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Homeless in Europe

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**More Than Just a
Roof Over Your Head:
Housing Options for
Homeless People
in Europe**



FEANTSA

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More Than Just a Roof Over Your Head: Housing Options for Homeless People in Europe

Lack of affordable, accessible, secure housing of adequate quality is a defining feature of homelessness. In order to tackle homelessness, it is therefore necessary to understand the central role housing provision and housing policy play in pathways into and out of homelessness.¹

Housing is becoming an increasingly 'hot topic' within the European Union (EU). Housing markets were a critical factor in the onset of the crisis in 2008. Several of the EU's housing markets have experienced dramatic boom and bust cycles in recent years, with serious implications for homelessness and housing exclusion. The European Commission is now monitoring some house price developments in the framework of the European Semester,² with a view to fostering more stability and balance. Housing affordability is a major and growing challenge in many European Member States. EU-SILC data shows that the proportion of households reporting being overburdened by housing costs in the bottom income quintile increased in the EU-27 from 30.9% in 2008 to 35.2% in 2012. Social housing policies in many Member States are under pressure. Finances are strained and waiting lists are growing in many cases. The implementation of EU competition law has led to cases on state aid with interesting implications for the definition and functioning of social housing in some countries such as the Netherlands. There are also new opportunities at EU level to invest in the social role of housing, for example through Cohesion policy and the recently announced Juncker Commission 315 billion €

investment programme. This makes this edition of *Homeless in Europe* a timely occasion to explore the relationship between homelessness and housing in the EU. Analysing this relationship includes looking at the double-edged role housing markets can have in generating as well combating homelessness, understanding homeless people's housing needs and exploring links with neighbouring sectors such as social housing.

The right to housing is a fundamental right. Homelessness is thus a rights violation. The lack of a home also prevents individuals from exercising other fundamental rights.

Housing-related support to homeless people can include help to access housing and/or the provision of ongoing support once someone is rehoused. There is more and more movement towards housing as a first step in solutions to homelessness, rather than an end goal. The term 'housing-led' was developed by the jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (2010) to describe all policy responses to homelessness that increase and speed up access to permanent housing and increase capacity for prevention and the provision of adequate support to people in their homes, according to their needs. There is increasing consensus amongst stakeholders at European, national, regional and local levels that 'housing-led' approaches to tackling homelessness are particularly effective.

1 Housing on the FEANTSA website <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique25&lang=en>

2 European Semester http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/making-it-happen/index_en.htm

3 Stephen Gaetz, Tanya Gulliver, & Tim Richter, "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014" http://calgaryhomeless.com/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Homelessness_2014.pdf

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like to give you the chance to comment on any of the articles which have appeared in this issue. If you would like to share your ideas, thoughts and feedback, please send an email to the editor, suzannah.young@feantsa.org.



«Homelessness may not be only a housing problem, but it is always a housing problem; housing is necessary, although sometimes not sufficient, to solve the problem of homelessness.»³ This issue of *Homeless in Europe* magazine explores different issues surrounding the provision of housing and related services for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness as a sustainable and empowering solution to homelessness.

Cooperation between the social housing and homeless sectors can help stem the tide of homelessness and housing exclusion caused by an affordable housing crisis. Marc Calon, Housing Europe President, discusses how to tackle and prevent housing exclusion through joined-up working and the provision of housing-led responses.

The Housing First model of service provision is a proven social innovation in the field of homelessness. It is an example of a housing-led intervention. Joanne Bretherton and Nicholas Pleace from the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York, UK, explore the ongoing debates about Housing First in Europe and discuss the outcomes of increasing amounts of research carried out into the effectiveness of the approach.

Experiences of homelessness and housing are broadly different for women and men and needs in housing allocation can differ for these groups. Elvira Loibl, Marlene Schagerl and Elisabeth Corazza of Caritas Archdiocese Vienna – Emergency Assistance, Austria,

working on gender-mainstreaming approaches to homeless services, argue that housing allocation and specifications should be adapted to the needs of their potential users, in this case women whose housing needs are different from those of their male counterparts.

It is sometimes observed that in order to provide housing-led solutions to homelessness, housing units must be available in the first place. Working in a context where housing supply is stretched can be challenging. Kathleen McKillion, Director of Operations at the Irish Council for Social Housing looks at the specific experience of trying to provide a housing supply-led approach to tackle homelessness following the recent property crash in Ireland. She analyses Government responses to the situation and considers the role of the non-profit housing association sector in meeting ever-increasing housing demand.

Innovative approaches to providing decent housing can also be a way to provide education and training to (young) people experiencing housing exclusion. Carl Ditchburn, CEO of Community Campus 87 Ltd in the UK describes the provision of housing and support services that help people at risk of homelessness to access and sustain tenancies, as well as the project's related 'Keyskills training programme' that provides a range of education, employment and volunteering opportunities and links to the community.

FEANTSA would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this issue of the magazine.



Housing-Led Approaches to Combat Homelessness: The Response of the European Affordable Housing Providers to the Ongoing Housing Crisis

By **Marc Calon**,¹ *President, Housing Europe, Europe*

The global financial crisis that was triggered by property bubbles has pushed all housing related problems, that were camouflaged for years behind the self-regulation of the market, to the surface. The bubbles burst and forced housing onto the political agenda, since the consequences took the form of a snowball effect, creating a series of socio-economic problems, most of which are still awaiting adequate solutions. Housing Europe has identified these problems that are interlinked as well as their causes and has been constantly trying to provide concrete responses through its member organisations and their partners at local level.

HOMELESSNESS

According to a study by the European Commission Employment and Social Affairs DG, homelessness has been on the rise during the crisis, at least in those countries where official data are available. The countries that were hit harder by the crisis, like Greece, Italy and Spain but also Central European countries like Hungary have been facing the biggest challenges in terms of homelessness ever since. Certain social groups such as migrants and young people have been affected the most.²

In July 2011, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on a European Union (EU) homelessness strategy³ that was followed up by a second one in January 2014.⁴ Housing Europe backed this initiative, stating in a press release that followed the adoption of the resolution that “there is plenty of evidence that housing-led approaches are the most cost effective response to the growing number of homeless people across Europe”.⁵

EMPTY HOMES AND ENDLESS WAITING LISTS

A recent survey published in the *Guardian* illustrated the major issue of empty homes in Europe in a very clear way. Figures gathered by the paper show that almost 11 million homes remain empty across the continent, a situation that the British newspaper calls “a scandal”. “In Spain, for instance, more than

3.4m homes lie vacant, while 2m are empty in France and Italy, 1.8m in Germany, 735,000 in Portugal, more than 700,000 in the UK and an estimated 300-400,000 in Greece. [...] Many of these homes are in vast holiday resorts built in the feverish housing boom in the run up to the 2007-08 financial crisis and have never been occupied.”⁶

Although many of these units have been constructed in locations with low demand, far from employment opportunities, Housing Europe strongly believes that an evaluation is needed to assess the potential of turning these empty homes into social housing to address growing needs. The role of social intermediaries is crucial, so that this process can indeed be completed. Public, Social, or Cooperative housing organisations, the private sector and local authorities should be working closely together in this direction. In Athens, for example, the first ‘Social Apartment Building’ has opened its doors thanks to a private initiative by an NGO that has been working closely with the Municipality of Athens.

At the same time, the number of people on waiting lists for a social home keeps growing in many EU countries. According to UK government data, there are more than 1.8 million households waiting for social housing in England. This is an estimated increase of 81% since 1997. *L’Union Social pour l’habitat* reports 1.7 million applications for social housing in France in 2014. The need for local authority housing in Ireland has increased by 75% since 2008 (passing from 56,000 applicants to 98,000). The need seems to be the most critical in capital and global cities where the housing markets are stretched. There were close to 550,000 people registered on the waiting lists in greater Paris (Ile-de-France) in 2013. In 2012, there were 354,000 households on the waiting lists in greater London.

The situation is not a lot better for those who have a place to stay either. More than 25.7 million people in the EU are in a situation of severe housing deprivation, which means that they are experiencing overcrowding

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2 <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9847&langId=en>

3 www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B7-2011-475&language=EN

4 www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P7-RC-2014-0008&language=EN&utm_source=hootsuite&utm_campaign=hootsuite

5 www.housingeurope.eu/resource-147/bringing-an-eu-homelessness-strategy-back-on-track

6 www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/23/europe-11m-empty-properties-enough-house-homeless-continent-twice/print



and poor quality of the dwelling at the same time. Additionally, according to Eurostat, 12.2% of European households and 39.1% of those with income below 60% of median equalised income, spend more than 40% of their disposable income on housing and they are considered thus as 'overburdened' by housing costs, i.e. what they have to pay for housing is too much compared to what they can afford.

THE QUESTION OF FINANCE

The above mentioned European Parliament Report also addresses financial issues. Housing Europe shares the views expressed regarding the "reform of the banking sector in such a way that it meets the needs of society by banning home foreclosures for unpaid mortgages". Protection of mortgage consumers and the reform of the banking sector were two of the main points that our organisation put on the table during an exchange with Commissioner Mimica, responsible for Consumer Policy.

Housing Europe, working alongside Finance Watch, has initiated an open public dialogue on Housing Finance. An international conference that took place in Brussels on November 5th 7 is just the beginning of an ongoing exchange among decision makers and stakeholders that will lead to concrete policy proposals that can tackle the issue of the lack of finance in some Member States.

CREATING A SAFETY NET

Affordable housing organisations across the EU have taken their share of responsibility and have established a twofold way of working that on the one hand aims at tackling the alarming issues identified above and on the other attempts to 'immunise' themselves against similar future problems. Besides providing homes, the sector is capable of stimulating employment and of contributing to the prevention of social exclusion. Housing Europe and its member organisations have been taking part in two large-scale European projects that bring together multiple partners and offer the chance for extensive action and exchange of best practices.

The International Union of Tenants, Housing Europe and DELPHIS (French network of housing providers) recently succeeded in finalising a twofold voluntary agreement under the European Responsible Housing Initiative (ERHIN) that implements the main Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles into the affordable housing sector.⁸ A Code of Conduct for housing providers and a European Declaration were signed by EU stakeholders in the sector. Affordable housing providers agree on clear principles for long term investment in building construction and renovation, neighbourhoods, human resources, and fair relations with stakeholders, particularly the tenants. Through the European Declaration, housing stakeholders call for the development of CSR in public, cooperative and social housing. At the same time the first edition of the European Responsible Housing Awards for which more than 70 organisations from 12 EU countries competed, showcased numerous best practices that are already in place in many Member States and make daily life in local communities better.

Another hands-on scheme that involves affordable housing providers is the European Core Learning Outcomes for Integration of Support and Housing (ELOSH) scheme,⁹ a platform that contributes to the fight against housing exclusion of groups with support needs by improving cooperation between social services workers and housing staff. ELOSH aims at transferring innovative learning outcomes and specific training material on housing and integrated support to tailor-made training at local level in 7 EU Member States. Training modules are produced in cooperation with citizens to make them identify what services they indeed need.

THE KEY...

The affordable housing sector has the experience, the expertise and the people to be among the driving forces for change in the landscape regarding homelessness. The key to unlock their full potential lies in the hands of decision makers who should provide the sector with better tools and above all a decent, stable framework within which it can fulfil its mission.

"The affordable housing sector has the experience, the expertise and the people to be among the driving forces for change in the landscape regarding homelessness."

7 www.housingeurope.eu/event-326/housing-finance-property-bubbles-or-social-ecological-resilience

8 www.responsiblehousing.eu/en/

9 www.elosh.eu



The Debates about Housing First in Europe

By **Joanne Bretherton**,¹ *Research Fellow* and **Nicholas Pleace**,²
Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, UK

“Within Europe, the successes of Housing First [in the US and Canada] appear to have been repeated.”

Housing First is the leading source of discussion, debate, innovation and argument in current homelessness policy. A series of evaluations in the USA were interpreted by many as proving that a new, housing-led, service model could be highly effective in ending long-term and repeated homelessness.

Successes with long-term and recurrently homeless people with complex needs have been achieved by other service models. However, Housing First has been able to successfully house far more of these populations than other service models, typically sustaining housing for between eight or nine out of every ten people it works with.

Not only this, but alongside reducing the human costs of this most extreme form of poverty and exclusion among very vulnerable people, Housing First may also save money. Someone who is stably housed, registered with a doctor and who has access to welfare and social supports, may be less likely to use emergency services, ranging from shelters through to emergency medical and psychiatric services, and may get into less trouble with the Police than when they were homeless. Even in contexts where Housing First is not necessarily any cheaper, there is some evidence to suggest it achieves more for the same or a very similar level of spending.

Housing First has become a core component of Federal homelessness policy in the USA. In Canada, Housing First has also taken a central role in national homelessness policy, following the successes of the At Home/Chez Soi project.

Within Europe, the successes of Housing First appear to have been repeated. The Finnish homelessness strategy has seen sustained reductions in long-term homelessness among people with high support needs, with the Paavo 1 and Paavo 2 programmes drawing both on Finnish innovation and reflecting some of the ideas from the American Housing First movement. Success has been reported following evaluations of Housing First services in Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Lisbon and from our own work on the Camden Housing First pilot in London, with Housing First projects ranging from full-scale programmes down to very small pilot projects all being very successful at ending homelessness. Initial indications from the DIHAL French Housing First pilots are also positive.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Housing First has been the evidence of consistent effectiveness in very diverse situations. The *Housing First Europe* project led by our colleague Volker Busch-Geertsema of GISS Bremen showed that Housing First was delivering remarkably similar levels of success in cities as diverse as Copenhagen and Lisbon.

Yet Housing First has raised both expectations and anxieties in both North America and Europe. It is a misrepresentation to suggest that Housing First now dominates all aspects of US homelessness services, or that everyone agrees that the Housing First is the most effective way to reduce long term and recurrent homelessness. There are American academics and service providers who raise serious questions about Housing First. In the US, some argue the ‘hardest to reach’ homeless people are not really targeted by Housing First services and raise questions about what happens to the minority of long-term homeless people that Housing First services seem unable successfully to work with. For some researchers, the evidence base for Housing First is not all it could be. There are few, if any, evaluations that meet the same rigorous standards as are used to evaluate medical treatments, for example.

Equally, it has been argued in the USA that Housing First achieves less than some other approaches. The argument here is that while often delivering housing stability, there is less evidence supporting the idea that Housing First leads to improvements in social integration and community participation and health and well-being, and also criticism that the mechanism by which successful housing is supposed to lead to other gains in well-being is not well defined in the Housing First approach.

Much of what is provided in terms of homelessness services in the USA is not Housing First. Instead a mix of other service models, including much more traditional services, are still in place.

One European concern is that the approach is American, developed in a country that is very different from much of Europe. Cecilia Hansen-Löfstrand and Kirsi Juhila, writing in the *European Journal of Homelessness* in 2012 (“The Discourse of Consumer Choice in the Pathways Housing First Model”), questioned whether Housing First actually truly wanted to give choice and control to people to end long-term

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homelessness, or whether it still saw their behaviour and characteristics as something that needed to be 'corrected', rather than following a client-led or personalisation focused model of service delivery.

There are also political concerns about Housing First in Europe. Some homelessness service providers are worried that Housing First might be used as a justification for closing down and cutting homelessness services, a concern our work in Ireland in 2012 and 2013 found, with similar concerns being raised by service providers in France. Many existing services in Northern Europe are specialised, communal and congregate services offering carefully designed services and there are concerns that this will be replaced by cheaper Housing First models, including services that are far too under-resourced to be regarded as examples of Housing First, but which might be presented as Housing First by unscrupulous politicians trying to hide spending cuts by saying they were providing an 'innovative' alternative in the form of Housing First.

Our work in the last four years has discussed the issue of whether or not Housing First is a single, coherent, service model. There are, for example, both communal/congregate models, in which homeless people are supported by on-site staff in a single site complex, and scattered housing models, using ordinary apartments and mobile support teams, both of which call themselves Housing First. There are also other variations, such as using small, shared houses or apartments containing a few long-term and recurrently homeless people, again calling themselves Housing First. In addition, while some Housing First services have assertive community treatment teams, including dedicated psychiatrists and drug/alcohol workers and nurses, and intensive case management teams, many offer only intensive case management services.

Depending on which version of Housing First one is talking about, another key question has centred on resources. This is a matter of where the housing that the Housing First model requires will come from and how Housing First itself can be financed. This is not just an issue for EU Member States which have fewer resources available for homelessness services, there are at least some issues about resources in every EU Member State.

Yet as Housing First spreads through Europe, many of these concerns have been at least partially addressed.

The positive evidence base continues to grow, both in Europe and in the important work being done on At Home/Chez Soi in Canada. The argument that there is 'no evidence' for Housing First, or that it is only appears effective because the evidence base is distorted or limited, has become much harder to sustain. Concerns about the US origins of Housing First can also be looked at in the light of how European countries are implementing Housing First services, shaping services, to reflect not only important differences in context, but differences in how homelessness is perceived.

Politically, Housing First is potentially a threat to some traditional homelessness services, but it depends on how it is implemented. In Finland, the transformation that has reduced long-term homelessness centred on existing services changing what they did and how they worked, not on their being replaced by other services. Equally, Housing First is targeted on one specific group of people, long term and recurrently homeless people with high and complex needs; it is not designed to replace an entire homelessness strategy, merely to be a part of one. Resource issues will continue everywhere, but while Housing First has been and continues to be a relatively expensive service in North America and Scandinavia, our own work in London shows Housing First can be delivered by two support workers delivering intensive case management and using the private rented sector, as well as by a large, very well-resourced and extensive teams.

However, it remains important not to claim too much for Housing First. As we have argued in the *European Journal of Homelessness* and as others have elsewhere, adherence to the core philosophy appears to be at the heart of successful use of Housing First, i.e. enabling choice, providing intensive open-ended support, following harm reduction and not making housing conditional on complying with a service or treatment plan. Yet while the detail of service delivery may be secondary to following the core philosophy, this does not mean that variations in service delivery are not important, and we still do not know enough about what forms of Housing First might be the most effective in different contexts. Gaps in evidence also exist, particularly around how far Housing First can deliver social integration, community participation and enhance well-being, and perhaps more fundamentally, we need to also ask just how much it is reasonable and realistic to expect Housing First to deliver.



Gender-Sensitive Housing First (Women-Oriented Housing First)

By **Elvira Loibl**,¹ *Qualified Social Worker, Head of the FrauenWohnZentrum, Caritas Archdiocese Vienna – Emergency Assistance, Austria*, in cooperation with **Marlene Schagerl**, *Social Worker and member of the Women's Working Group* and **Elisabeth Corazza**, *Social Worker and member of the Women's Working Group, Caritas Archdiocese Vienna – Emergency Assistance, Austria*

Men and women have different living conditions and needs. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the lives of homeless men and women from a gender-sensitive perspective, to thereby ensure we draw adequate analyses and conclusions for use in the support we give. This gender mainstreaming strategy, which is valid for all policy areas, is defined by the Council of Europe:

"Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the players normally involved in policy-making."²

Gender mainstreaming in this sense is a strategy for the systematic consideration of the different initial conditions of women and men in all policies and processes in the planning, implementation and evaluation of policies. The concept of gender mainstreaming means equality in all areas - even supposedly gender-neutral ones - to integrate and analyse how decisions affect the different situations of women and men.

Gender - social gender - as a category, is crucial for many areas of social work. A gender perspective states that men and women find different living conditions and opportunities in society. They develop different interests and needs due to gender socialisation. In addition, there are also large differences within the group of women and men (e.g. due to cultural and economic differences).

This knowledge of the different effect and impact of social processes is therefore essential for social work practice and social planning in the design of assistance programmes for homeless people. A gender-neutral view of society (or rather one that sees male experience as the norm) in our work and relationship environment and of the risk of homelessness for women and men therefore constitutes discrimination against female life experiences. In this sense, this article aims to contribute to securing equal opportunities for homeless women and men in the system of social assistance, especially in the new Housing First system.

FEMALE HOMELESSNESS

Homeless women are mostly not visible in public (i.e. they do not live on the street), but they live without the security of their own tenancy - with friends, relatives or partners for example. In this situation, they

are under great pressure to adapt and they are in a situation of acute dependence. There is a constant risk that they be forced to leave the accommodation if there is a conflict with the owner of the tenancy. If such events occur, they often search again for a private solution that takes them back to dependency.

The shortage of housing for females and female homelessness are closely linked with extreme poverty and with experiences of violence. Women try to hide their poverty as long as possible, because they assume that, based on the social role assigned to them, their poverty is regarded as a personal failure and something shameful. They also try to avoid homelessness or to hide their homelessness and their plight because they don't want to lose their acceptance by society.

Women don't want to attract attention to themselves and get by without institutional support for as long as possible. Therefore, they try to find shelter with partners and casual acquaintances, despite the difficulties involved.

WOMEN-ORIENTED QUALITY STANDARDS FOR HOUSING FIRST

"Housing First" is a new concept in the "Viennese support system for the homeless" in the area of housing and support for homeless people. As part of this concept, homeless people receive their own, permanent home - preferably immediately and directly. The hitherto practiced "staircase model" for homeless people, where people have to prove themselves over time as being worthy of an apartment, is thus avoided. Support is provided voluntarily, on an individually needs-oriented basis and applies the basic principle of separation of housing management and personal support.

When supporting and advising women (and their children) who have housing problems, it is always important to consider their special living background. Single women and women with children represent target groups who have an increased need of protection and security. Women who contact facilities for homeless people often have a long history of being subjected to indirect and / or direct violence.

In order to be able to take women's specific backgrounds and problems into account in a Housing First setting, specific measures are needed to implement a female-friendly living space and gender-sensitive support.

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² Council of Europe, 1998



For Housing First, this means that during the development of the programme, the number of women-specific accommodation units must be decided upon. Having specifically-allocated apartments ensures that women have sufficient access to the accommodation on offer and that the flats correspond with women-oriented quality criteria (see below). If an apartment is rented to a couple or a family, the woman should be the signatory on the rent agreement. Therefore she (together with any children present) will not lose the apartment in the event of separation. Thus, the cycle of hidden homelessness, addiction and the experience of violence is interrupted.

The access to a Housing First apartment should be as fast and as simple as possible so that these women can avoid the stigma of homelessness or the experience of homeless hostels adding to their already difficult lives.

A quality criterion for the support of women is that the support be provided by professional female staff. This supporting team has the knowledge of women-specific advice, female coping strategies and gender mainstreaming. They also have the relevant expertise for recognising women in hidden homelessness, despite all the ambiguities, shown by women in counseling sessions (as mentioned above, they are not usually 'acutely' homeless, but still live with somebody).

In the support setting itself, a sensitive approach to personal issues like relationships, separation, violence, health, self-determination and autonomous life planning is necessary. The goal is always to have an empowering attitude towards the women and the counselling given by social workers.

A major factor is also networking with other women-specific facilities (such as women's refuges and women's counseling centres). This is useful on the one hand for developing social workers' knowledge of women-specific issues and on the other hand for helping them gain relevant knowledge in order to advise clients adequately and effectively. This cooperation develops a very sustainable supporting system for the women using the service.

In the allocation of Housing First apartments, special attention should be paid to the suitability of the accommodation for women (and their children). Their specific needs in terms of protection: the protection of security and protection from violence respectively, must be central.

This means that both the accessibility of the flat (good access to public transport, no dark alleys, well-lit doorways) and the location of the apartment have to be considered when the housing is chosen. Ground-floor apartments are not suitable for many women, due to their exposed location, facing the street. The

apartments should have an intercom system and a peephole.

It should also be considered that many women have children. Even if they do not live with them, there must be the opportunity for regular visits to the apartment.

For the restoration of physical integrity, which is linked with protection, dignity and privacy, it is necessary that the apartment has its own toilet, bath, hot water and heating inside the flat and that these must be shared only with family members.

When choosing the flats, it should also be ensured that they provide the necessary facilities for living with children, such as a lift and / or opportunities to park a baby carriage. In the best case scenario, there will be common areas and playgrounds in the housing estate, which can be used as a place of meeting and exchange with other women and mothers.

To ensure sustainability, it is conceptually important to address the issue of maintenance of the apartments with women as tenants. Due to the low available financial resources and, at the same time, the still very gendered lack of craftsmanship skills training (although a lack of skills is also more and more the case for men), the risk of neglect of the apartments exists: loose sockets, blocked drains, ill-fitting doors or leaking toilets. The aim here is to establish offers of training where the women can learn to carry out small repairs by themselves. Moreover, they can learn how to identify and use opportunities in the neighborhood - where they can get what from and where cheap repairs are offered.

Despite all these points, which we consider from a women-specific viewpoint as ideal and worthy of consideration, we know that women are not a homogeneous target group and in individual cases we have to set very different priorities (for example, preference for ground floor apartments because of a pram or buggy, heavy shopping bags or the need for a calm area, etc.). These are reasons why it is especially important for women to be involved in the whole decision-making process regarding the selection of the housing. Therefore, individual needs can be met and the apartment is maintained over the long term as a permanent apartment.

Finally, we have to look at the prospects for future work with homeless women. At the centre of what is needed is the creation of women-specific professional teams in all areas (of housing support) and to create women-specific facilities. Above all, it is crucial to have clearinghouse facilities which deal exclusively with homeless women as a target group. These are women-only day centres and advice centres for homeless women.

“In the allocation of Housing First apartments, special attention should be paid to the suitability of the accommodation for women (and their children).”



The Challenges of a Housing Supply-Led Approach to Tackle Homelessness During a Property Crash in Ireland

By Kathleen McKillion,¹ Director of Operations, Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH),² Ireland

“Th[e] housing supply-led approach differs to the traditional ‘staircase model’ approach to tackling homelessness where individuals moved from emergency accommodation, to transitional housing to permanent housing.”

This article looks at the challenges in providing a housing supply-led³ approach to tackle homelessness during a property crash in Ireland. It charts the Government response and the Government’s target to end long term homelessness by 2016; how it has fared within the context of unprecedented social housing demand and a dysfunctional property market and explores what action needs to be taken now. The role of the non-profit housing association sector is considered in relation to its contribution in meeting the ever-increasing housing demand going forward.

CONTEXT

• Increasing Demand for Social Housing

The demand for social housing has been building to the point where in 2014 there were up to 20,000 applicants on the waiting list of Dublin City Council alone, an increase of 3,000 on the previous year. Across all local authorities nationally there are almost 90,000 households on social housing waiting lists, an increase of 60% since 2008.

The housing system has failed households at all levels from those caught in unsustainable mortgage debt to those trapped in negative equity to families who have found themselves homeless due to rising rent levels in the private rented sector.

• Cutback in Capital Funding

The drastic reductions in the government’s capital budget for social housing since 2009 has translated into very low levels of new social housing delivery, compounding the pressure at the lower end of the housing system. Public capital expenditure on housing dropped from €1.8 billion in 2008 to €300 million in 2013, resulting in combined social housing output from local authorities and the non-profit

housing sector of a mere 750 units last year compared to over 6,500 units delivered in 2008. The role of the private rented sector over this period was to act as a safety net for low-income families during the property crash when there was little traditional social housing.

THE STATE’S RESPONSE

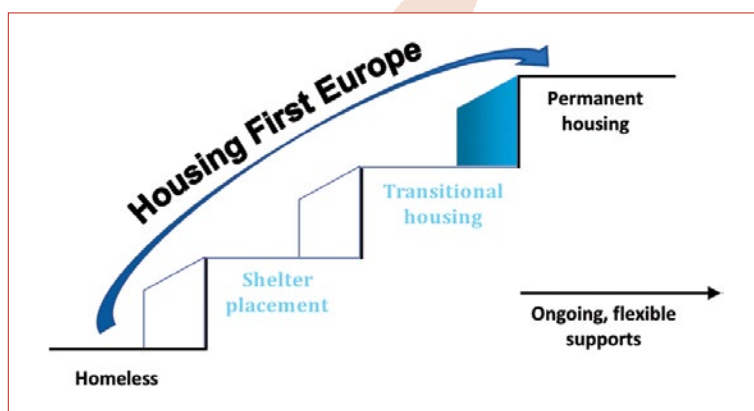
The State’s over-reliance on the private rented sector, including through the use of a Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), has meant that options have become very limited.

In February 2013, the Government published a Homelessness Policy Statement which set out an ambitious target to end long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough by the end of 2016. Within these ambitious plans, Government envisaged the move away from the provision of sheltered and transitional accommodation to the provision, as a preferred initial approach, of appropriate accommodation, with support as required to ensure sustainable tenancies.

HOMELESSNESS OVERSIGHT GROUP

Following the publication of the Policy Statement, the Minister established a Homelessness Oversight Group for the purpose of reviewing the approach being advocated in the Statement, to identify obstacles and to propose solutions to Government. The Group’s first report was published in December 2013 and among its main recommendations was a structured plan to deliver a housing-led response to homelessness by a multi-departmental implementation team.

This housing supply-led approach differs to the traditional ‘staircase model’ approach to tackling homelessness where individuals moved from emergency accommodation, to transitional housing to permanent housing.



Source: Housing First Europe <http://www.socialstyrelsen.dk/housingfirsteurope>

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³ Focusing on housing supply options of permanent social housing for those most in need. The provision of housing is the platform whereby homeless people can access other essential support services they require in a secure and stable environment.



CURRENT SITUATION

Housing provision alone will not end long-term homelessness but is a big part of the solution. However, obstacles to delivery remain. Demand is currently outstripping supply in the areas of highest need compounded by the substantial reduction in housing output in recent years. Consequently, rents in the private rented sector (as reported in daft.ie⁴) have increased between 4-15% within Ireland's main cities in 2014. Rent supplement paid to social housing tenants in the private rented sector, through the Department of Social Protection cannot compete with market demands. Also many landlords are not willing to accept rent supplement recipients as tenants resulting in an ever shrinking pool of available rental properties for those with less choice and access.

The Irish Government's commitment to a housing-led approach is failing because of the chronic shortage of housing. It is clear that in order to have a housing-led response to homelessness that there is need for an adequate supply of housing.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?

It is critical that the most welcome capital funding provision of €2.2 billion over the next three years announced within Budget 2015 is utilised to commence housing construction in a targeted, measured and sustainable manner, delivering homes in areas of greatest need. Lessons must be learned from the past and housing must be targeted where it is needed most, for the most vulnerable in society including those moving out of homelessness and out of Dublin hotels where some 150 families are currently residing.

• Budget 2015

Minister Alan Kelly (Minister of the Environment, Community & Local Government) has signalled that social housing is a number one priority in the October budget and this is expected to be translated into a deliverable cross departmental Social Housing Strategy (SHS) in the coming weeks. The SHS is expected to set out a vision for the social housing sector and intended to present a range of options for delivery over a five year period, including areas such as vacant 'ghost' estates and vacant local authority properties.

The ICSH welcomes the provision of an additional €10 million for accommodation and related services for homeless persons and the increased scheduled

expenditure for tackling homelessness for 2015 of €55.5 million. The Government's funding provision goes beyond previous commitment to maintain revenue expenditure at the 2013 level of €45 million to 2016. Of significance also is the need for continued revenue funding to meet the housing support element of housing provision, through leasing and other arrangements and is key to the prevention of homelessness and critical to assist people remain in their homes wherever possible.

The Capital Assistance Scheme, a State capital funding scheme for special needs housing, saw an increase and focus on homeless provision in Dublin with an additional €10million earlier this year and with an overall allocation of €80million for all special needs housing in Ireland for 2015. The Government itself is limited in terms of the capital it can make available, however the non-profit sector is able to borrow off balance sheet which is seen as a significant benefit and advantageous in terms of additional private funding provision. Evidence of housing project delivery demonstrates that through a mixed funding model three new homes can be delivered for one wholly state funded home. An additional attraction lies with lending to the sector as it is a largely risk-free option for private investors.

Other initiatives and options being explored in Ireland include Social Rental Agencies, a homeless pilot in Dublin on the new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), a welcome return to Part V of the Planning and Development Act where it is hoped that 10% of new private housing will be made available for social housing units (as opposed to payment in lieu of housing units). Of immediate interest is the publication of the Social Housing Strategy which should include a housing-led homeless solution addressing housing supply in the short term as well as over the next few years. Will this auspicious target of 2016 be achieved? The author is not convinced.

ROLE OF THE NON-PROFIT HOUSING SECTOR

The non-profit sector is one part of the solution and in moving forward will continue to increase housing supply and manage tenancies to meet varying needs including people with disabilities, elderly, low income families as well as formerly homeless people. The non-profit housing sector has an excellent track record in housing management and provides the much needed housing supports to enable tenants to stay in their own homes.



Housing and Employment Training

By **Carl Ditchburn**,¹ *CEO, Community Campus 87 Ltd*², UK

Community Campus 87 Ltd is the name of a mutual organisation (owned and controlled by its members) established in Middlesbrough in the north east of England in 1987. It developed as a response by a group of concerned individuals to the ever-deepening housing crisis in the area at that time. The organisation started in Middlesbrough but now works across Teesside (Redcar/Hartlepool/Stockton/Middlesbrough). Its mission is to provide housing and support for mainly young homeless clients (16-25 year olds). The organisation runs a variety of innovative projects with a focus upon young-person centred development, enabling young people to achieve their potential. The project provides formal and informal structures for participation training and development, giving young people a valuable stepping stone in their lives.

The organisation provides direct accommodation for 90 clients based across 70 properties in Teesside with a team of workers providing a planned programme of support on a permanent or transition basis in order for clients to access and sustain tenancies. Managing the home, maintaining the tenancy, building social networks all contribute to the success of a tenancy and prevent a young person from entering/carrying on a cycle of homelessness. These support services are critical to the process of maintaining a tenancy.

As part of the organisation's growth strategy in the early 1990s, we started to acquire empty properties on a lease/purchase model dependent upon resources. This then led to the development of what we call the 'Keyskills training programme'. The project's roots lie in the purchase of our first property in 1989. The property was bought with a charitable donation and was in a burnt-out state and we intended to renovate it, to create a home for 2 people. We went down the traditional route of contracting with a local builder to carry out the renovation of the property. The subsequent time delays and budget over runs that occurred caused immense frustration for the two young people earmarked to move into the property. This frustration alongside the eventual disappointment in the standard of the overall finish on the property became the source of inspiration for the young people to do better themselves and, over the last two decades, young people have developed over 50 properties for rent in the area and the organisation has created a training company which delivers in a commercial market. This has also helped sustain 12 jobs, of which 9 started out at volunteer/trainee level.

Since the development of the model in 1991, the project has retained a flexibility that has enabled it to adapt to an ever-changing funding and training landscape. At the moment the project offers:

- Development projects with registered social landlords, e.g. Empty Homes Scheme/Commercial work with housing associations;
- Community-Based Construction Work;
- Volunteering Opportunities – internal/external to the organisation;
- Employment opportunities in the project through intermediate labour market schemes;
- Training placements via recognised training agencies-working to nationally recognised qualifications;
- Work Based taster sessions (day/week) for those who want a start in the sector;
- Pupil Work experience schemes via local schools – including those at risk of exclusion.

The core work over the last 36 months has been renovation funded through the Central Government via the Department for Communities and Local Government to bring empty property back into use. This included a grant fund of £25 million (£1,577,639.44) for the community and voluntary sector to access, recognising the sector's expertise in returning empty properties back into use on a purchase-and-renovate model or a lease-and-renovate model. The sector has developed a series of innovative responses, creating high levels of community benefit with local training and employment opportunities as part of the developments taking place, and creating quality, well-managed accommodation and a rental stream for the sector.

All this work that flows from asset acquisition and development offers the opportunity for our clients to gain a recognised construction qualification while helping to develop existing property and contributing to the maintenance and upkeep of projects managed by the organisation. This variety of access points is one of the key successes of the scheme and its overall development. All clients are encouraged to view any input as a stepping stone to further development; three out of four people on the scheme move on to a positive outcome – further training or employment opportunities.

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The main areas of work we carry out in the properties are based around the general construction role/plastering/bricklaying/joinery work/electrics/painting and decorating. We use subcontractors to carry out any roof and plumbing work due to the current regulations. We have over the years built up a bank of subcontractors who are in tune with the aims and values of the scheme and take time to add value to the whole construction process. Three of our trainees are now employed by subcontractors who now work on this project and, when I recently visited a site in Redcar, I was heartened to see that the central heating system was being installed by one of our ex-trainees who is now a self-employed plumber. The trainee was a former tenant over 3 years ago and had just taken on an apprentice with the local college. He is a shining example of how the scheme can work with a former tenant and trainee now self-employed and delivering a contract on our behalf.

The project is highly successful in terms of the direct passing on of skills to its clients and procuring work that creates further income streams for the organisation. The project also has a valuable environmental impact by improving and bringing back into use empty property, thus increasing the housing supply while reducing the negative impact that neglected properties have in our neighbourhoods. We also utilise as many recycled materials as possible in the development process. The whole scheme is about making best use of existing provision and available resources to create decent homes, training opportunities and investment in marginalised people across Teesside.

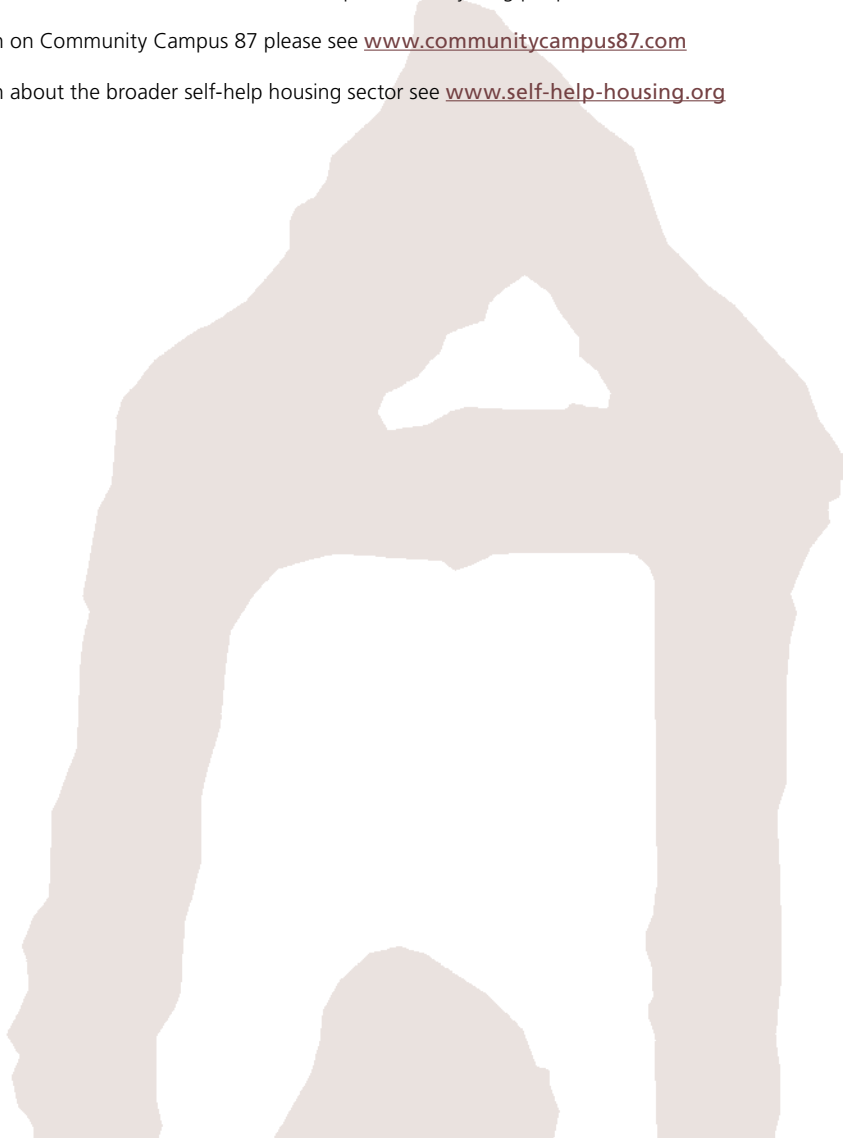
We offer training in areas for all tenants and we are an accredited centre with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and offer a range of short courses based around upskilling and tenancy management issues. A client may thus be able to obtain basic certificates in Health and safety/first aid/ money management/manual handling – all of which will help the individual in the longer term by making them more marketable. We also offer a volunteer model with support from a local charity where we are able to provide a supervisor for the day and work with 7 volunteers on a range of construction and community projects. This acts as a starting point for the engagement of our clients and normally involves the stripping out of derelict houses followed by fish and chips, a combination that works for our young people. This informal educative approach has increased over the years and there is a lot of satisfaction to be gained by the organisation being able to promote positive images of young people in the area. This work helps promote and maintain the culture of involvement and ownership across the organisation.

The organisation has successfully tied in its housing and training role, though I must stress that the tenancies we manage and support are not tied to the training. The organisation decided at the start of this process that linking the housing to training would be problematic and indeed we work with trainees that have left the housing and still house trainees that failed to thrive in our training environment. We have managed to secure resources to develop the organisation by increasing its asset base at the same time as maximising the wider social and environmental impact for the young people we work with.

“The whole scheme is about making best use of existing provision and available resources to create decent homes, training opportunities and investment in marginalised people.”

For further information on Community Campus 87 please see www.communitycampus87.com

For further information about the broader self-help housing sector see www.self-help-housing.org





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The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

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Cover image: The Blue Planet by Hayden Jones

Cymorth Cymru's Life Begins @ Home art exhibition showcases some of the very best artwork created by people using supported living services in Wales, such as homelessness services, refuges for families experiencing domestic abuse, mental health organisations and support services for older people and people with disabilities.

The artists whose work is on display have faced a range of issues such as mental health problems, drug and alcohol issues, domestic abuse and family breakdown; in many cases, these issues have resulted in homelessness. Contributors also included younger people who have experienced difficult home lives, as well as older people and people with learning and physical disabilities who need help to maintain their independence.

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