



# Mid East Region Homelessness Action Plan 2018 - 2020

• Kildare

• Meath

• Wicklow



**Rebuilding  
Ireland**







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## Introduction

The local authorities of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow form the Mid East Region Homelessness Forum, together with the HSE and relevant statutory and voluntary agencies. Kildare County Council has been designated as lead authority for the mid east region.

The Mid East Region Homelessness Action Plan is prepared having regard to the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 as it relates to Homelessness and sets out the priorities for the region for the next three years.

In accordance with Section 37 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 each Housing Authority must prepare an Action Plan to address homelessness. The Plan must specify the measures proposed to be undertaken to address homelessness in the administrative area(s) concerned by the Housing Authorities, the Health Service Executive and other bodies providing services to address homelessness.

The Plan must include, but is not limited to, the following objectives:

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

Housing supply is critical to dealing with homelessness. A key priority of Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to accelerate and expand the delivery across all tenures, including social housing.

Each of the Local Authorities in the Mid East Region are advancing their respective housing capital programmes under the various delivery mechanisms (direct construction, rapid build, vacant units, acquisition, Part V), which are subject to ongoing liaison with the Department of Housing , Planning and Local Government. Furthermore, Approved Housing Bodies have also intensified their delivery of new social units in collaboration with the three local authorities concerned.

The above delivery of social units will progress in parallel to the activities contained in this action plan.

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

Section 2 of the Housing Act 1988 provides:

A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purposes of this Act if:

- (a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of or,
- (b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a), and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.

Section 10 of the Act of 1988 provides:

- (1) A housing authority may, subject to such regulations as may be made by the Minister under this section:
  - (a) make arrangements, including financial arrangements, with a body approved of by the Minister for the purposes of section 5 for the provision by that body of accommodation for a homeless person,
  - (b) provide a homeless person with such assistance, including financial assistance, as the authority consider appropriate, or
  - (c) rent accommodation, arrange lodgings or contribute to the cost of such accommodation or lodgings for a homeless person
  
- (10) A housing authority may, while making enquiries to enable them to determine if a person is homeless, exercise the powers provided for in subsection (1).

It is the Housing Authority that must form the requisite opinion, following an assessment of need, on whether the criterion as set out in Section 2 is fulfilled. The decision to provide emergency accommodation supports rests within the competence and expertise of the Housing Authority and is made within the context of available resources and competing demands on those resources.

## Policy Context

### Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

In drawing up this Action Plan, the management group of the Mid East Region Homelessness Forum had regard to homeless and housing policies, both current and past, and has been particularly informed by the following:

- **Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness [July 2016]**

The overarching aim of Rebuilding Ireland is to ramp up delivery of housing from its current undersupply across all tenures to help individuals and families meet their housing needs, and to help those who are currently housed to remain in their homes or be provided with appropriate options of alternative accommodation, especially those families in emergency accommodation.

The Action Plan contains 5 pillars as follows:

Pillar 1: Address Homelessness

Pillar 2: Accelerate Social Housing

Pillar 3: Build More Homes

Pillar 4; Improve The Rental Sector

Pillar 5: Utilise Existing Stock

Under Pillar 1: Address Homelessness, the key objective is

*To provide early solutions to address the unacceptable level of families in emergency accommodation; deliver inter-agency supports for people who are currently homeless, with a particular emphasis on minimising the incidence of rough sleeping; and enhance State supports to keep people in their own homes.*

- **Action Plan to Address Homelessness [December 2014]**

In December 2014, a special summit was hosted by the then Minister on homelessness, in order to reaffirm the Government's commitment to end involuntary long term homelessness by the end of 2016.

The plan focussed on actions which constituted an immediate response to the issue of rough sleeping in Dublin, and secondly, actions which tackle the more systemic issues, classified under the three categories of the housing led approach, namely Prevention, Accommodation and Supports.

- **Implementation Plan on the State’s Response to Homelessness [May 2014]**

The Implementation Plan sets out the actions/recommendations to be applied in implementing the findings of the Homeless Oversight Group, which reported in December 2013. This is a structured and practical plan, transitioning from a shelter-led to a sustainable housing-led response to homelessness. The plan emphasises a housing led approach as set out in the Government’s Homelessness Policy Statement (February 2013).

- **Homelessness Policy Statement [February 2013]**

This policy statement places the rapid provision of appropriate accommodation, with support as needed to ensure sustainable tenancies, as the key solution to ending homelessness. It aimed to explicitly set out a housing led approach to ending homelessness as the core policy in tackling homelessness, encompassing the following:

- Supply – availability and supply of secure, affordable and adequate housing
- Prevention – action to prevent, as far as possible, the occurrence or reoccurrence of homelessness
- Support – promoting independent living, with supports as appropriate.

- **The Way Home [2008-2013] – A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland [August 2008] and the subsequent National Implementation Plan [2009]**

This strategy represented a further development in policy at the time to address the issue of homelessness, and was informed by the findings and recommendations for the Review of the Implementation of Homeless Strategies by Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants in 2006. The thrust of the strategy was to re-orientate efforts towards:

- Preventing homelessness
- Eliminating the need to sleep rough
- Eliminating long term occupation of emergency accommodation
- Providing long term accommodation solutions
- Ensuring effective services
- Better co-ordinated funding arrangements

- **Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency and Long Term Accommodation Needs**

Circular Housing 2/17 dated 17 January 2017 outlined guidance for Housing Authorities to ensure effectiveness and consistency in responses to assist victims of domestic violence. The guidelines provide a summary of best practice in this area and the procedural pathways within which Local Authorities operate. Organisational responsibility is outlined between the key stakeholders in terms of crisis response to domestic violence, emergency accommodation and long term accommodation needs. Partnership working between statutory agencies and organisations involved locally in the delivery of domestic violence services is emphasised.

## Department of Health

- **National Drugs Strategy: Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025.**

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery sets out the Government's strategy to address the harm caused by substance misuse in Ireland up to 2025. It identifies a set of key actions to be delivered between 2017 and 2020, and provides an opportunity for the development of further actions from 2021 to 2025 to address needs that may emerge later on in the lifetime of the strategy. The following goals are detailed in the document:

Goal 1 - Promote and protect health and wellbeing

Goal 2 - Minimise the harms caused by the use and misuse of substances and promote rehabilitation and recovery

Goal 3 - Address the harms of drug markets and reduce access to drugs for harmful use

Goal 4 - Support participation of individuals, families and communities

Goal 5 - Develop sound and comprehensive evidence informed policies and actions

With regard to homelessness, the importance of homelessness services and substance misuse services working together in a collaborative way is highlighted under Goal 2, as is the need to improve the range of problem substance use services and rehabilitation supports for people with high support needs who are homeless, together with the availability of drug and alcohol, mental health and community integration services.

- **A Vision for Change [Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy]**

A Vision for Change is a strategy document which sets out the direction for Mental Health Services in Ireland. It describes a framework for building and fostering positive mental health across the entire community and for providing accessible, community-based, specialist services for people with mental illness. Homelessness is referenced extensively in the report, in particular, risks associated with mental health which can result in or contribute to homelessness.



Under each of the above strategic aims, actions were outlined at both national and local level in order to achieve the aims set out in the document.

#### **Policy Reference**

Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – July 2016 **(RI)**

Action Plan to Address Homelessness – December 2014 **(APAH)**

Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness – May 2014 **(IPSRH)**

Homeless Policy Statement – February 2013 **(HPS)**

The Way Home (2008-2013) – A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland **(TWH)**

Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency and Long Term Accommodation Needs (AVDV)

National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025 **(NDS)**

A Vision for Change (VC)

Circular Housing **(CH)**

**The above documents are referenced in the Themes and Actions section of this Plan.**

## Regional Structure

Kildare County Council, under a shared service arrangement, is the lead housing authority for the Mid East Region with regard to homelessness. This role includes overseeing the regional Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum and Management Group as provided for in Sections 38 and 39 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. Kildare County Council is also responsible for managing the region's administrative relationship with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The coordinating role of the lead housing authority does not impinge on any of the statutory functions of the other housing authorities in the region, including those with regard to arrangements for the provision of accommodation for persons considered homeless.

### *Mid East Region Management Group*

A Management Group of the Mid East Homelessness Consultative Forum was established in accordance with legislation with the primary responsibility being the preparation of this statutory Mid East Homelessness Action Plan. The management group make recommendations to relevant statutory bodies in relation to the services required to address homelessness in the region, on funding for such services and on the ongoing operation of this Homelessness Action Plan and subsequent blueprint for Homeless Services.

Specifically, the Management Group:

- Assess and make decisions in principle on all funding applications for homeless services.
- Submit proposed budget for services to the budgetary authorities within the relevant statutory funding agencies.
- Are responsible for developing effective, efficient and integrated responses to homelessness, including the approval of three year local homeless action plans and the commitment to seek adequate and appropriate resources for their implementation.
- Have links with similar groups in neighbouring counties to develop a high level regional focus on homelessness.

### **Mid East Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum**

The Mid East Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum was first established in April 2010 arising from Ministerial directions issued by the then Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in Circular HU 1/2010 in accordance with the provisions of sections 38, 39 and 41 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009.

The role of this forum is to provide a consultative mechanism in relation to homelessness in the context of the preparation of this statutory Mid East Homelessness Action Plan 2018-2020.

The aim of the Mid East Region Homelessness Consultative Forum is to provide information, views, advice or reports in relation to homelessness and to encourage and assess implementation of objectives to address homelessness in both national and regional policies.

The Forum places an emphasis on strengthening preventative policies, building relationships, reviewing procedures and improving services to reduce instances of homelessness across the region.

During the period of the last plan the Mid East Region Consultative Forum met on a quarterly basis and discussed matters including:

- Preparation and monitoring of Homelessness Action Plan
- Review of homeless presentations across the region
- Housing Assistance Payment Scheme
- Discharge policy from hospitals and prisons
- Impact of homelessness on Travellers
- National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services in Ireland
- Regional and Agency updates

The membership of the Mid East Homelessness Forum is drawn from sectors as outlined in Circular HU 1/2010.

Further information with regard to the membership of both the Management Group and Forum is included at Appendix 1.

### **Funding**

As the lead authority in the Management Group, Kildare County Council has ultimate responsibility for the finalisation of the region's expenditure programme, which it will develop in co-operation with the other two housing authorities. The regional allocation is delegated to Kildare County Council and this funding will be disbursed appropriately across all the housing authorities in the region.

The following is the total cost of homeless services across the region for the period 2014-2016, including provision of emergency accommodation, together with support services such as homeless prevention and tenancy sustainment.

2014	2015	2016
€1,248,848	€2,151,820	€3,069,044

You will note from the above that the costs associated with homeless services across the region are increasing year on year.

In addition to the above, funding has been provided by the HSE arising from existing funding arrangements, as well as priority actions in the HSE Primary Care Operational Plan 2017. In the Mid East Region funding has been provided for costs associated with staff such as care workers and case workers in the following facilities:

Service Provider	Funding	Period
Peter McVerry Trust [Newbridge]	€200,000	2017/2018
Youth for Peace [Athy]	€139,000	2017

## Background to Services in the Mid East Region

During the lifetime of the last Action Plan, 2013-2016, significant challenges were faced across the region in dealing with the increasing numbers of people and families presenting as homeless to the local authorities. The impact of this demand for services, coupled with the lack of housing supply, has led to many people and families finding themselves in a homeless situation. The development of relationships between the local authorities and homeless service providers in the region has been critical in dealing with the many and complex issues that have arisen, not least of which is access to accommodation either through local authorities, approved housing bodies or the private rental market. A reflection of these relationships is the fact that a number of service level agreements are now in place between the local authorities and homeless service providers across the region.

The private rented sector across the region is under pressure to deliver the required units to meet demand. The Mid East Region falls within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) and, as a result, is uniquely affected by pressures on housing supply and exacerbated rent pressures due to its proximity to Dublin and being within the immediate commuter belt zone of the Capital.

Market value of residential property in recent years has increased across the region, which has in turn prompted landlords and banks/receivers to sell housing units, which has reduced the supply of rental accommodation. This has resulted in many tenants being unable to secure alternative private rented accommodation and becoming homeless as a consequence.

While the Forum will continue to work during the lifetime of this Action Plan to address issues related to homelessness across the region, tenancy sustainability will be a focus area for all those providing services and support arising from homelessness.

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government support Housing Authorities by providing up to a maximum of 90% funding for homeless services, subject to annual budget review.

### **Kildare**

In response to the number of families and individuals seeking assistance in relation to homelessness, Kildare County Council has developed a partnership approach with key homeless agencies to improve coordination and increase supports available to those at risk of homelessness. The Housing Department works closely with a number of organisations who provide services to homeless people, in particular Peter McVerry Trust, Simon, Focus and Threshold, in an effort to secure emergency accommodation and transition units throughout the county.

Kildare County Council employs a Homeless Team comprising of 3 Homeless Outreach Workers, together with support staff, to aid and assist the families and individuals presenting as homeless. Over the last two years this Team has been supplemented by staff from Peter McVerry Trust, Simon and Focus who have provided homeless support workers to the local authority on foot of a service level agreement.

Over the coming years these positions will transition to Tenancy Sustainability Officers employed by the local authority. While the focus will remain on providing assistance to people presenting as homeless in the first instance, it is also recognised that assistance is needed in helping people to find and retain tenancies into the future. The Homeless Team is supported by two social workers, employed by Kildare County Council, who work with traveller and vulnerable families and in cases of domestic violence and housing emergencies.

During the lifetime of the last Action Plan a number of units were identified from the council's housing stock to be used as transition accommodation and further such units will be developed over the course of this plan, should there continue to be a need. There are 33 hostel beds in the county in Newbridge and Athy operated by voluntary agencies. A 7 unit facility was opened in the former Dominican Priory in Athy in 2017 and is managed on a 24/7 basis by Peter McVerry Trust, which will operate as a family hub.

While bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation is provided in cases where the other alternatives are either not available or not suitable, every effort is being made to reduce the use of this type of accommodation and this will continue to be a focus during the life of this Plan.

Kildare County Council operates an out of hours freephone homeless service with the support and assistance of Peter McVerry Trust. The freephone service, which is 1800 804 307, is available from 5pm to 9pm Monday to Friday and noon to 5pm Saturday and Sunday.

In addition to the above, Teach Tearmainn, in Kildare Town, is a dedicated service working to address the issues of domestic violence, and provides the only specialised service in Co Kildare. The opening of a purpose built Women and Children's Refuge in 2014 was a very welcome addition to the county and enhanced the services already provided by Teach Tearmainn.

### **Meath**

Meath County Council's Homeless Service is operated on a team based approach, involving Senior Housing Management, Housing Allocation Officers and representatives of statutory and voluntary sector service providers that are directly involved with homeless clients in Co Meath. There are currently three Settlement Officers employed by Meath County Council.

The Settlement Officers deliver the homeless service on a case management basis. As informed by national policy, prevention of homelessness remains the key aim of the service. This involves a thorough assessment of a client's circumstances, and the implementation of appropriate interventions. Homelessness has complex causes and the Settlement Officers

respond to the psycho-social factors affecting each case in a strategic manner. Extensive support is provided in the prevention of homelessness with the adoption of a housing first led approach, through securing private rented accommodation, the payment of deposits and transitioning to Housing Assistance Payment.

Emergency accommodation is provided in exceptional circumstances. Co Meath does not have residential style emergency accommodation facilities (hostels) located within the County.

Accordingly, the provision of emergency accommodation has been through private landlord suppliers in terms of house shares, with shared self catering facilities, through a number of regular suppliers (currently 6 suppliers). The Settlement Officers have forged good working relationships with local agents and landlords, which has facilitated the supply of private rented accommodation for homeless clients, both in the form of emergency accommodation and long term private rented tenancies.

In addition to the above, Meath County Council has retained four bed places in Drogheda Homeless Aid, Drogheda. However, the Homeless Service avails of additional bed places subject to availability at the time of placement request. Typically, 5-7 bed places are occupied by Meath's Homeless Service at any one time.

Two supported emergency accommodation units have been established in the County via Approved Housing Bodies (Capital Assistance Scheme funded units) and have become operational in 2017.

- Simon Community: Capacity for 4 bed places, with a specific focus on homeless clients with substance misuse issues
- Drogheda Homeless Aid: Capacity for 3 beds, with a specific focus on homeless female clients.

It is the intention to replicate this model, with the objective of delivering a further 4 units in the short term.

In relation to domestic violence, Meath's Women Refuge is located in Navan, and comprises four family rooms and one single room for women and children experiencing domestic violence. The Refuge operates a 24 hour phone line and an outreach service which includes court accompaniment. In addition, peer to peer support groups are facilitated, as are education and awareness programmes.

Central to the work of the Settlement Officers is the formulation of settlement plans with clients. This includes organising referrals to other relevant services and facilitating interagency co-operation and the coordination of services.

As part of the case management process Settlement Officers have agreed protocols for accepting clients on discharge from hospitals, treatment centres and on release from prison. The aim of these protocols is to ensure that clients are assessed prior to placement in accommodation, and that the medical and social supports are in place in order for the clients to live independently.

### **Wicklow**

Wicklow County Council employs a Homeless Outreach Worker to provide advice and support to the increasing number of individuals and families presenting as homeless. A Simon Community support worker is also based in Wicklow County Council and assists with the ongoing work around prevention, settlement and outreach.

There are a number of organisations providing homeless supports and services in Co Wicklow, located entirely on the eastern side of the county, with a concentration of services in the main population base, Bray.

Demand for homeless services places severe strain on the resources of the Housing Department. Rising rents and lack of private rented accommodation options throughout the county has resulted in an increasing number of people seeking support from the council's homeless services.

Wicklow County Council, in partnership with the Dublin Simon Community, has developed a supported accommodation facility in Wicklow town for people experiencing homelessness, which accommodates ten individuals. Two further Council owned properties in Bray in partnership with Dublin Simon Community and one in Arklow with Tiglin provide low to medium supported accommodation and this successful model is being replicated throughout the county.

In addition, Wicklow Homeless Five Loaves Drop in Facility in Bray provides a range of daily support services, including the provision of meals, shower and laundry facilities. Education and training opportunities are also provided to people availing of the service as well as the provision of sleeping bags, tents and food supplies.

Ark Housing Association Ltd is a sister charity of Five Loaves and provides a transitional housing programme in Bray. The facility can accommodate up to six people and is open to males aged eighteen and over. A broad range of supports are on offer and the programme links in with addiction, counselling and other related services in the Bray area. Service users must be registered as homeless with the local authority and must also be registered on the social housing list.

Sa Bhaile Homeless Project, Bray, works intensively with people experiencing homelessness, including securing properties for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. A part-time Project Co-ordinator is employed to provide supports in relation to counselling/addiction/supported living/tenancy sustainment etc. This project is part funded by Wicklow County Council.



Crisis accommodation is provided by Bray Women's Refuge and Sonas Refuge, Wicklow Town for women and children escaping domestic violence. Both refuges provide support and relevant information to women accessing its service as well as delivering external outreach programmes.

It is intended to further enhance the Homeless Team with the provision of Tenancy Sustainment services. The overall objective of Tenancy Support & Sustainment Services is to provide support to persons or households that are at risk of becoming homeless, to assist them to occupy (or continue) to occupy their accommodation and progress from homelessness or potential homelessness towards independent sustainable living. This could involve initial visits to client's current accommodation or place of detention and will involve home visits by the Tenancy Support & Sustainment Service Project Workers whose role will be to support households and signpost and facilitate access to mainstream services.

### **Homeless Action Team**

The Homeless Action Team (HAT) provides a multidisciplinary approach to solving the needs of homeless persons or homeless families and facilitates the proactive interagency case management of homeless households. The service is provided with the close partnership of the HSE, Department of Social Protection and Voluntary Housing Bodies.

HATs comprise the local decision making expertise available to people who are homeless in the specific locality and includes health, housing and Approved Housing Bodies who provide emergency, transitional or long term residential accommodation.

The purpose of the HAT is:

- To respond to the needs of clients in emergency accommodation holistically
- To reduce duration of stay in emergency accommodation
- To reduce the cyclical nature of homelessness
- To ensure co-operation amongst agencies
- To identify at an early stage if a client has relapsed and put in place appropriate supports

Each local authority in the region operates a HAT, which meets on a frequent basis.

A shared care and case management ethos is central to the success of the HAT process, so as to ensure the completion of thorough assessments and the implementation of appropriate interventions for the clients concerned. The Mid East Region is committed to reviewing the operation of HAT so as to further advance this ethos, and ensure the necessary framework is in place to achieve same, including representation on HATs and referral processes.

### **PASS System**

The PASS System database is being used by statutory and voluntary agencies involved with homeless services, to capture emergency accommodation placements, by any agency. It is an online system that generates information in terms of homeless presentations and managing access to accommodation. The system assists in collating key information in terms of presentations to homeless services and service occupancy. Information recorded on the PASS system can assist in improving service delivery by ensuring that resources are used effectively by reducing duplication of effort and facilitating agencies to work together to provide a more integrated service delivery. All information is recorded in line with the protocols developed by homeless services for the PASS system and Data Protection legislation.

### **Threshold**

Threshold is a frontline advice and advocacy service for people with housing problems and people at risk of homelessness. Their service is free, independent and confidential. Many people are unable to solve their housing problems on their own. Threshold's service is available to the mid east region.

Since 2016 Threshold has provided a Tenancy Protection Service to the mid east region. This service is delivered on behalf of local authorities in partnership with other statutory and non-statutory bodies. Threshold works, on a daily basis, with people experiencing housing problems and is in a unique position to analyse existing problems and identify necessary policy change to improve the operation of the housing system in Ireland. The organisation is at the forefront of the development of innovative and creative approaches to overcoming housing problems.

## Extent of Homelessness in the Mid East Region

The number of people experiencing homelessness is constantly changing. However, recent years have witnessed a significant increase in the number of persons presenting to homeless services in the region, with a corresponding increase in emergency accommodation placements. This trend has also witnessed a substantial increase in family homeless presentations.

Table 1 below outlines the number of homeless household presentations, for the period 2014-2016, with a breakdown also provided for the composition of these households regarding the corresponding total number of adults and dependent children.

**Table1: Number of Homeless Presentations per County (2014-2016)**

	2014			2015			2016		
	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Kildare	428	519	428	405	520	531	465	586	583
Meath	574	597	484	579	631	623	446	627	517
Wicklow	218	255	172	267	306	240	522	631	583
Total	1220	1371	1084	1251	1457	1394	1433	1844	1683

Table 2 below outlines the number of homeless households placed in emergency accommodation for the period 2014-2016, with a breakdown also provided for the composition of these households regarding total number of adults and dependent children.

**Table 2: Number of Homeless Emergency Accommodation Placements per County (2014-2016)**

	2014			2015			2016		
	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children	No. of Households	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Kildare	24	201	52	52	274	84	42	304	62
Meath	121	137	44	198	237	99	173	331	127
Wicklow	11	16	25	19	20	36	15	20	31
Total	156	354	121	269	531	219	230	655	220

An analysis of households placed in emergency accommodation in 2016 highlighted the following key primary contributing factors to homelessness in the region:

- Failure to obtain accommodation following Notice to Quit (Private Rented)
- Substance misuse issues
- Mental Health
- Family Breakdown
- Release from Prison
- Domestic Violence

It is important to note that a household may have a number of underlying reasons that have resulted in their homelessness.

## *Emerging Trends and Priority Themes*

The experience of homelessness in the Mid East Region over the period of the previous plan, in tandem with due consideration of the current policy context, has informed the identification of the key themes and actions.

Focus on prevention remains core to the operation of homeless services in the Mid East Region. Significant work is undertaken to prevent an emergency accommodation placement in the first instance. This has involved the development of systems, protocols and good working relationship with a range of stakeholders. This is particularly fundamental in the prevention of homelessness among key target groups most at risk, including victims of domestic violence, sex offenders, prisoners being released from prison and youths leaving state care.

As is evident in the statistics provided for the period 2014-2016, it has not been possible to prevent homelessness in all cases, and the provision of emergency accommodation becomes a necessary intervention. The need to ensure sufficient provision of quality emergency accommodation across the various models of provision is apparent, from general supply to provision that is tailored specifically for the spectrum of homeless cohorts and their respective needs.

A housing led approach has been to the fore in successfully exiting households from emergency accommodation during the period of the last Action Plan. The need for tenancy sustainment supports has been recognised as critically important for certain clients in order to maintain their tenancies and break the cycle of homelessness that can often exist.

Furthermore, interagency wrap around health and welfare supports is a prerequisite for any successful long-term exit from homelessness for particular homeless cohorts, most notably those suffering from mental health and substance misuse issues. Across the Mid East Region these two issues have represented the key contributing factors in a large proportion of homeless cases. An inter-agency response is fundamental in providing accommodation, both temporary and permanent, for people who find themselves dealing with other issues in addition to homelessness.

A key emerging trend has been the issue of family homelessness, which is captured in the data outline in Table 3. This trend has posed considerable challenges to the, heretofore, traditional single adult orientated homeless services, both in terms of emergency accommodation provision and child protection considerations. The impacts of the recent recession and subsequent housing crisis, including the decreasing supply and increasing cost of private rented accommodation, across this region, has resulted in homelessness impacting on a far wider cohort within society.

In recent years more and more families have been presenting to our local authorities as homeless, mainly due to repossession of the family home or losing private rented accommodation and being unable to source alternative accommodation themselves and also as a result of domestic violence.

The number of homeless people within the travelling community has also increased in recent years across the region. Again this is mainly as a result of traveller families losing private rented accommodation, due to landlords selling properties or withdrawing properties from the rental market, and being unable to source alternative accommodation. In addition to the work of the Mid East Region Homelessness Management Group and Forum, each local authority has a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. Each local authority must also prepare, adopt and implement 5 year rolling accommodation programmes to accelerate the provision of accommodation for Travellers. These programmes set out the targets for the accommodation needs under the Social Housing Needs Assessment.

The Mid East Region has also witnessed an increase in the number of single women presenting as homeless.

People with disabilities are also impacted, as it can be difficult to source suitable accommodation to meet their needs and we find that a number of people who engage with Homeless Services have a disability. Each local authority has in place a Disability Steering Group who have prepared a Strategic Plan for Housing Persons with Disabilities for each county, in accordance with national policies and guidelines. The Disability Strategy and the Homeless Action Plan will dovetail to ensure effective service delivery for this cohort of presentations.

The need for a common information gathering framework within the Mid East Region has been identified, with a view to establishing the causes, extent and nature of homelessness within the region, so as to inform policy direction and service delivery of homeless services to the optimum effect during the lifetime of the plan.

The reasons for homelessness and for people remaining homeless are complex and an inter-agency approach is needed in order to address the many and varying issues that people are dealing with. This Plan is designed to inform and assist in a multi-agency approach to dealing with homelessness across the mid-east region.

It is important to note that a minority of homeless clients are unwilling to engage with services and may have repeatedly breached tenancy conditions, or are involved in anti social behaviour, which results in their continued homelessness, despite agencies' efforts and interventions.

**Table 3: Summary of Homelessness Services in Mid East Region**

Location	Service	Capacity (Bed Places)	Target Group	Local Authority Homeless Officers (FTE)
<b>Emergency Accommodation</b>				
<b>Kildare</b>				
Newbridge	Peter McVerry Trust	21	Male/Female	
Athy	Youth for Peace	10	Male	
Countywide	B&Bs/Hotels		Families/Male/Female	
<b>Meath</b>				
Drogheda	Drogheda Homeless Aid	4	Male	
Countywide	Private Landlords (Regular Suppliers)	25	Families/Male/Female	
Countywide	B&Bs		Families/Male/Female	
<b>Wicklow</b>				
South Dublin	Serviced Accommodation (ZFA Group)	4	Families	
Countywide	B&B (Retained Beds)		Families/Male/Female	
Countywide	Various hotels ad hoc		Families/Male/Female	
Wicklow Town	Social Housing as Emergency		Families	
<b>Supported Transitional Accommodation</b>				
<b>Kildare</b>				
The Priory Family Hub, Athy	Peter McVerry Trust	7 units	Families	
Athy	Youth for Peace	4	Male	
Newbridge	Peter McVerry Trust	9	Male/Female	
Various	Kildare County Council	12 units	Families/Male/Female	
<b>Meath</b>				
Navan	Simon Community	4	Male/Female	
Drogheda	Drogheda Homeless Aid	3	Female	
<b>Wicklow</b>				
Bray	Dublin Simon Community	8	Male/Female	
Wicklow Town	Dublin Simon Community	10	Male/Female	
Arklow	Tiglin	4	Male/Female	
Greystones	Tiglin	30	Male/Female	

### CAS Homeless Units (Permanent Tenancies)

<b>Kildare</b>			
Newbridge	Simon Community	35 units	Male/Female/Families
Various	Circle	4 units	
Newbridge	Focus	1 unit	
<b>Meath</b>			
Navan	Simon Community	1 Unit	
Ashbourne	Simon Community	2 Units	
<b>Wicklow</b>			
Newtownmountkennedy	Tuath	32 units	Families
Arklow	Dublin Simon Community	3 units	Families
Wicklow Town	Dublin Simon Community	5	Families/Male/Female
Blessington	Dublin Simon Community	1	Families

### Local Authority Homeless Officers/Tenancy Sustainment Officers

<b>Kildare</b>	6
<b>Meath</b>	3
<b>Wicklow</b>	1

### Voluntary Homeless Bodies - Outreach Workers \*

<b>Kildare</b>	0
<b>Meath</b>	0.5
<b>Wicklow</b>	1

\*The Voluntary Homeless Bodies operating in the Region have additional staff, to those identified in this table, working on the ground. The above reflects the number of staff supported by the local authorities in the Region.



## Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators will be used to monitor the implementation of this Action Plan.

Current national performance indicators require each local authority to provide annual data with regard to the number of adult individuals in long term emergency accommodation (i.e. 6 months or more) as follows:

- Number of adult individuals in emergency accommodation that are long term (i.e. 6 months or more within the previous year) homeless as a % of the total number of homeless adult individuals in emergency accommodation at 31<sup>st</sup> December.

**Table 4: Recorded figure for the local authorities in the region for the period 2014-2016.**

	% of Adult Individuals in Emergency Accommodation at Year End for greater than 6 Months		
	2014	2015	2016
Kildare	52.83%	12.6%	61.7%
Meath	5.71%	1.8%	20.37%
Wicklow	46.34%	33.93%	32.61%

The Mid East Region Homelessness Forum will measure progress by collecting accurate data as follows:

- New homeless individuals presenting in the region and identifying the primary reason for their presentation.
- People sleeping rough and the patterns of rough sleeping.
- People in emergency accommodation and the duration of stay in emergency accommodation.
- Homeless people presenting repeatedly as homeless and monitoring the reason for their presentation.
- People moved from emergency homeless accommodation to long term housing options

## **Statutory Consultation**

As provided in the Act the following bodies were consulted in the preparation of this Action Plan:

- Mid East Region Homelessness Consultative Forum
- Adjoining Housing Authorities
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee [Kildare]
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee [Meath]
- Housing Strategic Policy Committee [Wicklow]

## **Revocation and Period of Plan**

On adoption of this Plan, the previous Plan adopted in January 2013 now stands revoked and this Plan shall remain in force until 31 December 2020.

## **Adoption**

This Action Plan was adopted by the relevant Authorities on the following dates:

Kildare County Council	-	18 December 2017
Meath County Council	-	4 December 2017
Wicklow County Council	-	4 December 2017

## Mid East Region Themes and Actions

The following actions reflect the objectives of key Housing/Homeless polices as set out in Policy Context section of this document. Where applicable, the actions outlined have been linked to the relevant policy/circular as abbreviated below.

The following themes are prioritised by the Mid East Region:

Theme	Actions	Policy Reference	Responsible Body	Timeframe
Prevention of Homelessness Tenancy Sustainment	<p>Prevent homelessness by providing support and advice through Homeless Services Teams.</p> <p>Provide social housing support as a means of preventing homelessness where possible.</p> <p>Support mortgage to rent process.</p> <p>Provide tenancy sustainability service through Homeless Services Teams in each local authority in the region.</p> <p>Support and facilitate national media campaigns targeted at families and individuals worried about, or at risk of, losing their homes, including the availability of Threshold Tenancy Protection Services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Actions 1.2, 1.17, 1.21)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.16)</li> <li>▪ TWH ( Strategic Aim 1)</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government [DHPLG] Threshold Approved Housing Bodies [AHBs] Health Service Executive [HSE] Tusla</p>	2018-2020

<p><b>Emergency Accommodation/Supported Temporary Accommodation</b></p>	<p>Ensure a sufficient supply of suitable emergency and/or supported temporary accommodation in order to meet need as it arises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.8)</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities AHBs</p>	<p>2018-2020 Including quarterly review.</p>
<p><b>Transition from Emergency Accommodation/Supported Temporary Accommodation</b></p>	<p>Provide social housing support as a means of preventing homelessness where possible.  Adopt an interagency approach through the Homeless Action Teams.  Collaborate with approved housing bodies and other relevant support services to identify housing solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.2)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Actions 1-6)</li> <li>▪ TWF (Strategic Aim 3, 4)</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities Homeless Action Team members [HAT] AHBs</p>	<p>2018-2020 Including monthly review at HAT meetings</p>
<p><b>Families with Child Dependents in Emergency Accommodation/Supported Temporary Accommodation</b></p>	<p>Work with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that practical support and assistance is provided to homeless families with child dependents in emergency accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Actions 1.5, 1.6)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.16)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 1)</li> </ul>	<p>Tusla HSE Local Authorities HAT</p>	<p>Monthly review at HAT meeting.</p>

<p><b>Support and Advice to Young People Leaving State Care in relation to accommodation needs.</b></p>	<p>Work with Tusla and Approved Housing Bodies to progress projects identified for Capital Assistance Scheme [CAS] funding to acquire residential units to accommodate young people exiting State care.</p> <p>Engage with Tusla Aftercare Steering Committees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Actions 1.7, 5.6)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.19)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 1)</li> <li>▪ CH 46/2014</li> <li>▪ CH 30/2017</li> </ul>	<p>Tusla HSE Local Authorities AHBs</p>	<p>2018-2020</p> <p>Quarterly review at Aftercare Steering Committee meeting.</p>
<p><b>Assistance to Victims of Domestic Violence in relation to emergency and long term accommodation needs.</b></p>	<p>Implement best practice for local authorities in relation to their housing remit and ensure an effective and consistent housing response to victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>Support the provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence through Capital Assistance Scheme, in collaboration with Tusla.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.8)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.18)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 1)</li> <li>▪ CH 2/2017 and AVDV</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities Tusla DHPLG AHBs</p> <p>Sonas Bray Women's Refuge Navan Women's Refuge Teach Tearmainn Kildare Town</p>	<p>Annual review of protocols</p>

**Ensure proper supports are available and accessible to prisoners on their release.**

Liaise with Irish Prison and Probation Services in relation to planned discharges where the person is identified as homeless or likely to be homeless.

Enhance multi-agency arrangements within the region to ensure that accommodation, welfare and health supports for prisoners, are in place prior to their release and remain in place to prevent homelessness.

Ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively for people being released from prisons or on temporary release.

- RI ( Action1.10)
- IPSRH (Action 5.19)
- THW (Strategic Aim 1)

Irish Prison Service  
Probation Service  
Local Authorities  
HSE

2018-2020  
Protocols to be reviewed annually.

<p><b>Measures to address the issue of accommodation of sex offenders who have a social housing need.</b></p>	<p>Ensure that there is a designated Sex Offender Liaison Officer [SOLO] within each of the three local authorities in the region</p> <p>Engage with SORUM [Sex Offenders Risk Assessment and Management] in relation to planned discharges where the person is identified as homeless or likely to be homeless.</p> <p>Enhance multi-agency arrangements within the region to ensure that accommodation, welfare and health supports for prisoners, including sex offenders returning to the region, are in place prior to their release and remain in place to prevent homelessness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.11)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.19)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 1)</li> </ul>	<p>Irish Prison Service Probation Service SORUM Local Authorities Department of Social Protection [DSP] An Garda Siochana</p>	<p>2018-2020</p> <p>Protocols to be reviewed annually.</p>
<p><b>Supports to Rough Sleepers</b></p>	<p>Provide advice and support through the Homeless Services Team and ensure interagency collaboration. The Housing First model will be considered in the context of overall supports that will be required in relation to this cohort.</p> <p>Rough sleeper count to be undertaken annually.</p> <p>Ensure a cold weather initiative is in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.13)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.1)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 1)</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities AHBs An Garda Siochana</p>	<p>Annual review.</p>

**Ensure proper supports are available and accessible to homeless people suffering from mental health issues.**

Provide the most appropriate primary care and mental health services to those in homeless services and improve their ability to sustain a normal tenancy.

Ensure that each Homeless Action Team [HAT] has access to and is being supported by a member of the Community Mental Health Team, the priority being an integrated service delivered through HAT.

Ensure that discharge protocols/policies are in place and working effectively in line with new national Integrated Discharge Policies for homeless people being discharged from acute hospitals and mental health facilities.

Identify proposals relevant to mental health and homelessness for implementation in the region.

- RI ( Action1.15)
- IPSRH (Action 5.7)
- TWH (Strategic Aim 5)
- VC (Section 15.2)

HSE  
Local Authorities  
AHBs  
HAT

Monthly review at HAT.  
  
Protocols to be reviewed annually.



<p><b>Ensure proper supports are available and accessible to those with substance misuse issues.</b></p>	<p>Provide the most appropriate drug rehabilitation service to those in homeless services to improve their ability to sustain a tenancy.</p> <p>Ensure that each Homeless Action Team [HAT] has access to and is being supported by a member of the Addiction Services Team, the priority being an integrated service delivered through HAT.</p> <p>Identify proposals relevant to drug rehabilitation and homelessness for implementation in the region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RI (Action 1.16)</li> <li>▪ NDS (Action 5.7.3)</li> <li>▪ IPSRH (Action 5.7)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 5)</li> </ul>	<p>HSE Drugs and Alcohol Task Force HAT</p>	<p>Monthly review at HAT</p>
<p><b>Effective Services for Homeless Provision</b></p>	<p>Ensure service level agreements are in place for all services funded through Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 to deliver greater efficiencies, better performance, better outcomes in pursuing the objectives of a housing-led approach</p> <p>Ensure best practices in all dealings with homeless persons in line with implementation of National Quality Homeless Standards.</p> <p>Ensure that HAT continues to operate in each local authority. This will be subject to annual review by the Management Group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IPSRH (Actions 5.7, 5.15, 5.17)</li> <li>▪ TWH (Strategic Aim 6)</li> </ul>	<p>Local Authorities HAT AHBs HSE</p>	<p>Annual review by Management Group</p>

**Statistical Information and Value for Money**

Capture evidence based data and report quarterly.

Ensure that the PASS system is being implemented and operating effectively in the region.

Ensure service level agreements are in place for all services funded through Section 10 to deliver greater efficiencies, better performance, better outcomes in pursuing the objectives of a housing-led approach

Monitor all expenditure to ensure maximum effectiveness and value for money.

- RI (Action 1.14)
- IPSRH (Action 5.7, 5.14, 5.15, 5.20)
- TWH (Strategic Aim 6)

Local Authorities Housing Authority [Lead]

Quarterly review by Management Group

### **Membership of Mid East Region Homelessness Management Group**

Tadhg McDonnell, Director of Services, Kildare County Council [Chair]  
Barry Lynch, Director of Services, Meath County Council  
Joe Lane, Director of Services, Wicklow County Council  
Ollie Brady, Administrative Officer, Kildare County Council  
Justin Parkes, Primary Care Manager, Health Service Executive

### **Membership of Mid East Region Homelessness Forum**

Mid East Local Authorities: Kildare County Council – Lead Authority (Director + 1)  
Meath County Council – Director or nominee  
Wicklow County Council – Director or nominee

Mandatory Representation: Health Service Executive (HSE)  
Prison Service  
Probation Service  
Education and Training Board

Other Representation: Member of County Council [Lead Authority]  
Department of Social Protection  
Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force  
Tusla

Approved Bodies and  
Other Bodies: Simon Community  
Focus Ireland  
Peter McVerry Trust  
Bray Area Partnership  
Meath Women's Refuge

