

REBUILDING & REGENERATION

ACTION PLAN LAYS THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE



130,000 SOCIAL HOUSING SOLUTIONS!

Following the raft of new measures to solve Ireland's burgeoning housing crisis, highlighted by Minister Eoghan Murphy at the Housing Summit, COUNCIL REVIEW asked the Minister about his action plans and working with both local authorities and the agencies to accommodate Ireland's increasing numbers of homeless individuals and families.

The Housing Summit in Dublin in September provided Eoghan Murphy, Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, with the opportunity to meet the chief executives of all 31 local authorities to review the first phase of Rebuilding Ireland.

The stated aim of Rebuilding Ireland – the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, (published on 19 July 2016) – is "to increase and accelerate housing delivery across all tenures to help individuals and families meet their housing needs".

In a Q&A with COUNCIL REVIEW Minister Murphy said that over the lifetime of this Action Plan, the Government will provide "130,000 social housing solutions under various delivery streams" such as building, acquisitions, leasing, Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

Q: You said that for quite a number of years the State was not building social houses and the private sector was not building houses either. How do you aim to do things differently to Minister Simon Coveney, and what will change under your watch?

A: In the context of housing I'm clearly of the view that we need to plan in decades as opposed to years. Delivery of actual housing units on the ground can be a slow process, I am clear that we need to deliver quicker but also to ensure that we create the framework and basis for a sustainable housing supply into the future.

In this context a draft of the National Planning Framework (NPF), Ireland 2040 – Our Plan, is out for the final phase of public consultation and will when finalised provide the strategic framework for sustainable population growth over the next 20 or so years.

On the housing front, the Rebuilding Ireland, Action for Housing and Homelessness is delivering. Just to be absolutely clear



Rebuilding Ireland is working well and we are only one year into its implementation.

Our key statistics indicate that supply is starting to increase in a meaningful way. The Taoiseach has tasked me with reviewing Rebuilding Ireland – but this is not a wholesale review – we're not starting from scratch again.

The plan is to deliver important results but I firmly believe in the importance of continuously reviewing policy and progress – to build on the initiatives that are clearly working and assessing where modifications can be made in areas where improvement is needed.

There is always scope for new initiatives. The review, the results of which I am announcing as I take decisions, is identifying new and additional actions that can be taken to improve the supply of housing across all tenures, with a particular emphasis on social and affordable housing.

I have already announced further actions in the areas of

homelessness and on the rental sector, and I intend to announce outcomes on affordability measures and social housing builds by local authorities and approved housing bodies (AHBs) shortly. Budget 2018 will also bring forward important measures in the housing area.

Q: Following your recent meeting with the country's 31 local authority chief executives at the Housing Summit in Dublin, what were their main concerns and what measures are on their agenda? In effect, does a rural-urban divide exist when dealing with the homelessness crisis?

A: The purpose of the Housing Summit was two-fold; to listen to what the chief executives of the local authorities had to say one year into the delivery of the Rebuilding Ireland plan, and to hear directly from them their views on where the plan could be improved.

Secondly, the summit was an opportunity for me to detail my own analysis on the progress we have made in implementing Rebuild Ireland and my views on where new initiatives could be taken.

Subsequent to this meeting I issued a statement which included a number of initiatives which I will implement as a matter of urgency.

Some of the main initiatives are as follows:

- **A Homeless Inter-Agency Group** is to be established immediately to deliver services for the homeless in a coherent and joined-up way between the relevant departments and agencies.
- **Change in social house building policy** – budget is being redirected away from acquisitions and into direct build programmes for local authorities and housing bodies.
- As a result, **the current target for 2018 of c.3000 newly built homes will increase by almost 30 per cent to c. 3800.** That's 800 new social housing homes to be built in 2018. When combined with homes to be delivered from private sites through Part V, and including old social housing stock that is being refurbished into use (voids), c. 5000 new social housing homes will be delivered in 2018.



ADDITIONAL MEASURES ANNOUNCED AT HOUSING SUMMIT

- **The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) will appoint a Director of Housing First**, with specialist expertise, and Housing First will be expanded to the other main urban areas. Each of the Dublin local authorities will be given a specific Housing First target with an additional 100 Housing First places to be provided outside of Dublin. Local authorities will co-ordinate with approved housing bodies (AHBs) to build more one-bed homes for individuals and those under Housing First programmes.
- **The DRHE is being restructured to deliver more services directly**, working with the new Homeless Inter-Agency Group, and to focus in a targeted manner on prevention and services. It will also expand to include surrounding local authorities.
- **The Place Finder Service** in local authorities outside of Dublin will assist homeless families who wish to relocate outside of the capital, where possible, to access a suitable property. It will also provide them with advice and support in establishing their new lives in a different local authority area. This will require cross-agency and local authority co-operation and will be part of a broader rural regeneration programme, under the National Development Plan.
- The new Homeless Inter-Agency Group will roll-out and oversee **a targeted national awareness campaign for homelessness prevention**, promoting available services, including the Tenancy Protection Service. (This will include using online and digital channels to prevent homelessness for those who are not yet at a point of crisis that would require phone or face-to-face advice).

- Minister of State Damien English will lead **a new delivery team** in the Department working with local authorities and approved housing bodies.

These initiatives will assist in dealing with the housing crisis and addressing homelessness. However, I'm acutely aware that more needs to be done and I and the Government, working with the local authorities and AHBs, will continue to take the necessary decisions and provide the required resources to deliver the targets we have set for ourselves.

Q: When the Homeless Inter-Agency Group is established, will this simply be an umbrella group for relevant departments and agencies, who are already looking after the needs of homeless families, individuals and children?



Minister Murphy pictured at the Irish Council for Social Housing AGM in June.

A: The overarching objective of the Homeless Inter-Agency Group will be to bring about greater coherence and co-ordination in the provision of homelessness-related services across the relevant government departments and agencies. These will include health and social care supports, welfare, employment and social protection supports, family supports as well as housing and emergency accommodation services.

This will include accelerating the delivery of new supports and ensuring greater transparency and efficiency in the delivery of the various relevant funding streams.

The Homeless Inter-Agency Group will focus on four core areas:

- Prevention supports (to prevent homelessness occurring);
- Homeless supports (to assist and support those in homeless services);
- Exit supports (to assist homeless households enter new independent tenancy arrangements); and,
- Tenancy supports (to ensure that previously homeless households maintain their new tenancies).

I will be closely monitoring the work of the Group through regular engagements with and reports from the Group.

Q: To meet the needs of the growing number of homeless families (especially in Dublin), are calls by Social Justice Ireland to build 90,000 social housing units within five years realistic?

A: Housing is at the top of this Government's list of key priorities and, over the lifetime of our Action Plan, we will provide 130,000 social housing solutions under the various

FACTFILE – MINISTER EOGHAN MURPHY

Fine Gael's Eoghan Murphy (36) previously served as Junior Finance Minister from 2016 until his appointment as Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in June 2017. A TD since 2011, he currently serves the Dublin Bay South constituency.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English & Philosophy from UCD, and King's College London (MA, International Relations). Prior to entering politics, Murphy worked in international arms control, specifically in the area of nuclear weapons disarmament.

He has worked for the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin, and before his election to Dublin City Council (2009-2011) he worked as a speechwriter for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in Vienna.



delivery streams such as building, acquisitions, leasing, HAP and RAS. We are committed to delivering 47,000 homes to the local authority stock within the next five years.

I am seeking to further increase the number of new homes, which will be built as part of the State's Social Housing Build Programme. I am in ongoing discussions with the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, on the need for additional funding to be made available for social housing purposes in Budget 2018.