

Preventing Homelessness

A Comprehensive Preventative Strategy to Prevent Homelessness in Dublin, 2005–2010

Dr Jane Pillinger
for the Homeless Agency

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Foreword

I am very pleased to welcome this report on *Preventing Homelessness: A Comprehensive Preventative Strategy to Prevent Homelessness in Dublin, 2005–2010* completed by Dr Jane Pillinger on behalf of the Homeless Agency.

The Homeless Agency is a partnership body that was established as part of the Government strategy on homelessness in May 2001. It is responsible for the planning and co-ordination of the delivery of quality services to people who are experiencing homelessness in Dublin. The Homeless Agency co-ordinates homeless services in Dublin, provides training and other supports, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of services, carries out research and administers statutory funding to homeless services.

The Homeless Agency is comprised of voluntary and statutory agencies, who are working in partnership to implement agreed plans for the delivery of services people who are homeless, assisting them to move rapidly to appropriate long term housing and independence. A Consultative Forum advises the Board of Management.

The Homeless Agency's '*Making it Home; An Action Plan on Homelessness 2004–2006*' prioritises prevention as a key area which needs to be strengthened and which we believed would have a significant impact in supporting us to achieve our vision of the elimination of long term homelessness.

Since the writing of this report the Homeless Agency has launched a new preventative initiative, the *Dublin City Tenancy Sustainment Service*. Tenancy sustainment will support individuals by enabling them to maintain their tenancy where there is an identified risk, where without support they may risk losing it. Tenancy sustainment seeks to engage an individual with existing mainstream and community-based services, which can continue to provide support required after the tenancy sustainment service has concluded.

In addition, five local homeless fora have been established within Dublin City Council covering the North West, North Central, Central, South Central and South East areas as well as the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin foras. These fora will play a key role in supporting the development and strengthening of local area preventative initiatives.

We look forward to working with homeless and mainstream services to advance and implement the other key recommendations of this report.

Dr Derval Howley
Director · Homeless Agency

The logo for the Homeless Agency, featuring the words "HOME", "LESS", and "agency" stacked vertically in a bold, sans-serif font. "HOME" and "LESS" are in all caps, while "agency" is in lowercase. The text is white and set against a dark blue rectangular background.

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The Homeless Agency has commissioned and funded this report. Responsibility for it (including any errors or omissions) remains with the Consultants. The views and opinions contained in any reports arising from this contract are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Homeless Agency

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i Introduction

This Comprehensive Preventative Strategy provides the arguments and evidence base for moving towards a preventative approach to homelessness that emphasises early intervention and a life cycle approach. It builds on the commitments already made to prevention of homelessness in *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy*, the *Homelessness Prevention Strategy* and *Making it Home: An Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2004–2006*.

This terms of reference for this report are as follows:

- Examine the main causes of and risks associated with homelessness and evidence regarding prevention.
- Highlight the changes to and reorientation of service provision and policy that are needed to facilitate a preventative approach.
- Identify existing policy and service developments impacting on prevention under the umbrella of homeless prevention.
- Suggest actions for moving towards a preventative approach.

ii Methodology

To inform the development of this Comprehensive Preventative Strategy, a number of research methods were used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-two key policy makers and service providers and four focus groups were carried out with service providers and policy makers to gain insight into issues such as causes of homelessness, recent developments in the area of homelessness as well as an identification of what needs to be done to address the needs of those at risk and prevent homelessness.

A short questionnaire was also filled out by 42 service providers in the statutory and voluntary sector working with homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. In addition, individual interviews were conducted with ten people who are currently homeless or who have been homeless to identify where prevention could have worked to tackle homelessness and what led to their homelessness. From these interviews, personal biographies were drawn up.

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iii Findings

Homeless prevention means addressing the needs of those individuals and families that are at risk of becoming homeless, remaining in homelessness or reverting back into homelessness. Homeless prevention includes activities and interventions that are designed to:

- Reduce temporary and emergency accommodation in favour of ordinary and sustainable housing solutions, particularly for young people and families with children, and single people.
- Reduce levels of repeat homelessness.
- Reduce levels of homelessness among specific risk groups.

This *Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Homelessness* has identified three areas where prevention needs to be targeted if every risk of homelessness is to be tackled in a comprehensive way. Each area requires a different policy response and a different set of services to tackle the problems. These three areas are as follows:

- Prevent a crisis that leads to homelessness
- Prevent people remaining homeless
- Prevent recurring homelessness

iv Summary of Report

This report and action plan form the basis for a *Comprehensive Strategy for Preventing Homelessness, 2005–2010*. This provides the evidence base for prevention and points to the importance of prevention to tackling homelessness. It identifies the areas where prevention can be developed and the scope and application of preventative policies. Key themes are recommended for a preventative strategy. These are based on an exploration of what works as well as building on existing good practice and existing initiatives.

There are key roles to be played by the Homeless Agency in coordinating, steering and monitoring the strategy, as well as by policy makers and service providers. A fully resourced approach to prevention, along with a political commitment, will also be necessary if the shifts in policy and service delivery that are recommended in the action plan are to be implemented. Nevertheless, there are a number of good practice developments and a general move towards a preventative approach to homelessness that forms an important basis from which to build.

The focus is on preventing a crisis that results in homelessness, preventing people remaining in homelessness and preventing recurring homelessness. A key issue is early intervention to prevent homelessness across the lifecycle. Strategies include reducing temporary and emergency accommodation in favour of ordinary and sustainable housing solutions, particularly for young people and families with children, and single people; reducing levels of repeat homelessness; and reducing levels of homelessness among specific risk groups.

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Homelessness is a process that can span many years and early and appropriate intervention can help prevent the final outcome of homelessness. The measures recommended in this report will also help to ensure that the time spent in homelessness is short and results in appropriate supports to move out of homelessness, and that homelessness is not repeated once someone is settled in accommodation.

Individuals and families that experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness state that there was a particular trigger or crisis in their lives that led to homelessness, for example, relationship or family breakdown, because of domestic violence, or where they get into debt and could not afford the rent or mortgage. Some may suffer from drug, alcohol, mental health or other personal and health problems, which may lead them into homelessness.

This strategy shows that in moving towards a preventative model there is a need to provide more affordable and appropriate housing choices, including supports where this is needed. This means improving the understanding of homelessness prevention and changing the approach and thinking about how to tackle homelessness through prevention. This builds on the success of the Homeless Agency and a number of homelessness strategies that impact on prevention in signalling new approaches to tackling homelessness, in identifying the size and scope of the homelessness problem and in highlighting the causes of homelessness.

Prevention also requires that we have a better understanding of the causes of homelessness as well as the impact of homelessness on a person's physical health, mental health and areas such as educational under-achievement of children living in temporary accommodation. This means that there is a need to raise awareness and understanding of the causes and risks of homelessness so that policy makers through to mainstream and local service providers can better respond to those at risk of homelessness through appropriate services.

Few organisations providing homeless services are actively engaged in preventative work. Although there is an interest in and a commitment to prevention, there are awareness, capacity and resource issues that need to be addressed as well as closing the accommodation gap and the service gap. Addressing these gaps extends beyond homeless services and concerns the provision of housing and other services to meet complex needs in local areas in coordinated and integrated ways.

The many good examples of practices to promote prevention include family support, early school leaving projects, local community projects, and in several cases there have been local strategies to prevent homelessness developed in partnership at local levels. However, these are not across the board and tend to be isolated to areas of disadvantage / Rapid areas.

The prevention of homelessness requires wide ranging action. Whilst it is recognised that a preventative approach should address issues of housing supply and allocation, homeless prevention spans beyond housing policy to all areas of policy and service delivery that impact on people who are marginalised and people living in disadvantaged communities. In particular is the need for the provision of a network of integrated local services that are able to respond effectively and quickly to homelessness and/or address the risks of homelessness.

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In some cases homelessness can be prevented through the provision of suitable accommodation for people with support needs e.g. older people, people with mental health difficulty; people leaving institutions or hospitals; whilst in others there is a need for a multi-faceted approach to addressing social, economic, health, addiction and other needs. This requires multi- and inter- agency responses if homeless services are to move away from crisis intervention towards more work on prevention.

Prevention can take a twin track approach. First, prevention can be mainstreamed into all homeless activities / service provision through early intervention, awareness raising, and homeless proofing of activities. This will require a shift in orientation, culture and commitment from service providers. Second, there are specific prevention initiatives to prevent people from specific risk groups becoming homeless. This will require targeting of funding and resources e.g. people leaving prison or community based mental health or addiction supports.

Preventative work needs to be driven by national and local government and the HSE in partnership with the voluntary and community sector. Homeless prevention needs to be linked to other national and local strategies and social policies, in areas such as social inclusion, drugs and addiction, health and social care, education, training and employment etc. Coordination should also take place with schools, youth services, local housing and advice services, local family support services, community based drug and alcohol projects, etc. Homeless prevention work should also be taking place in local schools and communities, including support and information to young people, particularly before transition year, on making choices, leaving home and homelessness.

v Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Homelessness: Action Plan

The action plan that follows is divided into nine sections:

1. Build preventative actions into existing strategies and services.
2. Prevent homelessness through an improved evidence based and cause centred approach.
3. Prevent homelessness through the provision of effective services and new ways of delivering services.
4. Prevent homelessness through a wider range of permanent housing solutions.
5. Prevent homelessness amongst families, children and young people.
6. Preventing homelessness through information, advice, tenancy support and mediation.
7. Link homeless prevention to drug and alcohol addiction, ill health and disability.
8. Prevent homelessness by enhancing the role of education, training,
9. Action to deliver on prevention and build capacity to prevent homelessness.

1. Build preventative actions into existing strategies and services

Prevention is set to become a significant activity in strategic and service development, and this is increasingly linked to tackling social exclusion. Integrating homeless prevention into all strategic and operational policy initiatives can be carried out through raised awareness and building prevention into homelessness proofing of all policy and service developments. Local homelessness strategies need to take prevention into account. For example, the HSE can work closely with local authorities in formulating joint preventative homelessness strategies that are linked into the work with Local Authority Housing Strategies, the work of Local Area Partnerships, Primary Care Teams, Local Drugs Task Forces and other anti-poverty and social inclusion activities. Building local partnerships should enable organisations to take local ownership of and accountability for homeless prevention.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Prevention is integrated into all strategies and local action plans	<p>Local authority and HSE strategies should integrate prevention into all objectives and actions.</p> <p>Local Authority Homeless Forums and Dublin City Council local Homeless Forums should create homeless prevention sub-groups/working groups with a view to develop new ways of delivering prevention.</p> <p>Each Homeless Forum should establish a two-year preventative pilot project in their area. Evaluation of pilot projects will be the basis of shared learning across partners.</p> <p>Prevention should be the main focus of the next Homeless Agency Action Plan.</p>	<p>Local authorities and HSE</p> <p>Local Authority and DCC Homeless Forums</p> <p>Local Authority and DCC Homeless Forum</p> <p>Homeless Agency</p>	<p>Ongoing and reviewed annually</p> <p>Established by December 2006</p> <p>Commence beginning of 2006</p> <p>2007–2009</p>	<p>100% of all strategies have prevention of homelessness in all objectives and actions</p> <p>Prevention sub-groups created in all Homeless Forums</p> <p>Pilot projects completed and learning disseminated</p>
Mainstream prevention into service evaluations and service developments	All future homeless service evaluations should explore how the service can be reoriented towards a preventative approach. Individual organisations and service providers should be encouraged to carry out a self-assessment of how services can be reoriented towards prevention. This approach should extend to mainstream services.	HA and service providers	Ongoing and reviewed annually	All service reviews and evaluations contain section on homeless prevention
All policy and service delivery is proofed for impact on homeless prevention.	Homeless proof all policy making and service delivery that impacts on homeless prevention (HA Objective 2.4.1). Integrate homeless proofing into planned actions currently taking place between the Equality Authority and Combat Poverty Agency on an integrated approach to equality and poverty proofing.	Homeless Agency; Cross-Departmental Team on Homelessness	From 2005	Proofing template implemented for all new policy and service developments

2. Prevent homelessness through an improved evidence based and cause centred approach

Improved data and a better understanding of the structural and personal/individual factors that cause homelessness are essential if preventative actions are to be effectively focussed and targeted. Existing data needs to become more targeted on causes, geographic areas and experiences of homelessness so as not to mask specific causal factors and the complexity of events leading to homelessness, including the individuals and families that experience repeated homelessness.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Identify trends in and causes of homelessness through improved data collection	Develop more effective ways to collect information about homeless families and individuals, including repeat homelessness.	HPU, local authorities	Completed by the end 2006	Establishment of IT system.
	Develop a common definition of homelessness so as to identify causes of homelessness/geographic areas with greatest risk.	Homeless Agency	To be completed in 2006	Common definition established by cause and geographic location.
	Expand the Dublin LINK to all local authority areas.	Homeless Agency	Completed by the end 2007	LINK established in all areas
Better identification of those at risk of homelessness	Develop and implement joint protocols for interagency work to help identify people at risk of homelessness.	Inter-agency work	To be agreed by September 2006	One joint protocol in each local area agreed.
	Introduced training on how to implement protocols so that they result in joint working and monitor the effectiveness of the protocols.	Relevant government departments/agencies	To commence from January 2006	Training programme for each local area
	Ensure systems are put in place for the early identification of risk to homelessness e.g. people not paying rent; children not attending school etc.	Homeless Agency with relevant agencies	System agreed by December 2006 and evaluated in 2008	Systems are in place
Better understanding of the underlying causes and trends in homelessness	Carry out additional research and personal biographies into the causes of homelessness, particularly related to minority ethnic groups, and issues related to age, gender, sexual orientation, disability and membership of the Traveller community.	Homeless Agency	To be commenced in autumn 2005 and completed by December 2007	Studies completed.

3. Prevent homelessness through the provision of effective services and new ways of delivering services

Preventing homelessness requires the provision of effective and coordinated services. In some cases this means new ways of delivering services. In particular, more attention needs to be given to the quality and flexibility of support services to vulnerable and marginalised people by focusing provision on local need and integrating support with local strategies. It is important that there is regular monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of services and service providers need to be encouraged and incentivised to develop new services or to reorientate their services in partnership with relevant agencies. This can be linked into mainstream services, for example, by enabling older people or disabled people to remain in their own homes backed up by home and community based support services. Young people could be helped to prepare for leaving HSE care to prepare for greater independence through social supports and basic skills training.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Effective coordination at local levels	Coordination and information sharing amongst agencies preventing a crisis or emergency.	Homeless Agency and Homeless Forums	Ongoing and reviewed annually	Examples of successful information sharing
Locally provided services	Carry out a pilot project in Dun Laoghaire for a locally based HPU, jointly staffed by the HSE and the local authority. This pilot should examine more effective ways of preventing homelessness through comprehensive needs assessments and monitored for its implementation and effectiveness.	HSE, Local authority	Commence December 2005	Pilot established and learning disseminated
Improved quality and effectiveness of services	Build the capacity of mainstream services to carry out preventative work through initiatives to inform, support and train mainstream service providers in the causes and understanding of homelessness (HA Objective 2.5).	Statutory bodies and mainstream service providers, with the Homeless Agency	Ongoing regular service reviews	Evidence of improved capacity
Prevent unplanned discharge from institutions	Improve discharge planning processes and develop training and tools to implement existing joint protocols.	HSE, IPS, PWS	Commence December 2006	New processes put in place
	Agree integrated care policies for people discharged from hospitals, care homes and prisons. This includes a) the full implementation and monitoring of the Leaving Care Policy currently being progressed by the National Children's Office and the HSE; b) improved prison discharge planning with supported or transitional housing, particularly for young single men.	HSE, IPS, PWS, National Children's Office	Commence December 2006	Number of new policies agreed
	Implement and further develop joint protocols as established in the Homeless Prevention Strategy.	HSE, IPS, PWS	Commence December 2006	Number of joint protocols agreed
Establish Local Homeless Coordinators	Local Homeless Coordinators to establish a preventative approach to homelessness.	HSE, Local Authorities	2005	Evidence of preventative approach
Engagement of local communities through community development approaches	Encourage and support community development approaches to preventing homelessness in local areas, including befriending, peer led, mentoring, information and other services that focus local communities on preventative work.	HSE, Local Authorities, DES, IPS, SCFA, Local Area Partnerships	Ongoing and reviewed annually	Evidence of additional community development activity

4. Prevent homelessness through the provision of more mainstream and permanent housing solutions

Preventing homelessness means that there should be a reduction in the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation and improved access to more permanent housing solutions. This is a particular objective of *Making it Home* and requires more innovative responses to housing supply and allocation. Where temporary accommodation is provided it is important that this provides minimum standards and serves the purpose for which it was intended.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
An end to housing families in Bed and Breakfast style accommodation	End the practice of accommodating families in B&B and emergency accommodation. This will mean introducing funding for long term housing with support.	LA	50% reduction by December 2007 100% reduction by 2010	B&B provided for no more than one month at a time
Revised policy regarding eligibility for housing	Examine ways by which local authority housing departments can rehouse someone who is at risk of homeless, particularly where this is a result of domestic violence or where families with children have social needs and are at risk.	Homeless Agency and local authorities	Completed by September 2006	Numbers successfully rehoused
Housing that more effectively meets needs and prevents dependency on homeless services	Enhance the provision of social housing.	Local authorities and voluntary housing	September 2005–September 2010	Number of new units
	Enhance the use of privately rented accommodation through rent deposit schemes and accredited landlords.	Local authorities and voluntary housing	Commence December 2005	Number of rent deposit schemes
	Extend the Access Housing Unit, particularly for young people	Local authorities Threshold	From December 2005	Number of people accommodated
	Continue to provide transitional housing for those most in need of step down facilities, e.g. prisoners, people leaving institutional care, people with mental health support needs.	Homeless Agency, local authorities and voluntary organisations	Ongoing and numbers monitored annually	Number of people accommodated in transitional housing
	Implement the scheme of priority lettings	Local authorities	Ongoing	Numbers housed through priority lettings
	Implement the Residential Tenancies Act and ensure that people at risk are aware of the provisions	Local authorities in service providers	Ongoing	
	Disseminate and mainstream the findings and learning from the Rent Assistance Pilot scheme	Homeless Agency	Commence 2006	Pilot disseminated and extended to all areas

4. Prevent homelessness through the provision of more mainstream and permanent housing solutions

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
A greater provision of supports in housing	<p>Increase the provision of low, medium and high supports so that the appropriate supports are provided to people to live independently.</p> <p>Improve the capacity for service providers to identify and provide emergency and other accommodation appropriate to people's needs. This may also require there to be some reallocation of services.</p> <p>Increase the range and number of referrals from mainstream providers and homeless services such as day centres to appropriate housing, and early intervention from a wider range of agencies.</p>	<p>HSE, local authorities</p> <p>Homeless Agency with service providers</p> <p>All service providers</p>	<p>September 2005–September 2010</p> <p>Commence 2007</p> <p>Commence December 2005</p>	<p>Numbers provided with high, medium and low support.</p> <p>Services are refocused where appropriate</p> <p>Annual increase in referrals</p>
Improved standards in temporary and privately rented accommodation	<p>Introduce minimum standards for temporary accommodation based on those set out in <i>Putting People First</i> Ensure good standards of privately rented accommodation and in particular that they meet those standards set out under the Residential Tenancies Board, and that proper standards are set out in established through the procurement process and through tenancy agreements.</p>	<p>Homeless Agency with local authorities</p>	<p>Completed by December 2006</p>	<p>Standards template agreed.</p>

5. Prevent homelessness amongst families, children and young people

Specific attention is given in this strategy to families, children and young people in order to prevent homelessness over the lifecycle. Young people at risk of homelessness should have access to a key worker / personal adviser who provides support, advice and guidance with developing life skills, independence and autonomy so that their transitions into adulthood do not involve homelessness. Key issues that need to be addressed in prevention include support for young people related to exclusion from school, lack of life skills, learning disabilities, mental ill health, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy or a history of running away are all problems that can lead to social exclusion and homelessness. Work needs to be focussed in schools to help children and young people avoid homelessness through peer education models and learning materials, for example, through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and in targeted provision for transition year students. Partnerships with national and local homelessness organisations are important to ensuring that the needs of homeless people are reflected in policy and service developments to support children and families living in disadvantaged areas. There is a particular need for coordinated systems linked into schools and family support, and specific supports around mental health and disability and for children in homeless families. In addition, there is a need for better opportunities for young people to be directly involved in participating in decisions that impact on their lives in order to improve self-esteem. This is particularly important for young people who have lived in HSE or residential care and who are not used to participating in decisions about their lives and planning for the future.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Improve the security of women and children experiencing domestic violence	Develop new initiatives for enhancing the security of women and children so that they can stay in their own homes, including floating support for women and families, counselling and one-to-one support.	Local authorities, HSE, Women's Aid, Gardai	Commence December 2006	Number of new measures introduced
Enhance the provision of benefits and supports to end child poverty	Provide a new targeted second tier intervention to assist children living in poverty, as a supplement to Child Benefit. There should also be targeted financial supports for childcare for those who are unable to benefit from the tax benefit system.	Dept. Social and Family Affairs	2006	
Improve supports to young people with mental health difficulties	Develop and implement joint protocols on young people and mental health	HSE and service providers	January 2006	Protocol implemented; numbers of young people supported
Enhance the capacity of schools, youth and community services to identify children at risk	Increase school, youth and community service involvement in identifying, referring and assessing children at risk.	DES, HSE, local agencies	Ongoing	Numbers identified at risk and referred
	Link prevention into the role of wider community services and services provided by Local Area Partnership, such as breakfast clubs, early school leaving projects, mentoring projects etc.	Local area Partnerships and community based projects	Ongoing	Examples of the integration of homeless prevention in activities
	Improve the awareness of risks of homelessness amongst home-school liaison officers	DES and the National Education Welfare Board	Ongoing	Evidence of awareness raising activities
	Continue to promote joint working between the National Children's Office, the HSE and the Homeless Agency	National Children's Office, the HSE and the Homeless Agency	Ongoing	Evidence of outcomes of joint working

5. Prevent homelessness amongst families, children and young people

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Young people are better informed about housing and homelessness	Develop a guide (in a range of accessible formats and languages and targeted to disadvantaged communities) for young people who are thinking about leaving home or preparing to leave home with information about leaving home, the law, housing advice, benefits, education, training, employment, money management, health, sex, sexuality, drugs and alcohol. This could be adapted from work undertaken through Focus Ireland's schools service, a guide produced by Centrepoin in the UK and a web-based resource produced by the Scottish Council for Single Homeless.	Homeless Agency with relevant agencies and homeless young people	December 2007	Guide produced and disseminated
	Action through educational process and youth services through role-plays, planned approaches for young people that are vulnerable, resources and leaflets to prepare young people for choices and transitions.	DES, Homeless Agency	Draw up plan by January 2006	Plan agreed and rolled out to relevant agencies
	Develop a programme with visits to schools, community centres, GPs, etc to raise awareness of young people's risks of homelessness and services available, and to offer advice.	DES, Homeless Agency	Commence January 2006	Number of visits
Improved quality of inter-agency work	Improve multi-agency working for children by developing a case review protocol and disseminate key learning. Joint working between drug agencies, child and family services and homeless services should have more fluid boundaries and not be rigidly age related.	HA and HSE	September 2006	Production and implementation of joint protocol.
	Enhance the provision of multidisciplinary supports for children and young people modelled on the multidisciplinary health teams in the South West and Northern Area HSE.	HSE	Ongoing	Establishment of new teams in each area

6. Preventing homelessness through information, advice, tenancy support and mediation

A great deal can be done to prevent homelessness through information, advice, tenancy support and mediation, particularly where this is targeted in the most disadvantaged areas. Work with estate management offices can also be further developed to identify early on who is at risk of losing their accommodation and to support people in their tenancies where there is a risk of homelessness, including anti-social behaviour. This should be carried out in partnership with local community organisations, and in the case of families with locally based family support services through early identification of families at risk. This could be modelled on the role of family support workers provided by the local authority in Ballymun to identify families in difficulty with their accommodation.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Information is accessible to homeless people and front line staff working with homeless people	Continue to work in partnership with Comhairle to develop targeted and accessible information about rights and entitlements, services and benefits for homeless people, for example, through the OASIS web site and information capacity in mainstream organisations, Citizens Information Services etc.	Comhairle/ Homeless Agency HA	Implemented by September 2005 and reviewed September 2006	Examples of information activities
	Training for staff working in the front line of homeless services in outreach, settlement, hostels, day centres, housing welfare services etc.	Comhairle/ Homeless Agency	Commence November 2006	Number of training courses
Housing advice services provided locally	Develop a range of complementary housing advice services through voluntary and community bodies and local housing offices in order to enable people to make informed choices about housing options. Housing advice should also be integrated into mainstream information and other services. Specialist services such as provided through Threshold can provide a second tier, more specialised service.	Homeless Agency, local authorities, voluntary organi- sations, Comhairle	Created by December 2006	One housing advice service in each local authority area
Mediation services are provided locally	Provide a range of mediation services for families and neighbours in order to prevent or delay a young person leaving the family home. This can also help to prevent loss of tenancies because of eviction of a parent, friend or relative. More flexible provision of benefits and training grants for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years could also help to keep young people at home.	Local authorities, DES, DFSA, HSE	Ongoing and reviewed annually	One mediation service in each local authority area
Proactive estate management services	Develop more proactive estate management services, modelled on good practice found in areas such as Ballyfermot, with locally based family support services, to identify early on who is at risk of losing their accommodation.	Local authorities, HSE and community organisations	Ongoing and reviewed annually	Evidence of homelessness prevented through estate management

6. Preventing homelessness through information, advice, tenancy support and mediation

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Prevent homelessness resulting from anti-social behaviour	Develop pro-active mediation and estate management practices to avoid evictions through anti-social behaviour.	Local authorities	Ongoing, reviewed regularly	Evidence of prevention of evictions
	Examine the potential impact of the planned implementation of Anti Social Behaviour Orders on homelessness, particularly of young people.	Local authorities	Completed by December 2005	Evidence of potential impact on homelessness
Tenancy sustainment schemes exist in all local areas	Tenancy sustainment schemes should be established and linked to all local housing offices.	Local authorities	From January 2006	Evidence of the numbers of tenancies that have been sustained.
	Tenancies should be sustained for people on remand or in prison for up to 13 weeks, with more flexible provisions to enable people to have guarantees about access to tenancies when leaving prison following sentences of longer than 13 weeks.	Local authorities / Prison Service	From January 2006	Numbers receiving settlement services
	Extended settlement and resettlement services to previously homeless people in temporary and permanent accommodation	Local authorities and voluntary organisations		

7. Link homeless prevention to drug and alcohol addiction, ill health and disability

People who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, often suffer from physical or mental ill health, and they may be addicted to drugs or alcohol and a combination of these. Locally level supports and early intervention to identify problems is needed since homelessness adds to the complexity of their problems. Homeless people need to have access to mainstream health services as well as to specialised supports. GPs and other health practitioners need to be given resources to address multifaceted needs, including physical and mental health problems and addiction. Families with children in temporary accommodation should have access to regular health checks, and homeless people should be able to access both mainstream health care and specialist care in hostels and day centres which can help to ensure that health problems do not contribute to long term homelessness. Tackling drug or alcohol addiction can help prevent homelessness and is an important step in stabilising those that are homeless. Homeless people with multiple needs or a dual diagnosis often have difficulties in accessing health care, drug detoxification and rehabilitation and housing support. Local service providers need to work in partnership to support people with multiple needs so that their problems are not examined in isolation. Guidance is needed on how to assess an individual's needs, the provision of supported accommodation units with access to health care and life skills training.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Effective treatment and support to prevent alcohol addiction	Develop a strategic approach to tackling alcohol addiction on foot of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol and using the model of the National Drugs Strategy and the Regional and Local Drugs Task Forces. This should include prevention as an operational theme with actions linked into the prevention of homelessness.	HSE	31 March 2006	Strategy in place
An integrated approach to homeless prevention	On foot of the review of the Drugs Strategy, link local drugs and alcohol strategies to local homelessness strategies. Implement the findings of the NACD research on drugs and homelessness	HSE HSE, NACD, RDTF (Regional Drugs Task Force), NDST (National Drug Strategy Team)	Commence March 2006 Ongoing, monitored regularly	Evidence of links made at local levels Actions implemented
Improve guidance and services for people with dual diagnosis	Provide guidance on how to effectively assess the needs of a person who has multiple problems / dual diagnosis and enhance specialist service provision.	HSE	Completed December 2005	Evidence of guidance and tailored services
Enhanced access to health care services	Provide enhanced health care supports for homeless people by GPs and Public Health Nurses in hostels and day centres, more flexible treatment services linked to housing support and enhanced community-based prevention in mental health. Continue to assess health and social care needs of those in long-term hostel or private emergency accommodation. Evaluate the proposals to be drawn up by the relevant HSE areas to assess the health and social care needs of people in longer-term hostels (HA Action 2.12.1).	HSE and relevant service providers HSE and Homeless Agency	Ongoing and monitor regularly Ongoing and monitor regularly	Numbers of homeless people treated Number of assessments made.

7. Link homeless prevention to drug and alcohol addiction, ill health and disability

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
An effective multi-disciplinary team	Resource the multi-disciplinary team to enable it to effectively engage in assertive and proactive health and homeless prevention work as part of their crisis intervention work. Staff should have a smaller caseload in order to engage in a more assertive outreach approach.	HSE	January 2006	Evidence of case loads
Local Health Offices are a site for preventative work	One preventative pilot project in one Local Health Office to coordinate local services, including drug and alcohol addiction, mental health, disability, child and family health, and older people's services, and to develop a coordinated and multidisciplinary health strategy for preventing homelessness.	HSE	Commence January 2006 and completed by end of 2007	Pilot project successfully completed
	Evaluate the pilot and disseminate findings.	HSE	Completed 2008	Evaluation completed and learning disseminated

8. Education, training, employment and meaningful occupation

Preventing homelessness also needs to focus on an enhanced role for education, training, employment and meaningful occupation. Having access to education, training and employment reduces the likelihood of debt, social isolation and homelessness. Incentivising and encouraging people that are at risk of homelessness, homeless or former homeless people to take up training courses or jobs is a crucial part of prevention. Training, volunteering or work experience schemes can provide the routes out of homelessness and initiatives developed for homeless people should be providing meaningful activities. For example, day centres could become more than just a place to provide food and shelter. They should be taking more proactive roles to become learning centres or healthy living / food centres that promote user participation and empowerment. This should take place in partnership with local community education and training providers as a first step to entry into mainstream education and training. In this context, homeless services, including day services and hostels, need to be part of the strategy to prevent homelessness by providing employment and training schemes that take people into meaningful activity. This will not only help to avoid anti-social behaviour, but can also enhance the esteem and confidence of homeless people.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Implement commitments on the employment of marginalised groups in Ireland's National Action Plan on Employment 2003–2005	Implement the provisions in the National Action Plan on Employment concerning the systematic engagement with the young unemployed (under 25) who have been unemployed for longer than six months and for adults (25–55 years) after they have been unemployed for more than nine months and roll out the experience of the pilots introduced in Galway and Clondalkin in 2001. This includes a pathways programme for participants where existing guidance, training or employment options are not suitable.	DETE with Local Area Partnerships, Local Employment Services and other relevant agencies	Ongoing, review regularly	Actions are implemented
	Ensure that young people at risk of homelessness or who are currently homeless have access to Youthreach and early school leaving programmes.	DETE, DES and other relevant agencies	Ongoing, review regularly	Improved access for young people at risk
	Ensure that childcare funding and provision is available for parents taking up training.			
Homeless people, particularly young people, have improved access to training	Incentivise young people to take up key skills development, personal development and training in order to prevent homelessness and/or provide route out of homelessness, particularly those in disadvantaged areas.	FAS, VEC, DES, voluntary organisations, Local Area Partnerships	From 2005	Number of training places and training plans
	Provide a wider range of specifically targeted and personalised training courses, volunteer initiatives, employment and meaningful activities, including developing the concept of learning centres within day centres and hostels as a way of building people's confidence to take up mainstream community education and training.	FAS, VEC, DES, voluntary organisations	From 2006	Number of young people supported by key workers
	Provide additional supports for homeless people undertaking mainstream community education and training through key workers and other supports.	FAS, VEC, DES, voluntary organisations	From 2006	Extended peer training course established
	Fund an extended Peer Worker Training Course so that people who have experienced homelessness and addiction can provide services directly to homeless people.	CDVEC	Commence in 2005	Number of courses provided

8. Education, training, employment and meaningful occupation

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
	<p>Establish partnerships between mainstream community education and training providers and homeless services and provide inreach and outreach services and bridging programmes where appropriate.</p> <p>Implement personal advisor scheme for young homeless people or young people at risk of homelessness, through this provision of a training and care plan with key worker support</p>	<p>VEC, FAS, LES, Local Area Partnerships etc.</p> <p>DETE with FAS and Local Area Partnerships</p>	<p>Partnerships established by March 2006</p> <p>Commence January 2006</p>	
Homeless people have improved access to employment	<p>Disseminate learning from Business in the Community Ready for Work Programme (HA).</p> <p>Expand and improve options for homeless people to have work experience and access to employment in local areas.</p>	Business in the Community, ICTU, IBEC, Homeless Agency	<p>September 2005</p> <p>Commence 2005</p>	<p>Learning disseminated through variety of methods</p> <p>Links with five local employers in each local authority area</p>
Ensure that homeless people or those at risk have access to meaningful, quality work	<p>Implement the National Action Plan on Employment 2003–2005 and Sustaining Progress concerning provisions regarding making work pay and quality employment.</p> <p>Remove disincentives to employment by removing the barriers in the benefits system that result in a poverty trap</p>	<p>DETE</p> <p>DSFA, DETE</p>	<p>Ongoing, review regularly</p> <p>Ongoing, review regularly</p>	<p>Improved access to quality work</p> <p>Barriers to integration in employment removed</p>

9. Action to deliver on prevention and build capacity to prevent homelessness

Homeless prevention will only be successful if there is a commitment to and action on the part of service providers in statutory and voluntary sectors to do things differently, to innovate and to shift perspectives and mindsets. Key to this is the need to improve awareness and capacity of service providers and policy makers about the role and benefits of prevention and new methods of working. Practical support and capacity building is needed to help local authorities and other statutory and voluntary organisations build prevention into their work. A shift in resources and work towards prevention needs to take place in the voluntary sector, in local authorities and the HSE. The Homeless Agency, will need to take the lead in steering the implementation and in monitoring the action plan and is in a good strategic position to help enhance coordination and cooperation around prevention, and support innovation and new approaches.

Also an important part of prevention is to increase the control and choices homeless people and those at risk of homelessness have so that they can be engaged in developing solutions. This will not only have the effect of empowering homeless people to support themselves and others out of homelessness, but will also lead to appropriate solutions and cost savings in the long run. Effective participation of people at risk or affected by homelessness can include programme for supporting people in establishing a suitable home, with daily living skills, benefits advice, health and community care supports, and community and social support networks. A key element is also to ensure that homeless people or formerly homeless people input into the planning, development and delivery of services, including user-led and peer-led services.

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Enhanced capacity to deliver on prevention	Develop training on prevention, new ways of delivering services and to promote the values and attitudes that can result in personalised, responsive high quality services. The Homeless Agency should explore how awareness of homeless prevention can be built into professional training of Gardia, health and social care staff, and local authority staff, amongst others.	Homeless Agency, City and County Development Boards with all relevant agencies	September 2005–September 2010	100% participation of front line service providers and managers
New models to support early intervention and homeless prevention	Develop a comprehensive needs assessment model so that early intervention and targeting of appropriate services can be put in place to prevent homelessness.	Homeless Agency and relevant agencies	December 2007	All new cases are assessed within one month.
A model of care and case management build around prevention	Further develop the care and case management approach and extend it to other group with priority for: a) families who have been in B&B or hostel accommodation for more than 6 months b) women and children who have experienced domestic violence c) individuals or families who have experienced repeat homelessness d) young people e) older men with mental health difficulties f) women leaving prison Provide training and support for those undertaking care and case management.	Homeless Agency with voluntary and statutory service providers	To commence 2006 and reviewed October 2007	Four pilots developed, implemented and reviewed.
Prevention is built into a continuum of care	Build prevention into the provision of a continuum of care that enables people to progress towards independence. This should help to comprehensively provide planned and responsive supports and services to meet the needs of individuals and families according to their levels of need and dependency.	Homeless Agency and relevant service providers	From 2005	Evidence of prevention in continuum of care

9. Action to deliver on prevention and build capacity to prevent homelessness

Objective	Action	Organisation responsible	Timescale	Performance indicator
Evaluation of homeless prevention	Evaluate the impact of prevention initiatives on the lives of people who used the services, including qualitative research to examine the impact on people's lives and the levels of risk of homelessness.	Homeless Agency	Completed 2008	Evaluation completed
Improved evidence base	Improve research evidence of what works in practice and more evidence based research to inform the planning of services so that they can more effectively work on prevention (HA).	Homeless Agency	Completed 2008	Research completed
Raised awareness of homelessness and how it can be prevented	Conduct a public awareness campaign on homeless prevention and examine the feasibility of this taking place annually.	Homeless Agency	2006	Campaign completed
	Produce a guide for practitioners on what works with best practice on homeless prevention.	Homeless Agency	Completed September 2007	Guidelines produced
	Produce a 'story book' of personal biographies and case histories of homeless people.	Homeless Agency	Completed March 2006	Story book produced
	Work with schools and homeless services providers to raise awareness of homelessness and how it can be prevented			
Enhanced local coordination and cooperation around prevention	Training and seminars, provided with an inter-agency methodology, to help organisations develop preventative work.	Homeless Agency/ City and County Development Boards	Commence September 2005	Number of training courses
	Identify specific resources for prevention projects and encourage the testing of new and innovative approaches to prevention in local areas.	Homeless Agency	September 2005	Level of resource allocation
Learning from good practices	Evaluation and dissemination of research and lessons learnt from pilot schemes and good practices to identify and promote preventative approaches.	Homeless Agency	Ongoing and completed by 2010	Learning and evidence disseminated
Roll out the preventative strategy	The Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Homelessness should have a range of resources for information and awareness dissemination activities in order to raise awareness and ownership of it by service providers, local communities, and the general public. This could include seminars on inter-agency working and prevention for local homeless forums and for those agencies that will be involved in preventative work.	Homeless Agency	Commence in the autumn of 2005 and completed by 2008	Information and awareness raising activities completed
Resources for prevention	There are resource implications for moving towards a preventative approach and it will be important to ensure that this work is properly resourced.	Homeless Agency and DELG	Resource framework agreed by the end of 2005	Evidence of resources and spending annually
Review of the Comprehensive Strategy to Prevent Homelessness	The strategy should be reviewed after five years in order to identify what works, the learning and outcomes for the strategy and areas for further development.	Homeless Agency	Commence December 2010	Review completed

The broader recommendations of this report will be available in the report on the recommendations for all reports commissioned by the Homeless Agency under the Action Plan Making it Home 2004–2006.

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The logo for Homeless Agency is contained within a light blue square. The word "HOME" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below it, the word "LESS" is written in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the square, the word "agency" is written in a smaller, white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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