Q4 2021	LAs, DCEDIY
9.2	Local Authorities, DHLGH, and its agencies, including The Housing Agency, will support DCEDIY as appropriate in implementation of the provisions of the White Paper and IRPP 2020-2023	Ongoing	DHLGH, Housing Agency, DCEDIY

2.4.5 Continue the Capital Assistance Scheme

The housing and accommodation needs of a range of vulnerable individuals and families, whether permanent housing or temporary/emergency needs, are also supported through funding provided under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), as well as through other social housing delivery programmes. CAS brings together the local strategic leadership of the Local Authorities with the skills and commitment of AHBs and other NGOs. The supports for such individuals and families are also coordinated with a range of Departments and Agencies such as HSE and Tusla.

Funding under CAS has grown in recent years and in 2021 stands at €96m. This funding supports priority areas such as age-friendly housing, accommodation for individuals and families who are homeless and housing for people with a disability. The work of Local Authorities, AHBs and NGOs in these important areas is coordinated with Age Friendly Ireland’s Technical Advisors, with Joint Consultative Homeless Fora and with

Housing and Disability Steering Groups (HDSGs) working across all 31 Local Authority areas.

In the last few years, the Department has also used CAS to support other important and emerging areas of housing need delivered by AHBs, involving coordination on the ground with the HSE, Tusla and others. This has included the development of new refuges for victims of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence, housing for care leavers (people exiting State care at the age of 18), de-congregation (people with a disability are being enabled to move from large institutions (congregated settings) to their own homes in the community with the support they need, thereby enabling people to ‘live ordinary lives in ordinary places’) and returning emigrants (assisting qualifying emigrants to help them explore secure housing options and to assist in their return home, primarily to social housing schemes back in their native areas). As such, this scheme performs a very important function in directly funding housing for the most vulnerable of sectors of society.

Housing Policy Objective 10:
Provide Capital Assistance Scheme funding to improve social inclusion

No.		Timeline	Lead
10.1	Provide capital funding for further development of housing for the specific vulnerable cohorts eligible for CAS funding, in alignment with support services provided through State agencies and NGOs	Ongoing	DHLGH