



HOMELESS ACTION PLAN NORTH-WEST REGION

(2023 – 2028)



Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



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GLOSSARY

RTB	Rented Tenancy Board
HAP	Housing Accommodation Payment
HAT	Homeless Action Teams
RTSS	Resettlement Tenancy Support and Sustainment Service
LA	Local Authority (County Council)
Voucher Scheme	Voucher issued to homeless people in Donegal County Council and this can be used to access emergency accommodation from certain private providers
NQSF	National Quality Standards Framework
ETHOS	European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

NORTH-WEST HOMELESSNESS ACTION PLAN

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Homelessness Action Plan for the North-West Region is to cover the period 2023- 2028 and replaces the previous plan which covered the period of 2013-18. There are 4 key Strategic Aims in this Plan:

1. To **Prevent** Homelessness – early intervention to people at risk of homelessness;
2. To **Protect** those experiencing homelessness through emergency accommodation and targeted support;
3. **Progression** – to identify pathways to long-term housing solutions;
4. **Ensure Proper Governance, Financial Oversight and Funding** to deliver homeless services.

This Homelessness Action Plan was developed as a result of a detailed consultative process comprising submissions from agencies and groups, workshops held with frontline service providers, stakeholders and advocacy groups in the region and by the direction of the Working Group of the North-West Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum. The North-West Joint Homelessness Consultative Management Group approved the Plan on 11 January 2023. The Plan was appraised by the three counties' Strategic Policy Committees and finally adopted by the elected members of the three Local Authorities of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim in March 2023.

Members of the Working Group of the North-West Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum are: Sligo County Council, Donegal County Council, Leitrim County Council, Sligo Social Services, North-West Simon, HSE Social Inclusion. (For membership of the Forum and Management Group, see the Appendices.)

The current North-West Homelessness Action Plan expired in 2018 and an update is now overdue, having been postponed until guidance was obtained from the Government. On 23 December 2021, Circular 44/2021 was issued to Local Authorities by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, providing guidance on the preparation of Homelessness Action Plans by all Regional Lead Authorities, supported by the Forum and Management Groups.

In particular, the Regional Homelessness Action Plan will reflect the policy positions and actions contained in the *Housing For All* Policy which was published in September 2021.

The preparation of Homelessness Action Plans is provided for under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 2009: s.6 and requires local authorities to adopt a strategic approach for dealing with homelessness in their areas.

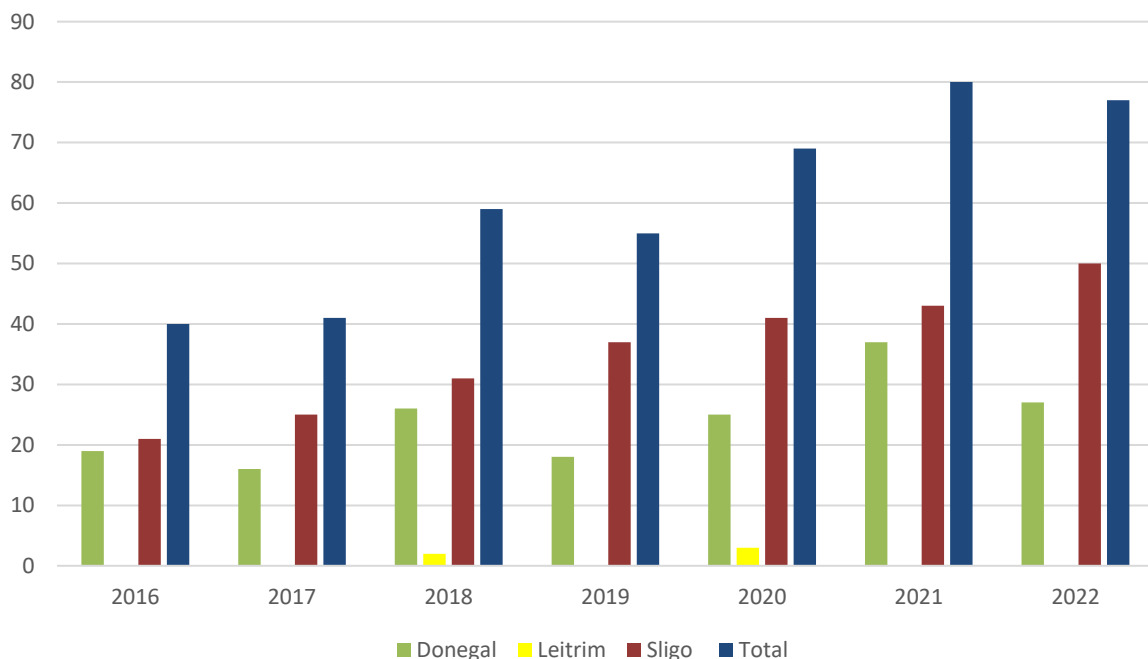
Terms of Reference for the Plan:

- I. To discuss the policy, legislative and societal context of homelessness at the current time.
- II. To examine the scope and extent of homelessness in the North-West.
- III. To examine and review the delivery of homeless services in the region since the last plan was agreed. The period of the previous plan was 2013-2018.
- IV. To examine the resources and tools to address homelessness in the region.
- V. To develop the new Action Plan 2023-2028.
- VI. To comply with the legislative basis for Homelessness Action Plans.
- VII. To achieve joint management and governance with responsible bodies.
- VIII. Consultation process and methods of engaging the stakeholders.

Chapter 2 Extent of Homelessness in the North-West Region

2.1 Number of Adults in Emergency Accommodation in the North-West Region

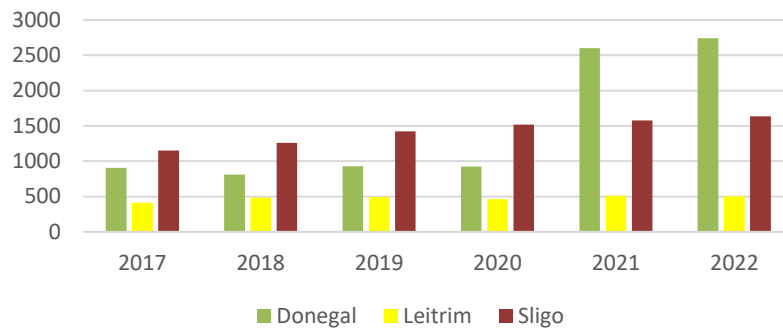
From the period 2016 – 2022, the number of adults in emergency accommodation has increased by 93% - the increase in Sligo was 138% during this period.



(from www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness-data on 11/7/22)

2.2 Housing Waiting Lists in North-West Region

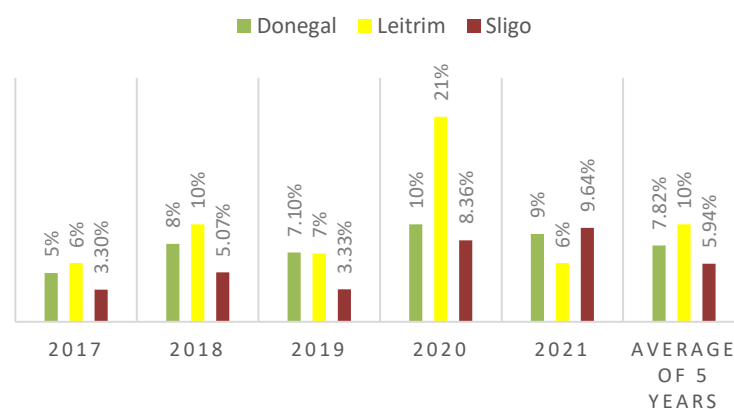
The below table shows that there have been increases in the number of applicants on Social Housing Support lists in all three local authorities, with the percentage changes for SHS between 2017-2022 being 10.39% increase for Donegal; 47% less for Leitrim and 28.4% increase for Sligo. The comparison of all counties' figures for HAP, SHS and Transfer list (total) could not be done since 2017-2020 figures were not available. However, the Sligo Total increased by 42.3% since 2017 and Leitrim increased by 21.55% in this time.



	Donegal Total	Donegal SHS	Donegal HAP & Transfer list	Leitrim Total	Leitrim HAP & Transfer list	Leitrim SHS	Sligo Total	Sligo HAP & Transfer list	Sligo SHS
2017	905	905	-	413	81	332	1150	421	697
2018	813	813	-	487	176	311	1259	584	585
2019	927	927	-	496	221	275	1425	676	657
2020	926	926	-	461	259	202	1520	754	673
2021	2602	860	1742	513	312	201	1576	765	713
2022	2740	999	1741	502	325	177	1636	741	895

House data up to 31st May 2022 (Sligo, Leitrim) and 22nd Sept 2022 (Donegal)¹

NW Percentage of Housing Allocations to Homeless Households of the Total Allocations

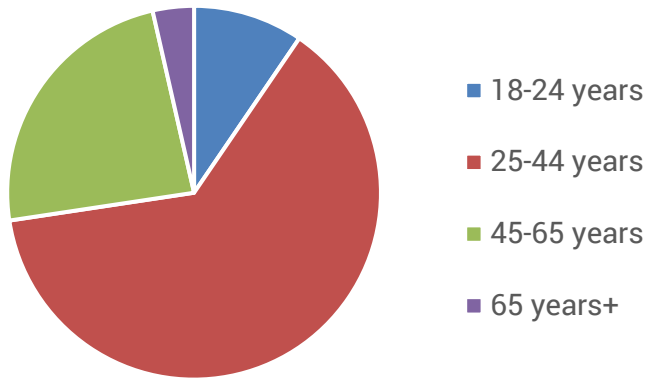


House data September 2022

¹ SHS includes Households approved for a transfer i.e. Council tenants, AHB & RAS tenants, also households not in receipt of any form of social housing support

2.3 Characteristics of the homeless

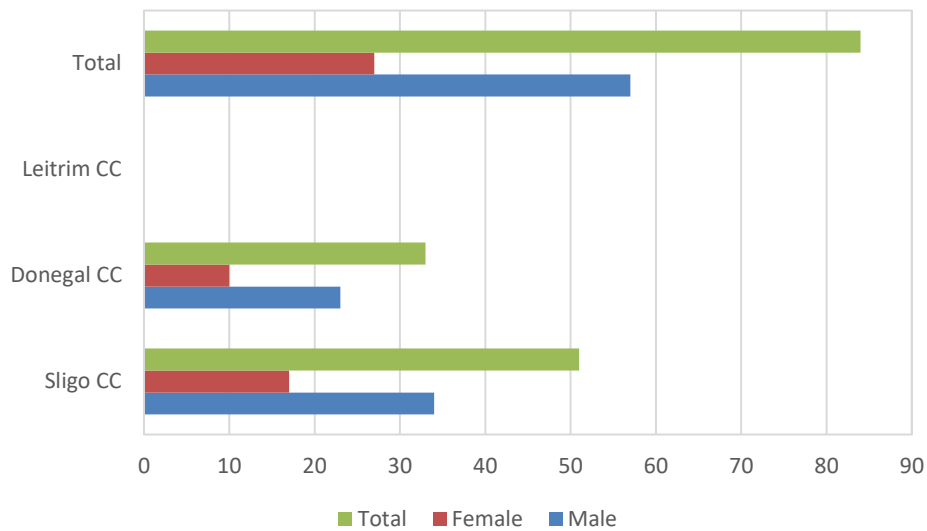
2.3.1 The Age of Homeless Adults in the North-West Region



PASS data from 25th to 31st July 2022 Count Week.

Based on the Count Week data there were 84 homeless adults in the North-West Region.

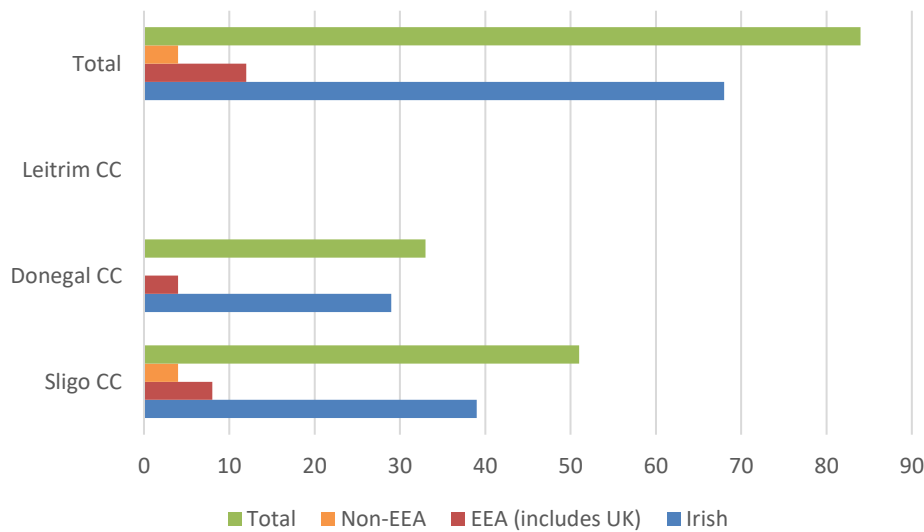
2.3.2 The Gender of Homeless Adults in North-West Region



PASS data from 25th to 31st July 2022 Count Week.

Males still make up most of the homeless adult number in the North-West, although there is a pattern that there is an increasing number of females in homeless services.

2.3.3 Citizenship of Homeless Adults in North-West Region



PASS data from 25th to 31st July 2022 Count Week.

It can be seen that there is more citizenship diversity in Sligo homeless population than elsewhere in the region.

2.4 Homeless Accommodation Type² for Adults in North-West Homeless Services

	PEA 2020	PEA 2022	STA 2020	STA 2022	TEA 2020	TEA 2022	Total 2020	Total 2022
Sligo CC		10		35		11		56
Donegal CC		28		0		0		28
Leitrim CC		0		0		0		0
Total	27	38	31	35	11	11	69	84

PASS Data from 25th to 31st July 2022 and July 2020 Count Week.

In total numbers there was an increase of over 21% in 2 years.

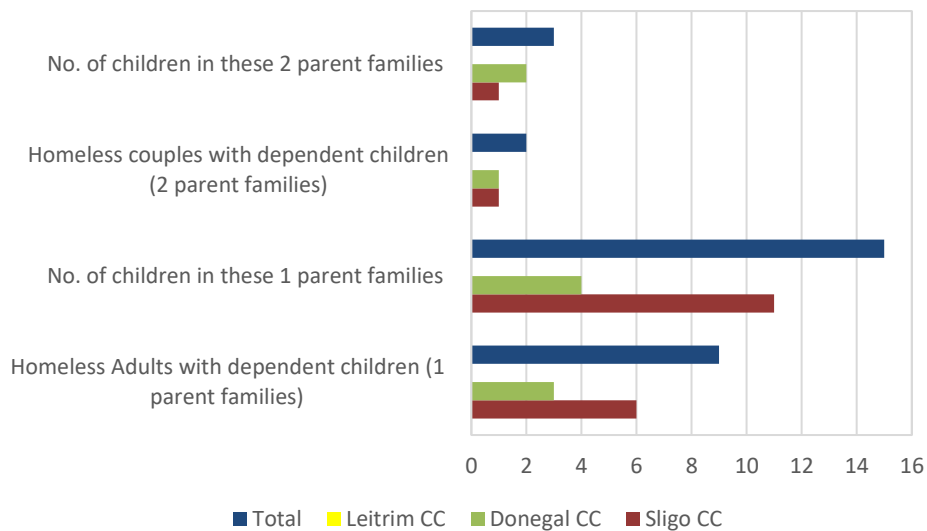
² Definitions of Accommodation Types

PEA - Private Emergency Accommodation – private sector, short term accommodation such as hotel or guest house room only arrangements for families.

STA - Supported Temporary Accommodation - self-catering units provided for homeless families with supports from voluntary sector partners eg. Family hubs.

TEA – Temporary Emergency Accommodation – Hostel beds for homeless single adults which are expected to be for short term, emergency use, with supports.

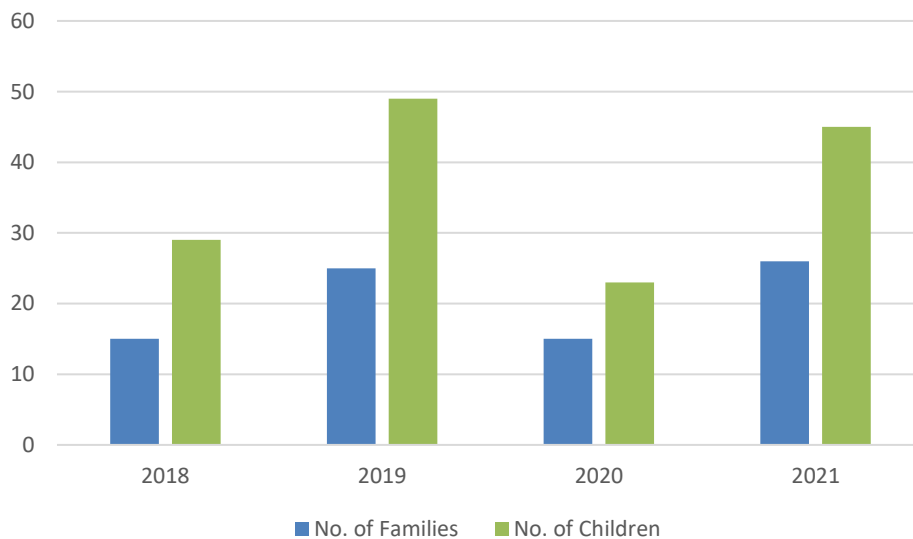
2.5 Number of Homeless Families and their Size in the North-West Region



PASS data from April 18-24th 2022 Count Week.

The totals reflect there are many more lone parents in homelessness than two parent families, perhaps due to reduced income and vulnerability to poverty.

2.5.1 Family Homelessness



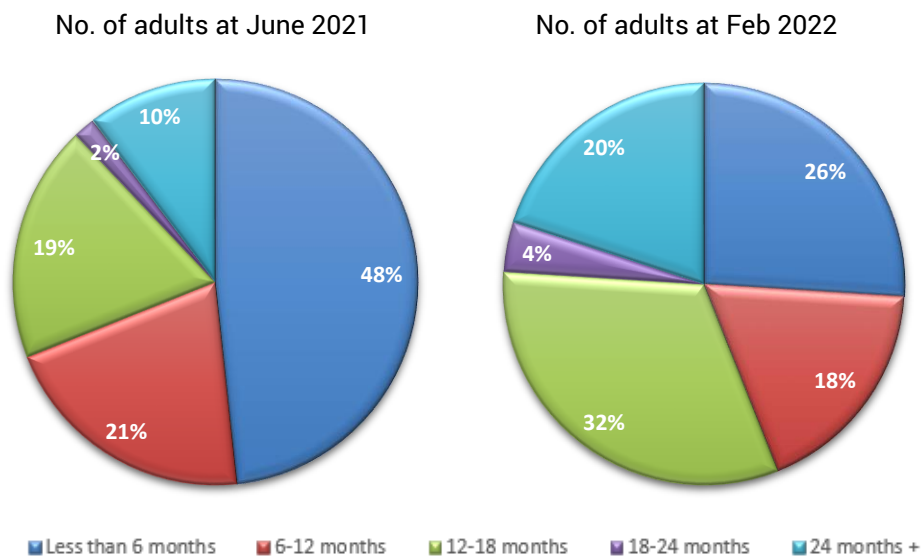
PASS data compiled on 27/4/2022

Analysis of the Sligo figures indicated that the number of families has increased by 73 % from 2018 to 2021. The number of children experiencing homelessness is up 55 %.

Another significant current difficulty in homeless services, is the lack of supply of private emergency accommodation (PEA) utilised by local authorities in the North-West to place homeless families with children, in the absence of other forms of emergency

accommodation. There is no family hub in the North-West, there are only 2 units of Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) in Sligo Town and this necessitates going to the private market to procure additional rooms for families who present as homeless. There is now a reduced supply of PEA due to the placement of many Ukrainian refugees in urban hotels and in student accommodation that was used in college vacations for PEA. As this Plan is being compiled, the situation is becoming acute in University towns such as Sligo and Letterkenny where the supply of long-term, short-term and seasonal accommodation is nearing saturation point and we await the direction of Government to help resolve the problem.

2.5.2 Duration Spent in Homeless Accommodation by Single Adults in Co. Sligo by year



The duration spent in homeless accommodation is increasing in Sligo, with 24% of single adults being more than 2 years in the homeless hostels in 2022.

2.5.3 Duration spent in Homeless Accommodation (PEA) by Families in North-West Region

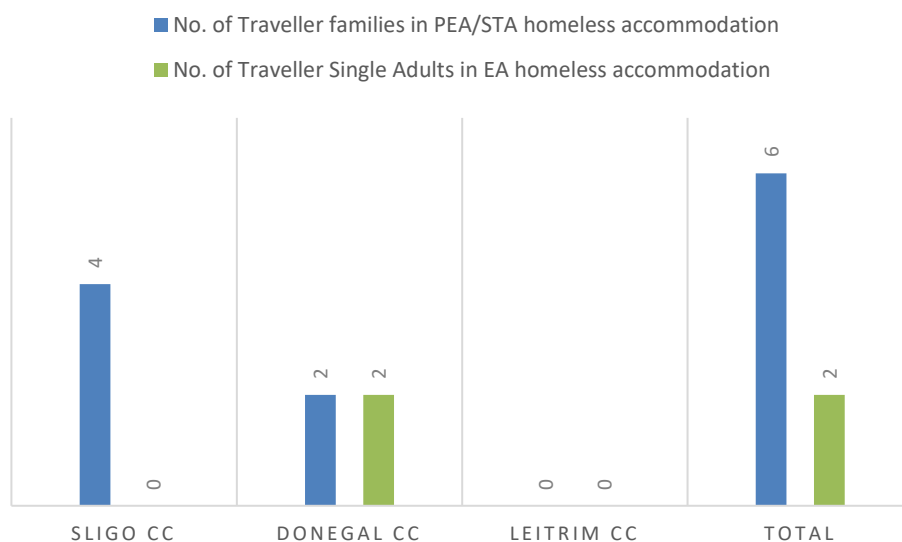
	End Quarter 3 2021	End Quarter 1 2022	End Quarter 3 2022
*	<u>Families</u>	<u>Families</u>	<u>Families</u>
Less than 6 months	8	8	10
6-12 months	0	2	7
12-18 months	0	0	0
18-24 months	0	2	0
24 months +	0	0	0

PASS data

**continuous period is measured.*

The duration spent in homeless accommodation is longer in 2022 due to a shortage of available transitional or more permanent accommodation solutions.

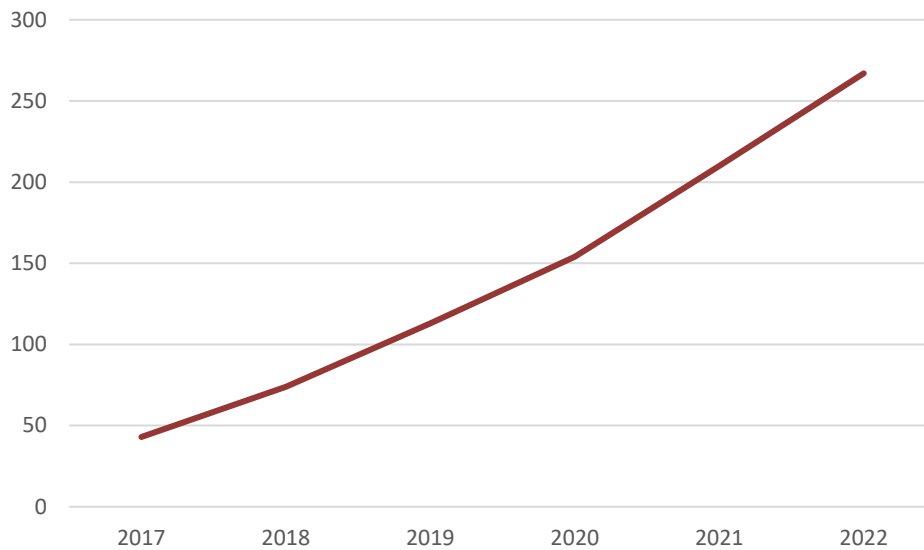
2.5.4 Traveller Families and Traveller Single Adults in Homeless Accommodation



Data compiled by SCC on 26 August 2022 by query with staff in LAs.

Travellers are over-represented in homeless services, with 5 out of 8 families in Sligo PEA being Travellers. (20th September 2022). A Traveller Accommodation Programme is being implemented in each Local Authority area to meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller community.

2.5.5 Households living with family/friends or couch surfing in County Sligo



Recorded from SHS Applications

Figures were not recorded for Counties Leitrim and Donegal but the above graph indicates that there have been a sharp increase in the numbers of housing applicants who state they are living with family/friends and couch surfing. Both categories are indicators of “hidden homelessness” under the ETHOS definition of homelessness as discussed in Chapter 3.

2.6 Victims of domestic violence who were homeless in Co. Donegal by Year

County	Year 2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 up to 23 Aug	Total
Donegal*	23 adults 23 children	30 adults 51 children	24 adults and 30 children (also 22 adults and 14 children placed through DCC and other services)	32 adults and 37 children (also 5 adults and 7 children placed through DCC and other services)	15 adults and 23 children (also 4 adults and 4 children placed through DCC and other services)	124 adults 164 children (31 adults and 25 children)

*Donegal Domestic Violence Services CLG provided data and these are women and children who meet the 1988 Act definition of homelessness. See below for additional numbers who

fled domestic violence in Donegal and were classed as couch surfing or overcrowded with friends/family due to domestic violence.

Donegal DVS	2020	2021	2022 up to 23 Aug	Total
Adults	59	50	38	147
Children	61	33	40	134

2.6.1 Victims of Domestic Violence in Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan who required accommodation support by year (DVAS Figures)

Year	No. of women	Number needing accommodation support
2017	81	16
2018	115	23
2019	146	29
2020	227	45
2021	214	42

Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS) do not have direct access to emergency specialist DV accommodation, so women accessing DVAS and needing emergency domestic violence accommodation will be directly referred to other refuges, for example, Donegal, Mayo, Galway and several in Dublin (also occasionally further afield including Limerick and Kilkenny).

Explanatory note – Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal figures could not be compared since both DV services collate their service numbers differently. However, it can be seen that there are steady increases of women needing accommodation supports in Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan over the five years measured. There are also large numbers of women homeless due to domestic violence in Donegal, although less of a clear pattern, perhaps due to the influence of the Covid pandemic in which refuges had to “lock down” their beds to new entrants and there may have been less through flow of service users.

2.7 Key Findings

From analysis, the North-West Region continues to experience significant challenges in the homeless services and there are barriers to making progress in homelessness prevention and resettlement measures. There has been a huge increase in the numbers of homeless presentations, people placed in emergency accommodation and the duration that each client spends in homeless accommodation is longer since the last North-West Homelessness Action Plan was developed.

1. It is not possible to prevent all homelessness so emergency accommodation must be made available for some. There has been an increase in family and individual homelessness in the North-West region so it is recommended that intervention needs to be based upon the projected need, be of high quality and tailored to specific cohorts.
2. Housing First is a key intervention for high support single clients. Tenancy support resettlement and tailored services for clients who have intensive support needs due to addiction, mental health, cultural disadvantage or disability are essential to enable a pathway out of homelessness. It is necessary to have a housing led approach.
3. Due to a huge shortage in private rented small properties and a sharp increase in rent prices, there has been an increase in the number of single adult homeless in Donegal, Leitrim and Sligo, with people staying much longer in homeless accommodation than previously.
4. There has been a huge rise in the number of families homeless in Donegal and Sligo, demonstrated by presentations and numbers stating they are couch surfing/staying with friends and family. There is no family hub model in either county, despite this rise in demand. The worsening in family homelessness in Co Sligo is a dynamic situation, changing within 2022 (see Section 4.1 c)
5. There is need to gather more accurate data on couch surfing, overcrowding in family homes and rough sleeping. There is need to assess the most accurate way of measuring these types of homeless and this may be through outreach services rather than self-assessment on the Social Housing Support application form.
6. A number of homeless service users seem either unable or unwilling to positively engage with service providers in the delivery of homeless services.
7. There are also challenges to provide services to offenders who require accommodation upon release from prison.

Chapter 3 Strategic Context and Background

3.1 Definition of homelessness

This Homelessness Action Plan reflects the following definition of homelessness, which has been defined in the Housing Act (1988) as:

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 persons 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 institution and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph a).*

This definition translates as:

- Persons living in temporary insecure accommodation;
- Persons living in private emergency accommodation, and hostels, because they have nowhere else available to them;
- Rough sleepers;
- Victims of domestic violence.

However, several commentators have called for a more expansive definition of homelessness since the above definition does not include those who are “hidden homeless” or “couch surfing”, living in overcrowded or inappropriate accommodation...or those with insecure tenure, (www.simon.ie/understanding-homelessness/ accessed on 21/07/2022). This means that the Government data on homeless numbers does not count those outside of the 1988 Act definition of homelessness. Those who are counted are those who have registered with the local authority and have been assessed as in need of housing.

In other European countries, there is use of the ETHOS (European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion) typology to define homelessness and this is a wider definition, including the hidden homeless; persons in institutions such as mental health units or prisons where there is a delayed discharge due to lack of housing; persons in overcrowded or living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing. Currently, there is a lack of data on the numbers of persons in these circumstances and there is also a lack of evidence of the progress achieved in preventing or ending homelessness for these categories of person.

It is also important to mention disabled persons that do not have suitable accommodation and can experience homelessness. Each Local Authority convenes a Housing and Disability Steering Group with a Strategic Plan for providing accommodation and supports to disabled persons.

3.2 The Causes of Homelessness

Research into the causes of homelessness in Ireland has been ongoing for decades. The research indicates that the complexity of homelessness requires a multi-faceted, interdisciplinary response and one which cuts across many agencies and sectors. There is such broad agreement on the principal contributing factors set out below, that further discussion is not needed for the purpose of preparing this Action Plan.

1. **Structural Causes** - social and economic conditions and policies impact the availability and accessibility of social and affordable housing, over-reliance on the private rented market, under- and unemployment and discrimination (Simon 2022). The housing crisis has exacerbated the difficulty for persons availing of social housing supports in recent years and local authorities are seeing the presentation of more people at risk of homelessness than ever before, and notably, the demographic of first-time homeless presentation is changing, with the cause of many situations being in this structural category rather than “traditional” homeless causes.
2. **Institutional Causes** – those who have come through the care system, prisons, mental health facilities, direct provision system or disability residential settings are at higher risk of becoming homeless than the general population due to stigma, discrimination, lack of family supports and poverty.
3. **Relationship Causes** – such situations as domestic violence, abuse, family conflict and the death of a family member can lead to homelessness. Young people and women are impacted most severely by these issues.
4. **Personal Causes** – this can include mental health, physical health issues, learning difficulty, addictions and experiences of childhood trauma. Supports such as counselling, mental health, education, training and addiction services in combination with accommodation, can lead to better outcomes for those experiencing such issues e.g. Housing First services.

The drivers of homelessness can vary from household to household, but as the data in Chapter 2 shows, there are now different drivers of homelessness compared to the past decade and since the last Homelessness Action Plan was completed. Although the other causes still pertain and add to the complexity of homelessness the principal reasons why there has been a significant increase in homelessness are the structural causes of inadequate supply and unaffordability of housing.

3.3 National Policy Context

The recession and resultant austerity of the past decade in Ireland has presented challenges for the whole country including the North-West region. There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of homeless individuals, families and in the number of people on local authority housing lists in Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal while the national figures for those in

emergency accommodation reached 11, 397, of which 3,480 are children in October 2022, the highest number ever recorded (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Monthly Homelessness Report October 2022).

Compounding the existing homelessness and lack of housing supply, there has been an absence of a coherent building programme in the region over the last ten years and this is only now being addressed through the implementation of Housing Delivery Action Plans as part of the Housing For All National Implementation Plan:

“Right now, Ireland’s housing system is not meeting the needs of enough of our people. There are not enough houses to buy or rent in the private sector. There are not enough houses being built by the State for those who need social housing. Housing has become increasingly unaffordable for the ‘squeezed middle’ who would once have expected to be able to purchase their own home. Too many people are experiencing homelessness or are unable to access appropriate housing. The cost of building housing is too high. Too much vacant housing stock remains unused. Our housing stock needs to be more environmentally friendly.”
(Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2021).

3.3.1 Lisbon Declaration

The Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform in Combating Homelessness (2021) commits Ireland and other signatories to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030 so that:

- No-one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation;
- No-one lives in emergency accommodation longer than is required for successful move on to a permanent housing solution;
- No-one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing.
- Evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no-one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed.
- No-one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.

3.3.2 Housing for All

‘Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland’ was published by the Government in September 2021 and has a funding commitment of €4 Billion per annum. This policy details the *Pathway to Eradicating Homelessness*, among other pathways and sets out actions that are to address and end homelessness by 2030 in Ireland. The Government states its commitment to adopt a housing-led approach to “advance the Lisbon Declaration...by working with relevant stakeholders and supporting policy measures with adequate funding”

(Government of Ireland 2021). The Housing For All policy contains further actions to address housing supply, affordability, issues in the private rented sector, refurbishment and renewal, recognising the “criticality of interagency supports to help address the complex combination of social, health and economic needs of homeless persons” (Government of Ireland 2021).

North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plans

The North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plans have been produced since 2010-13 and this plan aims to build upon the achievements of the 2013-18 Plan, while recognising there has been huge change in the societal conditions and political landscape since this period, namely the effect of inadequate supply of all housing types across the country; the unaffordability of rents particularly affecting those eligible for social housing; the population increase due to returned emigrants, competition for accommodation due to the Ukraine resettlement measures and the huge numbers of landlords leaving the long term housing market.

The current position in the North-West region is reflected in the data presented in the next chapter. It can be seen that there is a large increase in expenditure on homeless facilities and prevention services, due to the rise in numbers of those presenting as homeless. There is a requirement in the development of the current Homelessness Action Plan 2023-26, to ensure alignment with the Housing for All objectives in the North-West region, so as to complement and help deliver these objectives.

Meanwhile the current tenure of qualified households demonstrates the challenge facing the region, with the number in private rented housing decreasing by 202 households and the number living with parents, family and friends increasing by 187 households.

- Private rented decrease of 27.81% - 798 to 576.
- Living with parents increase of 32.14% - 336 to 444
- Living with family or friends increase of 48.14% - 161 to 240.

This may be one indicator of households being at risk of homelessness due to the lack of affordable rental properties in the region.

Since the previous North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2013-18 was developed, the housing crisis has deepened in all parts of the country, including the North-West. There is an ever-dwindling supply of affordable rental properties with current property prices encouraging landlords to realise their investments. Demand for vacant possession results in notices of termination for HAP and RAS tenants, whose only alternative is social housing.

After the North-West region weathered the Covid-19 pandemic through a concerted effort in partnership and inter-agency working, we now see huge challenges in resettling many homeless individuals who are institutionalised long-term residents of emergency hostels

RENTS IN NORTH WEST

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENTS IN NW REGION Q2 2022



DONEGAL, SLIGO, LEITRIM
€881 €1030 €843

% INCREASE IN AVERAGE
RENTS Q2

18.5% 16.6% 21.3%

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENTS IN NW REGION Q2 2018



DONEGAL, SLIGO, LEITRIM
€605 €698 €557

% INCREASE IN AVERAGE RENTS
Q2

1.7% 6.1% 6.1%

DAFT.IE IRISH RENTAL PRICE REPORT Q2 2022/2018

and families who are not able to find HAP properties within their budget or who have additional needs such as mental health, domestic violence, disability, ethnic or cultural differences and low income challenges. For the first time, all local authorities in the North-West are seeing an increase in HAP tenants who are unable to find alternative private rented properties before Notices of Termination (NOT) expire. This is forcing a new demographic of clients into the homeless services, despite the best efforts of NGOs who are skilled at advising, preventing tenancy loss and resettling housing applicants. The Covid-19 public health measures and associated moratorium on evictions during the lockdown, put a stay on such tenancy loss but the floodgates are now open and the numbers of NOTs issued has become an overwhelming feature of Local Authority housing administration in the past two years.

Another significant current difficulty in homeless services, is the shortage of private emergency accommodation (PEA). PEA is utilised by local authorities to accommodate families with children when there is no supported emergency accommodation available. There are only 2 units of Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) in Sligo Town

and this necessitates going to the private market to procure additional rooms for families who present as homeless. This issue was spectacularly highlighted during the summer of 2021 when the lifting of pandemic restrictions in Ireland led to high numbers visiting the North-West region and the hospitality sector full to capacity could not accept PEA allocations. As refugees from Ukraine replace holidaymakers it is clear the local authorities can no longer rely on the hospitality sector to accommodate people experiencing homelessness. Guidance, resources and perhaps legislative supports are urgently needed from Government to help the local authorities to resolve this problem in a sustainable manner.

Other key policy directions and advocacy papers that have been considered in the compilation of the Action Plan are:

- The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-13 (DOEHLG 2013);
- The Traveller Community and Homelessness: Advocacy Paper (Pavee Point 2021)
- Exploring Own Door Models of Emergency Accommodation for Homeless Families in Ireland (Focus Ireland 2020)

- Housing For All - A New Housing Plan for Ireland (DOHLGH September 2021)
- Housing For All Youth Homelessness Strategy 2022-25 November 2022 (DOHLGH 2022)
- Guidelines for Temporary Emergency Accommodation March 2018 (DOH).
- Slaintecare 2018 (Department of Health).
- Housing First National Implementation Plans 2018-2021 and 2022-2026.
- Residential Tenancies Board Legislation (Rent Pressure Zones).
- National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027
- Sligo County Development Plan 2017-2023 Housing Strategy (August 2017).
- Department of Health (2020). Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone.

Chapter 4 Background to Homeless Services in North-West Region

In the course of the consultations for this Homelessness Action Plan, those organisations providing services to homeless service users and their advocates gave feedback on “what’s working” and “what’s not working” in the region in housing and homeless services. The aspects of the service provision and the structure of the services that were mentioned as working well at the current time are discussed below, under the 4 headings of the Strategic Aims:

1. **To Prevent Homelessness** – early intervention to people at risk of homelessness;
2. **To Protect those experiencing homelessness** through emergency accommodation and targeted support;
3. **Progression** – to identify pathways to long-term housing solutions;
4. **Ensure Proper Governance and Financial Oversight and funding structures in place for delivery of homeless services.**

4.1 Preventing Homelessness

a) Links between LA Housing Section, Focus, NW Simon, Threshold and RTB

When tenancies are identified as at risk of ending, without other accommodation identified, there is a process of trying to prevent or delay the end of the tenancy by verifying the facts, liaising with the landlord, advising the tenant of their rights and referring to Residential Tenancy Board (RTB) and/or Threshold for further action. In 50% of cases, the first Notices of Termination that were issued by a private landlord and examined by Threshold, were found to be invalid. In 2021, Threshold prevented 81 tenants in the North-West region from entering homelessness, whether through advocating, negotiating or resolving disputes between

landlord and tenant (Timothy 2022). North-West Simon, HAIL and Focus Ireland also work with households referred by the LAs due to them being at risk of homelessness whilst in private rented accommodation. There was much endorsement of these RTSS and homeless advice, information and prevention services in the consultation process, but it was widely felt that services were overstretched and under-funded by Section 10 Homeless funding channelled by the Department of Housing through Local Authorities. The current caseloads of the above organisations are always full, exceed their resources and the complexity of cases is increasing. Local Authorities can apply for additional funding from the Department at each year end, as necessary.

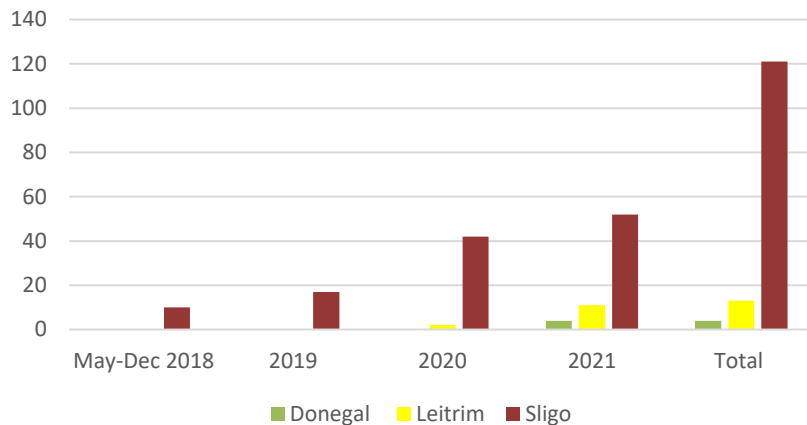
b) Homeless HAP Place Finder Service

Homeless HAP Place Finder Service has been active in all three counties albeit the Service is being brought in-house in Donegal, when previously delivered through an external agency, and Department of Housing sanction for the post is currently awaited.

The purpose of this service is to match HAP vacancies with households at risk of homelessness or already in homeless services and to expedite the set-up process of the new tenancies, with these households being eligible for additional benefits such as the deposit, first month's rent and an incentivised rate of rent payment.

In the HAT Think Tanks (consultation process for this Plan), this service was named as a homeless prevention measure that is working well to divert some households from availing of emergency accommodation. However, the proviso still exists that the shortage of private rented properties, means that even Place Finder incentives cannot create new tenancies where there are few to avail of. Place Finder Services commenced in Sligo in May 2018, in Donegal in 2021 and in Leitrim in 2020. The role of Place Finder is to build strong relationships with local property owners and estate agents to secure properties for rental/HAP, etc.

HAP Place Finder Tenancies in NW Region



c) Homeless Clinic and dedicated Homeless Liaison Officer Role in Local Authorities

This role and the morning clinic which is operated in SCC offices for 14 hours per week, has been instrumental in stemming the tide of homelessness for those who come in looking for advice and information regarding their urgent housing situation. The homeless assessment which is carried out in person, is holistic and can result in referral to other support and welfare agencies with which the client needs to be linked e.g. HSE mental health or addiction services, HSE Primary Care, Community Welfare Office/ Dept of Social Protection, Tusla and Family support services etc. Often clients can be referred to Place Finder or RTSS services prior to them becoming homeless, or can be given advice on their housing entitlements, eligibility, the procedure for making a housing application and accessing HAP. If the client is deemed homeless, they are screened for placement in one of the types of homeless accommodation in the form of a risk assessment.

This “open door” service means that less clients are rough sleeping, more have correct information about their entitlements and there is more professional and managed gateway to homeless services.

The Housing section of Leitrim County Council, including the Homelessness Officer, is located at Aras an Chontae in Carrick-on-Shannon and individuals or households can present as homeless at this office during normal opening hours five days a week. Leitrim County Council also runs an out of hours service through which individuals or households can be assessed in emergency situations.

Homeless Presentations to Sligo County Council in 2022

2022	New Pres. Adults	New Pres. Children	Repeat Pres.	New Pres. Assessed as Homeless (not incl. children)	Total Presentation	Cumulative Presentations
January	6	3	51	1	57	57
February	4	4	22	3	26	83
March	13	7	37	9	50	133
April	12	13	37	6	49	182
May	19	14	27	11	46	228
June	11	9	33	10	44	272
July	12	14	38	10	50	322
August	18	13	32	13	50	372
Sept	15	18	66	14	81	453

PASS data collated on Nov 11th 2022.

In County Donegal, staff are available at five locations in each Public Service Centre and Headquarters each weekday to offer assistance and advice to people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

North-West Simon Community's experience of offering independent advice, information and advocacy support, illustrates that not all those at risk of homelessness feel able to seek support direct from the LAs. This highlights the need for collaborative effort and information sharing to support those experiencing the risk of homelessness.

The stress of realising an individual or family is at risk or experiencing homelessness can make application processes to access housing and social supports seem quite complex, and people may struggle to use the system to their best advantage. Trauma, past financial and housing history, personal and family circumstances, low levels of educational and employment, and distrust of bureaucracy, are all factors that can deter people who lack confidence about their entitlement to support, from seeking assistance at the appropriate time. Some households may live in a state of perpetual stress and chaos for years whilst others resort to emergency services at an early stage. Very often unsatisfactory housing circumstances only come to the attention of the local authority when the household presents as homeless and in need of emergency accommodation.

Perhaps the greatest value of the community and voluntary sector is our capacity to offer independent advice and support to people to fully assess their own situation, identify the totality of their support needs, and tell their story in a coherent manner that enables officials in multiple agencies to identify how they can help and respond in a positive manner. It is

essential that the Homeless Action Plan should seek to foster the growth of these supports as an integral aspect of efforts to end homelessness in the region.

d) Pre-Discharge and Multi-disciplinary (MDT) Meetings

Those involved in homeless services and associated agencies, gave feedback that often homelessness is prevented when agencies share current information and collaborate to solve their clients' housing problems. The Homeless Action Team (HAT) meetings in each county exemplify this approach and issues such as rent arrears or hospitalisation can be mitigated and resolved if raised at an early point.

Pre-discharge meetings for clients exiting mental health units, the care system or hospitals can also support clients to transition into supported accommodation, emergency accommodation or to be negotiated back into family homes rather than rough sleeping or couch surfing after sudden discharge. Regrettably, sometimes there are not enough emergency beds and clients need to have a delayed discharge from the health facility.

Other networks and client-focussed meetings are beneficial to ensure clear information, straight forward processes and including vulnerable people in their own decision-making.

e) Addiction Supports

Addiction Worker and Assertive Outreach roles are a feature of the homeless services in the North-West and these skilled workers can help to prevent homelessness and improve the chances of a client maintaining their recovery. The link between addictions and homelessness is well-established and a complex one, often based upon the experience of childhood trauma, connected to loss, debt, unemployment, relationship breakdown and other factors (Simon 2022). There was recognition for the role of this type of support in preventing repeated homelessness and loss of tenancy.

There is one full-time worker based in Sligo whose role is specifically Substance Misuse Worker for the homeless/at risk of homelessness. The worker is employed by Sligo Social Service Council CLG. This post is funded by the North-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force with the HSE as the channel of funding. The Drug Task Force does not currently fund a similar post in either Leitrim or Donegal.

The Assertive Outreach Worker posts are not specifically focused on the homeless. Although they do support them or those at risk of homelessness through their work, they deal with a much broader range of people who are living with addiction. They also support the families of those in addiction where they have the capacity to do so. In Sligo these posts (1 x part-time, 1 by full-time) are hosted by Sligo Northside Community Partnership and Cranmore

Community Cooperative. In Leitrim the post (1 x part-time) is hosted by Rossinver Youth and Community Project. In Donegal these posts (1 x part-time, 1 by full-time) are hosted by Letterkenny CDP. These posts are funded by North-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force with the HSE as the Channel of Funding.

f) Capital Acquisition Scheme (CAS) purchases for those at risk of homeless, special needs applicants and care leavers

This CAS measure, which allows Approved Housing Bodies to acquire and manage properties for special client groups was supported by the respondents to the consultation. This can enable targeted groups to be accommodated in Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) or long-term accommodation and means that this accommodation is reserved for this particular target group in the future.

g) The emergency accommodation in Sligo and Donegal for homeless adults

The emergency accommodation for homeless adults in these two counties is in the form of hostels with supports provided and was praised for the quality of the support and accommodation. The provision is funded under Section 10 by the Dept of Housing and is procured by the Local Authorities but managed and staffed by voluntary organisations. The funding for staffing comes from HSE Social Inclusion budgets and staff are trained and experienced social care workers/ hostel workers, many of whom have been working in homeless settings for many years. Service users have individual tailored support plans, and they are encouraged to engage with their key worker to achieve actions such as to address addictions, link with mental health services and complete housing application forms. Unfortunately, due to the lack of affordable accommodation, many service users are not progressing out of the hostels and now regard them as home. The system of emergency hostels cannot be regarded as “housing led” since service users remain here for many months before they are able to relocate to long term accommodation and some service users have physical disabilities or personal care requirements which cannot be accommodated in these hostels and so alternative, private sector accommodation must be arranged.

In terms of ending homelessness, the term ‘housing-led’ was developed by the Jury of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness in order to describe all policy responses to homelessness that increase access to secure accommodation and increase capacity for both prevention and the provision of adequate floating support to people in their homes according to their needs. Such an approach, which includes the use of scattered ordinary rented housing, floating support, ‘consumer’ choice and control, including harm reduction, the use of both flexible direct provision of support to high needs and case management/service brokering and open-ended support represents a departure from the

'staircase' or 'continuum of care' approach, which until recently has dominated responses to homelessness in Ireland, many other European member states and North America. This approach, as the staircase metaphor implies, is a progression ascending from emergency hostels to transitional housing to regular housing, with individuals developing the necessary skills at different stages of the system (O'Sullivan 2012)

h) Trauma Informed Approach and Collaborative Methods

Staff employed in the North-West in homeless services are committed, motivated and professional and attracted positive feedback from those who participated in the consultation process. The utilisation of contemporary approaches such as trauma-informed, client-centred, task-focussed and motivational interviewing methodologies means that the quality of the services provided is excellent. It was suggested that continual training should be offered on such approaches and learning to retain this level of service. The complexity of the nature of homelessness in this era in Ireland requires a focus on professionalism and continual professional development. However, it was pointed out that "staff recruitment and retention remain an issue", with need for increased resources in this sector to compete with other sectors in which wages are more attractive. The focus on maintaining standards of care for this vulnerable group of service users is a struggle for the period of this Homelessness Action Plan.

4.2 Progression to Long Term Accommodation

4.2.1 Housing First Model

Housing First is a housing-led approach that enables single people with a history of rough sleeping or long-term use of emergency accommodation, and with complex needs, to obtain permanent secure accommodation, with the provision of intensive supports to help them to maintain their tenancies.

The new National Implementation Plan provides for the creation of 1319 tenancies over the period 2022 to 2026 (Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2021). The North-West targets are as below, although it must be noted that limiting the accommodation to the use of scarce one-bedroom social properties, trying to cover a huge geographical area (8,286 km²) with limited staff and resources and the reluctance of the Department to approve alterations to the national model to address these local rural complexities has affected the progress in the region.

There are now 25 active Housing First tenancies in the North-West (at 14th December 2022), mostly accommodated in Local Authority houses, and a small number in Approved Housing Body tenancies. All are offered tailored support plans and can choose to engage with

Housing First and HSE staff to tackle obstacles they have identified such as addictions, mental health issues, physical disabilities, lack of social connectedness, lack of educational attainment etc. The fundamental principles of Housing First mean that service users must be willing to engage, have co-designed their support plan and have not been forced to accept accommodation of a certain type and in a certain location. This programme exemplifies a “housing led” approach, as opposed to awaiting them to be in recovery until they “qualify” for housing i.e. a “housing ready” approach. There have been 3 tenancies ended in the North-West region - one was withdrawn as too high risk at present, one person died and the other person voluntarily left the Housing First programme. This represents a tenancy sustainment rate of 88.5% compared to the national average of 86.8% (Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2021).

Many of the contributors to the North-West consultation mentioned the success of Housing First and expressed interest in this programme being extended, expanded and to be focussed to include other types of service users (youth, ex-offenders, families) and to operate in hard-to-reach parts of the region (Northern/Western Donegal and South Leitrim). These discussions require the agreement of the Department of Housing and HSE who co-fund the Housing First Programme in Ireland. An enhanced funding package would be required to extend the programme in the North-West region.

4.2.2 Housing First Pilot Project in Donegal

Sligo Social Services is exploring the option of a pilot project in the Bundoran / Ballyshannon area to support the Housing First team with funding from the HSE Social Inclusion Unit.

4.2.3 Provision of Long-Term Accommodation with Supports

It was mentioned that offering a family or individual the chance of a “forever home” after they have experienced homelessness, is like giving them the “golden ticket” a la Willie Wonka, but often they still require a transitional period of support. This can be offered through the RTSS, tenancy support, Housing First programmes and by linking with housing liaison/estate management staff in the local authorities on a regular basis. There is an element of monitoring required for a period to encourage the tenant to identify when trouble shooting and assistance with problem solving is required. Over time the development of new skills and social contacts enables the tenant to manage their home and integrate within their new community.

These supports function well to prevent recurrent homelessness, to be an early response to rent arrears, lack of household management, nuisance behaviour, rubbish build-up or to flag up issues with neighbours. The role of the Councils or housing provider in managing the tenancy involves responding quickly to signals that that a tenancy is in trouble.

It was mentioned that the high quality of the social housing, especially new developments, in the North-West, makes tenants feel hopeful of a new start in the community.

Some supported accommodation is also available, provided by partnerships such as Sophia Housing Association, Focus Ireland, North-West Simon, St. Vincent de Paul, Cheshire Ireland and the local authorities. In these housing projects, staff is on site daily/regularly to provide additional services to tenants. The target groups of this accommodation may include former homeless persons, those with mental health, cognitive impairment or other disabilities, persons with addictions etc.

4.3 CHALLENGES

Homeless Action Teams in all counties were consulted in the development of this Plan and 19 agencies, services and organisations participated. In addition, written submissions were received from 12 bodies. See Appendix D for a list of contributing bodies.

The valuable feedback and recommendations put forward by those who are experts in the field of homeless service provision in the rural North-West region, was compiled and has been taken into account in the development of this Action Plan. There was huge consistency in the content and a number of points of consensus were raised. The responses resoundingly corroborate that there are a range of societal, economic and resource issues affecting the efficacy of homeless services, some of which have emerged in recent times.

The respondents were asked:

What is not working well in North-West homeless services or is not covered by services?

- Over-reliance on private rented properties and extreme limitations of the HAP Scheme even after the recent Government review.
- Shortage of emergency accommodation with supports for individuals in Sligo and Donegal and staff shortages in these services due to under-funding. No supported emergency accommodation in Leitrim.
- The voucher scheme in Donegal does not meet the needs of homeless individuals
- Lack of appropriate supported family homeless accommodation in Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal
- No supports to reduce the incidence and risks/effects associated with rough sleeping.

- Not enough social housing available in an appropriate timeframe for persons at risk of homelessness or in emergency accommodation, especially for one or two bed need
- Not enough supported temporary/transitional accommodation for specific vulnerable groups including: care leavers, persons with mental or physical disability, learning disability, ex-offenders, sex offenders, families fleeing domestic violence, members of the LGBTQI community, especially youth.
- No dedicated, accessible primary healthcare services for homeless persons despite the increased incidence of poor health.
- Gaps in provision of Community Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, access to Addiction Services and Mental Health services for homeless persons.
- Inadequate funding of resettlement and tenancy sustainment and support services in all counties, since client numbers exceed case-loads.
- Homeless services in North-West are not sufficiently preventative in focus.
- “Housing led” approach is not being used through all LAs, services and programmes – instead “housing ready” approach still pertains.
- Not enough affordable housing in the region, so that social housing is “blocked up” with those who could buy or build their own home, leading to a saturation of housing waiting lists.
- “Dire shortage” of suitable, affordable accommodation in the region.
- There is not widespread access to primary and secondary homeless preventative and housing advice services in which loss of tenancy is prevented or delayed where possible. This should be funded under Section 10 and made available universally, not just for those at imminent risk of homelessness or those with complex needs.
- Lack of culturally-appropriate accommodation options and housing support services for Travellers, Roma, other ethnic groups, migrants. Also an over-reliance on private-rented HAP accommodation for these groups who experience stigma, racism and discrimination in the private rented market. An RTB survey from 2014 found that 82% of landlords would be reluctant to rent to a Traveller family. (DKM Consultants (2014))
- Shortage of community sector services to “socially reconnect” and integrate homeless persons in the community due to funding deficits.
- Lack of understanding and experience in cultural awareness, languages and literacy needs in frontline staff in Housing and Homeless services.
- Lack of data and recording of “hidden homelessness”, couch surfing, unfit and overcrowded accommodation.
- Under-resourced Housing First Programme is leading to some geographic areas being excluded and expansion of the Programme being on hold.
- Homeless HAP Place Finder service needs to be prioritised in all Local Authorities.
- Homeless Assessment process is not provided in all Local Authority areas and not all relevant LA staff are equipped to deal with traumatised people.

- Membership and level of participation of some HATs needs reviewed to reflect the inclusion of AHBs, representatives from all Municipal areas (Donegal).
- Information flow from North-West Joint Homelessness Management Group to Forum needs improvement
- There are no creative/ rapid temporary emergency accommodation options - trailer parks, modular homes or log cabins.

Chapter 5 Vision & Strategic Aims

The overall vision of NWHAP is to ensure to prevent homelessness where possible, the protection of those who are homeless, support the movement to stable accommodation, and ensure stringent governance of provision, all through a caring, compassionate and proactive approach.

Strategic Aims:

- I. **PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS** - Measures to include early intervention, advice and information, tenancy support, supported housing, targeted supports for vulnerable groups. This can mean engagement and referral of clients to prevention services at an early stage, when the first signs of a tenancy becoming unsustainable emerge.

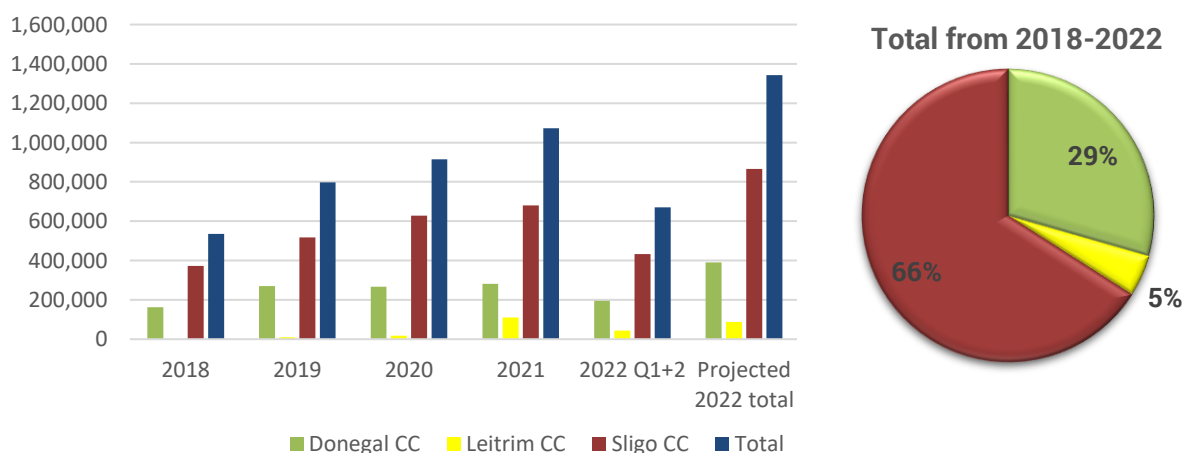
- II. **PROTECTING HOMELESS PEOPLE** – Measures to provide suitable emergency accommodation for all, assessment and case management services, support for rough sleepers, supporting the health needs of homeless people, access to social and welfare services.

- III. **PROGRESSION TO LONG TERM HOUSING** – reducing the obstacles to moving on from emergency accommodation, identifying housing solutions, providing supported or transitional accommodation, providing care and supports in long term accommodation, providing incentives for landlords and housing providers so that integration in the community can occur.
- IV. **GOVERNANCE** – ensuring that management groups are representative and functional. Ensuring that there is appropriate monitoring and procurement of services and funding.

Chapter 6 Expenditure on Homelessness in the Region

Exchequer funding provided to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage towards expenditure incurred on the provision of homeless services under Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988 has increased each year over the period 2016-2019, from €89m to €165m, an increase of 85%. €271m was provided in 2020 although it should be noted that 2020 was an exceptional year as a result of carryover costs from 2019 and additional services provided due to the Covid pandemic. The majority of this funding is provided to the Dublin Region, 76% on average each year. This is in line with homeless numbers which are concentrated in the Dublin Region. The majority of homelessness expenditure each year is attributed to the provision of emergency accommodation, accounting for 83% (€188m) of total homelessness expenditure (€226m) for Local Authorities' in 2019 (Bermanjes 2021).

Homeless Funding (under Section 10) in North-West Region



In total the homeless funding was €3,990,656 since including Q2 in 2022. An additional €1,342,634 will be needed to cover costs in 2022.

The figures are set to exceed €1.35 million if the same trajectory is maintained for the third and fourth quarters of 2022. It can be seen that there has been a steady increase in expenditure in County Donegal; in County Leitrim there is a sharp upward growth in expenditure and the Sligo expenditure is also increasing sharply.

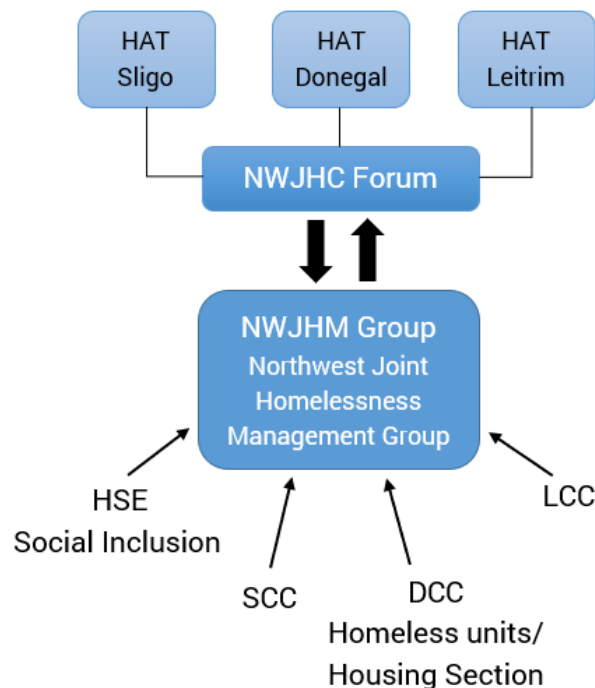
HSE Funding Homeless Service NW Region

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Euros €	557,748	808,500	894,972	919,671	1,242,712

Chapter 7 Governance & Co-ordination of Services and Supports in the North-West

It was mentioned in each HAT Think Tank meeting that there is great collaboration and peer support from HAT members and on the frontline of homeless services between agencies. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in this complex area which is shared to resolve difficulties and benefit service users.

7.1 Organogram of Regional Homeless Structure in North-West



HSE Provision of Care and Support Services in the North-West

The HSE, through the Social Inclusion team, provides support for hostels in the North-West - Colmcille in Letterkenny, Maryville and Shalomar in Sligo. It also co-funds Housing First provision in partnership.

Additionally, a Hospital Liaison Worker post has been developed in both Letterkenny University Hospital (LUH) and Sligo University Hospital (SUH). This facilitates the discharge planning process and is also designed to reduce unnecessary stays in hospital, where non-medical issues are present. Delivery of services happens principally in partnership with community and voluntary agencies through service level and grant aid agreements. This includes finance for support staff on projects such as Housing First. Where issues arise in service delivery, existing contacts are explored to identify where supports are needed, along with links to appropriate HSE services if necessary.

Social Inclusion collaborates with the local authorities on housing policy and capacity; with groups such as NWJCHF; regional SI Homeless Forum and at a National level on the Homeless Advisory Governance Group.

Community and voluntary sector providers who have a contract to deliver services are monitored through Key Performance Indicators and review meetings, where professional and supportive relationships have been developed to ensure best practice service delivery. As such, service delivery is determined by national policy on homelessness, and also by each organisation's policy and procedures which are meant to align with best practice in the field. Service users' needs are identified by the funded agency which can make a case for additional support from HSE Social Inclusion, however this may be constrained by national priorities and finances being available.

Social Inclusion has consistently delivered support to funded organisations supporting homeless persons and has been closely involved, not just with the funded agencies but also in partnership with the Community Response Forum in each County. This has involved transporting service users to Covid isolation units, the provision of Covid test items, PPE and information in a range of appropriate languages.

Social Inclusion is acutely aware of increasing challenges in terms of homelessness provision and those presented by the increasing numbers of those living on the streets, the need for increased provision for those with intellectual difficulties, mental health and physical disabilities which require a particular set of responses.

In conversation with service providers, issues such as the MICA crisis, Ukrainian refugees, changes in landlord practices, and the unavailability of housing stock, are exacerbating those challenges. Social Inclusion will continue to work with partners to seek answers to these challenges, resources notwithstanding.

Chapter 8

Actions for the Region

8.1 Preventing Homelessness

Objectives	Continuing Key Actions	Added Value Actions	Responsible Bodies	Timeframe
More EA beds	<p>Provide more emergency accommodation in Co Donegal and Co. Sligo, staffed by trauma-informed staff.</p> <p>Ensure all homeless presentations to LAs are captured on PASS and accurately recorded to improve data collection.</p> <p>Provision of emergency/ transitional accommodation for sex offenders and violent ex-offenders released from prison is needed in Sligo. Their situation needs a tailored response and suggest a step-down model could be developed on a small scale in parts of the NW region. Need an AHB/NGO with experience to lead this action.</p>	<p>Assess the need for emergency beds in Co. Leitrim and ensure homeless data is being captured to evidence this need.</p> <p>ETHOS Definition of homelessness to be adopted to encompass all types of homelessness.</p> <p>Ensure accuracy in capturing the numbers of rough sleepers, persons “couch surfing” or overcrowded with families and friends so as to assess the future need for homeless services.</p>	<p>LCC, DCC, SCC</p> <p>Dept, LAs, Housing Agency</p> <p>All HAT agencies</p>	
Inter-Agency Homeless staff LA staffing	<p>Further increase coordination of agencies’ efforts to deal with clients who are homeless/at risk of homelessness, with the broader use of multi-disciplinary meetings/ HAT to focus on individual complex cases or emerging service needs.</p> <p>Continue the Homeless Clinics in SCC and refer to Focus and NWS for support. Ensure DCC staff are supported to deal with homeless clients.</p> <p>More investment in tenancy support services across the region. Improve the funding</p>	<p>Strengthen the Tenancy Sustainment resources within LCC.</p> <p>Provide Homeless clinic and homeless liaison staff to deal with homeless/those at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>Strengthen tenants’ rights in private rented accommodation – give advice or refer to advice services.</p>	<p>All HAT agencies. DCC, SCC, LCC</p> <p>LAs, NWS, Focus Threshold</p>	

	<p>provision for RTSS services provided by NWS and Focus so as to expand the number of clients, geographic area and time spent in supporting each client. Provide housing supports using a rural model of delivery and funding.</p>	<p>Restart the Homeless HAP Place Finder Service in Co Donegal when DOH approval is confirmed.</p> <p>Establish and mainstream the role of RTSS in each LA area</p>	
<p>Effective HAP Scheme</p>	<p>Overhaul the HAP Scheme - Raise the HAP rates or cap landlords at maximum rates; Incentivise landlords to accept and sustain HAP tenancies; Review the HAP Scheme; Provide a rent freeze or a stay on evictions due to the housing crisis; Where possible, engage with landlords issuing Notices of Termination to seek alternatives to eviction.</p> <p>Develop a communication process that facilitates landlords, tenants and support agencies to co-operate in resolving issues that may pose a risk to a tenancy.</p>	<p>Enforced rent pressure zones in more areas.</p> <p>Tighter restrictions on evictions.</p>	<p>Dept of Housing</p>
<p>Link to Health, Welfare & Counselling Supports</p>	<p>Increase access to and provision of drug and alcohol services in the community and within residential settings and continue to support those receiving drug and alcohol treatment services inclusive of maintaining the hospital homeless liaison service.</p> <p>Seek additional resources to support additional community addiction supports in the region.</p>	<p>Provide a community detox service for those dealing with addiction and dual diagnosis.</p> <p>Provide in-patient detox service where necessary.</p> <p>Dedicated homeless services hub or one stop shop in Sligo Town to meet the needs of homeless service users. Outreach of GP and other primary healthcare services, chiropody, family planning, legal services, sanitary and laundry services, and training and employment services are needed for those rough sleepers or placed in emergency accommodation</p>	<p>HSE, Drugs Taskforce</p> <p>LA, HSE, ETB, DSP and other agencies</p>

8.2 Protecting Homeless People

Objectives	Continuing Key Actions	Added Value Actions	Responsible Bodies	Timeframe
Family supports	Improve the link between children's/family support services and homeless families in PEA. Develop a referral mechanism to existing services which is affordable, expedient and appropriate for families.	<p>Develop the Family Hub Model of emergency accommodation in Sligo and Donegal as needed. Ensure support services, self-catering accommodation, play space and a link to appropriate services can be provided as part of this provision.</p> <p>Provide a domestic violence refuge for Sligo/Leitrim.</p>	<p>SCC, DCC Support services</p> <p>CYPSC and various providers of family/childcare services</p> <p>Tusla, DVAS, Government</p>	
Approach to emergency accommodation	Emergency Accommodation model needs to change from communal hostel to housing led/supported accommodation units.	<p>Provide trauma-informed and crisis intervention training for homeless services staff.</p> <p>Keyworkers to be assigned for all who are placed in homeless accommodation in all areas. This is to include those in private emergency accommodation</p>	LAs, Service providers Dept of Housing	
Build more units of housing to meet the needs of homeless persons	Social housing should be prioritised for all those in homeless accommodation, rather than relying upon private rented/HAP options for this demographic.	Consider alternatives for rapid provision of short term/emergency accommodation such as trailer parks, modular units, log cabins instead of using private emergency accommodation.	LAs, Dept of Housing	

Health needs	Medical/Mental health and addiction services appointments should be communicated to homeless clients via text or phone rather than post since their postal address often changes.	Need a medical respite facility for younger vulnerable persons (i.e not elderly) following acute hospitalisation	HSE MH and Addiction services
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8.3 Progression into Housing

Objectives	Continuing Key Actions	Added Value Actions	Responsible Bodies	Timeframe
AHBs	<p>Differential rent scheme cap needs to be reviewed and assessed.</p> <p>Completion of DHLGH Review of CALF process and subsequent amendment to current financial model to enable AHBs to deliver additional homes in rural counties with lower rents.</p>		Dept of Housing	
Supported Housing	Housing First – Extension of Housing First to include youth, mental health clients and families.	<p>Provide more housing-led opportunities for families and individuals who have support needs. Develop more supported permanent accommodation to ensure appropriate housing for vulnerable cohorts such as learning disability, persons with an acquired brain injury, homeless youth, young parents, LGBTQI+ youth and others.</p> <p>Provide Step Down supported accommodation for those with addictions who have completed residential treatment programmes. A small number of clients require this in each county.</p> <p>Link with relevant services such as education and employment to ensure resettlement and sustained recovery.</p>	<p>SCC, HSE, AHBs</p> <p>HSE, SCC and AHB as yet unknown.</p> <p>Various agencies</p> <p>Dept of Housing</p> <p>LAs, HSE, voluntary providers</p>	

Need targeted supported housing in Leitrim for such cohorts as Roma, inter-generational families, Traveller community. Service-led.

Council Housing

Build more units of Council housing and allocate them to an increased percentage of homeless persons – suggested target is 10-20% of allocations to homeless households.

Acquisition of more 1-bedroom properties by LA's to support the Housing First programme.

LAs

8.4 Governance

Objectives	Continuing Key Actions	Added Value Actions	Responsible Bodies	Timeframe
Representation	<p>Review the representation of HAT Teams for any gaps in relation to target groups that are currently represented in homeless services. Update the terms of reference to ensure they reflect the current aims of the HAT/homeless service provision. Ensure that all municipal districts have representation on HAT in Donegal.</p> <p>Regional Forum and Management Groups – review representation and member involvement to ensure all participants and stake holders have equal involvement. Request at least 75% attendance at Management Group and Forum meetings for members.</p>	<p>Need for service user involvement in the management and development of homeless services. This could be a ladder of involvement and would need to be supported, genuine and gradual to avoid tokenism and patronisation.</p>	<p>HAT team, SCC</p> <p>All agencies</p> <p>LA's, HSE</p>	

Perhaps review the function of the groups and open the agenda of the Forum to include more current issues, informational and relevant input. Consider holding the Forum meeting prior to the Management meeting so as to address issues raised at the Forum.

Pass	Training and full usage of the PASS system by all stakeholders.	Housing Agency, LAs
NQSF	National Framework of quality and assessment (NQSF) for homeless service providers needs to be implemented.	Dept of Housing, LAs
Governance	NQSF provisions in homeless services need to be better funded to improve standards of emergency accommodation. The procurement and funding of homeless services contracts need to reflect the full cost of service delivery in an era of higher costs for NGOs.	Dept of Housing SCC, Dept Housing

8.5 Draft actions for all Local Authorities are to be incorporated from the National Youth Homelessness Strategy which will be finalised in December 2022:

Action	Owner	Timeline
Develop and implement homelessness prevention programmes for young people	LAs	Develop: Q4 2023 Implement: Ongoing
Youth specific tenancy preparation lettings to empower young people and provide time to improve life skills and explore education, employment & training	LAs	Develop: Q4 2023 Implement: Ongoing
Enhance connectivity between LAs and Tusla to ensure that appropriate supports can be provided	Tusla, LAs	Ongoing
Consider and implement, as appropriate, the recommendations by NHAC Subgroup C on enhancing family support and prevention and early intervention services for children and their families, particularly those recommendations which relate to teenage children. (recommendations due Nov 22)	DHLGH DCEDIY Tusla LAs	Consider: Q1 2023 Implement: Ongoing
Work with the LTACCs to consider and put in place any additional supports which are required at a local level to assist young Travellers who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.	DHLGH LAs	Ongoing
Develop a framework for specific assessments for young people presenting to services to identify supports required	LAs	Q2 2024
Establish further dedicated homeless accommodation for young people which promotes an inclusive ethos including for LGBTQ and Traveller Community and has designated spaces that allow for visits from family members of residents	LAs	Ongoing
Ensure that staff are trained in developmentally informed approaches, including trauma-informed care	LAs	Ongoing
Ensure the specific inclusion of young people in Regional Homelessness Action Plans with, if appropriate, consideration given to those who have been identified as a vulnerable cohort in the Strategy	LAs	Ongoing
LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness Training Workshops for Service Providers to ensure a better understanding of LGBTI+ issues and the various forms of discrimination	DCEDIY LAs	Q4 2023
The development of privacy and safety strategies for young LGBTI+ people using emergency accommodation, informed directly by LGBTI+ youth, which could be implemented by the homeless service providers.	DCEDIY LAs	Q4 2023
Future Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) to include specific actions to address youth homelessness	LAs	Q1 2025 Ongoing
Establishment of Youth Tenancy Support Programmes	LAs	Q4 2023
Pilot the use of social housing as shared accommodation	LAs	Q3 2023
For people aged 18-24 who are committed to prison for a short sentence, local authorities to agree a method of engaging with the person in custody at the committal stage to identify any opportunity to keep an existing tenancy and supports open;	LAs	TBC

Local authorities to take steps to ensure that a young person (18-24 years) who is on the housing list is not removed from the housing list on sole basis that they are in prison custody	LAs	TBC
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8.6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The principal monitoring agencies for the implementation of the Regional Action Plan will be the NWJHCF Management Group. During the life of the Plan, continual assessment will take place to identify performance indicators, targets and to ensure monitoring of same. Achievements will rely somewhat upon the continued funding of the actions, projects and programmes identified in the Plan and on the implementation of Housing For All throughout the region.

In addition, the following will be required:

- Performance indicators, lead agencies and timeframes to be assigned for each action as part of an annual implementation plan. Implementation mechanisms to be agreed locally to ensure participation and consultation with all stake holders.
- Progress to be measured via reports to the Management Group on a quarterly basis.
- Independent evaluation of the North-West Regional Homelessness Action Plan 2023-2028 to be arranged at agreed points.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Members of the NWJHCF Management Group

Jim Molloy, Chair, Sligo County Council

Justin Fannon, Leitrim County Council

Patricia Garland, Social Inclusion, HSE

Patricia McIntyre, Donegal County Council

Appendix B Members of the NWJHCF Forum

Jim Molloy, Chair, Sligo County Council

Justin Fannon, Leitrim County Council

Patricia Garland, Social Inclusion, HSE

Patricia McIntyre, Donegal Country Council

Joe Murphy, Sligo County Council

Aimee McGee, Cluid Housing Association

Christina McTaggart, Sligo Social Services

Cllr Arthur Gibbons, Sligo County Council

Ciaran Maguire, Colmcille Hostel

John Kennedy, Department of Social Protection

Mary Jameson, Focus Ireland

Noel Daly, North-West Simon

Paula Dufficy, MSLETB

Tina Gardiner, Social Inclusion – HSE

Olivia Boyle, Irish Probation Service

Lorna Curry, NW Drugs Taskforce, HSE

Appendix C Membership of Homeless Action Teams

Donegal HAT team

Eamonn Browne/Patricia McIntyre, DCC – Chair

Maeve Logue/Annmarie McGrath – AGS (Community Garda).

Cora McAleer – Addiction Services, HSE

Gary Marshall – Assistant Director of Nursing, HSE

Angela Strain – Mental Health Services Social Work, Psychiatric Unit

Marie Hainsworth – Donegal Domestic Violence Service

Mary and Ciaran Maguire – Outreach Worker and Manager Colmcille Hostel

Maria McMahon and Angela Edwards – North-West Simon

Catherine Payne – Mental Health Social Work, HSE, Sligo

Karen McClintock, Donegal Mental Health Advocacy Services

Lisa Couch, Housing First, Sligo Social Services

Marie Callaghan, Community Welfare Service, Department Social Protection

Patricia McCann, HSE, Housing Coordinator

Bridie McDermott and Mary Devine – Tusla Aftercare

Shauna Hawes, Probation Services

Leitrim HAT Team

Brendan Timon, Social Worker, HSE

C.J. Stone, Probation Service

Eamonn Cunningham, Leitrim County Council

Emer Woods, Community Welfare Service, Department of Social Protection

Finbarr Sweeney, Sligo Social Services

Helen Denning, Leitrim County Council

Hugh Slevin, HSE Mental Health Service

Jimmy Smith, HSE

Johanna Daly, Leitrim County Council

Justin Fannon, Senior Executive Officer, Leitrim County Council

Lorna Curry, North-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force

Marie Finney, North-West Simon

Marie O'Brien, Primary Care Social Worker, HSE

Nick Taylor, Housing Liaison SUH

Nicola Scully, HSE Mental Health Social Work

Noel Daly, North-West Simon

Orla McGrath, An Garda Siochana

Sean O' Connor, Senior Social Worker, HSE

Sharon Morrison, Tusla

Sligo HAT Team

Abi Bambrick / Alison Keaney North-West Simon;

Carol McLoughlin, Sophia Housing Association;

Supervisor Maryville, Sligo Social Services;

Denise Leahy, Probation Service, Sligo;

Finbarr Sweeney, Sligo Social Services;

Jason Murphy, Community Welfare Service, DSP,

Gabrielle Fitzpatrick/ Sean O'Connor, Mental Health Social Work, HSE;

Clive Morris, Mental Health Service, HSE;

Lisa Couch, Housing First, SSS.

Lorna Curry, North-West Regional Drug and Alcohol Taskforce, HSE;

Martin Jones, Addiction Services, HSE

Mary Jameson, Focus Ireland

Nick Taylor, Sligo Social Services

Noel Daly, North-West Simon;

Oonagh Honeyman/Sarah Fox, HSE Primary Care Social Work;

Pamela Andison, Chair, Sligo County Council

Paula Egan, Finisklin Housing Association;

Sgt Angela Cummins, An Garda Siochana;

Sharon Morrison, Leaving and Aftercare, Tusla

Appendix D Consultation for the Plan

Agencies participating in HAT Thinktanks

- An Garda Siochana
- Community Welfare Service, Dept Social Protection
- Dept of Psychiatry Letterkenny University Hospital
- Donegal County Council
- Donegal Domestic Violence Services
- Donegal Mental Health Advocacy Services
- Focus Ireland
- HSE Addiction Service
- HSE Housing Co-ordinator
- HSE Mental Health Service
- HSE Primary Care Social Work
- Leitrim County Council
- North-West Housing First Service
- North-West Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force
- North-West Simon
- Sligo County Council
- Sligo Social Services
- Tusla Child and Family Agency Social Work
- Tusla Leaving and Aftercare Service

Submissions were received from:

- Sligo Social Services
- Focus Ireland
- North-West Simon
- Probation Service
- Donegal County Council and St Vincent De Paul
- Sligo County Council
- Leitrim County Council
- Threshold
- Letterkenny University Hospital, HSE Medical Social Work
- Sligo Traveller Support Group
- Diversity Sligo
- Social Inclusion Service, HSE

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