

EXTRA €100M FOR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The Government has approved an extra €100m for housing and homelessness for 2017, bringing to €1.4 billion the funding provided in 2017, which will support the delivery of new homes, family hubs and emergency accommodation for those that need them.

The Minister for Housing, Planning, and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy TD, has confirmed the additional funding, which will support the delivery of new homes, family hubs and emergency accommodation for those that need them.

Of the €100 million, €92 million is being provided for the local authority capital programme while €8 million is being provided to deliver homes under the National Regeneration Programme.

An updated status list of social housing construction schemes shows that almost 12,300 new social homes are now being advanced by local authorities and approved housing bodies (AHBs) across the country, including those that are on site, in planning and those completed since 2016.

The Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government will publish quarterly updates on social housing construction schemes; all listed projects will deliver the 12,300 new social homes in total in order to facilitate people on waiting lists around the country.

“There are 3,660 new homes now under construction, on top of those already built since Rebuilding Ireland was launched, with more starting on site in early 2018. Each of these homes is, or will soon be, a high quality social home, with good design and sustainable communities, as central priorities in their design and location,” according to Minister Murphy.

DIRECT-BUILD PROGRAMMES

This is the first Social Housing Construction Status Report the Minister has published since the target to deliver social homes under Rebuilding Ireland increased to 50,000, from the original target of 47,000. Funding of €6 billion is now in place to support this delivery.

At the Housing Summit in September under the ‘Review of Rebuilding Ireland’ he announced that resources would be redirected from acquisitions to direct-build programmes for local authorities and AHBs.

The Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development, Damien English, will lead a new delivery team in the Department to work with local authorities and AHBs. That team will have at the centre of its work, the advancement of all of the projects reflected in the construction status report.

“We are now seeing more and more projects start and



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finish on site with each quarterly report and the extra financial and human resources we are making available will enhance this activity," noted Minister Murphy.

Since the last Social Housing Construction Status Report (end of Quarter 2 of 2017), the number of new individual social homes being developed and represented on the report has risen from over 11,000 to over 12,300 and will continue to increase.

"The local authority build programme continues to ramp up and we are beginning to see real delivery on the ground with 3,660 homes underway across 191 projects nationwide, with just under 2,000 homes due to go on site shortly."

EMERGENCY BEDS

The Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government is currently in the process of delivering 200 additional permanent emergency beds so that there will be a bed and all the necessary supports available for anyone who needs them.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) will also implement their targeted programme to reach out to all those sleeping rough and to provide them with the interventions and support they need.

Housing First is the best solution, but there are people who need beds immediately, and we can provide that on a permanent basis with these new beds. More than 180 people are sleeping rough on the streets at night, so the aim is to get them into safe shelter and then on to one of the many pathways of more secure and sustainable supports.

COLD WEATHER INITIATIVE

The DRHE has published its Cold Weather Strategy, which will see the availability of additional temporary beds and accommodation, if required, in addition to the 200 new beds.

"There will be more than enough spare capacity in the system, as an additional precaution. This strategy can also be activated during more extreme weather conditions – the excellent response for vulnerable homeless people during the recent Storm Ophelia is testament to this," noted Minister Eoghan Murphy.

Arrangements are also in place with Peter McVerry Trust and Focus Ireland to ensure that additional temporary shelter can be brought into use across a range of existing services and facilities for singles and couples on a temporary basis. (A contingency



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emergency response is in place permanently for any family who may be at risk of sleeping rough at any time.)

Across the country, cold weather plans and initiatives are also being advanced. Local authorities in major urban centres have robust contingency arrangements to meet any additional homeless requirements, as they arise during the winter. In Cork an additional 25 temporary beds are in place, in Galway 34 temporary beds are in place with an additional 10 temporary beds in place in Limerick.

HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMME

"Many homeless individuals have complex needs that require supports beyond housing. We must work with the homeless individuals, on a one-on-one basis, so that root issues can be addressed and managed to help them achieve independent living in the long term.

"The Housing First programme is critical in this regard and provides direct access to housing and to the intensive health, addiction and personal supports required for people who are homeless and have complex needs to maintain their tenancies," added the Housing Minister.

This includes rough sleepers, long-term users of emergency accommodation, young people exiting care, and those exiting institutions such as prisons and hospitals. Evidence in Ireland and internationally shows the Housing First approach to be an efficient and effective way to address homelessness for these groups.

Using this model, 180 new tenancies have been created in Dublin under a consortium contract between the DRHE, Focus Ireland and the Peter McVerry Trust. The Housing First programme is being extended to the major urban areas outside of Dublin.

The housing authorities in Cork, Limerick and Galway

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steps to prevent the eviction in the first instance and where this is not possible, to put the correct supports in place to ensure the housing need of the household is met.”

The number of people accessing emergency accommodation in October was 8,492 nationally – this comprises 5,298 adults and 3,194 dependents. “While this figure has increased, the rate of increase is much smaller and indeed we are seeing the numbers stabilising in the Dublin region, an important step along the pathway to addressing successfully the challenge of homelessness.”

According to Minister Murphy, the delivery of homes is key to meeting the needs of those experiencing homelessness. “We will provide social housing solutions for over 21,000 individuals and families and my department, local authorities and approved housing bodies will continue to work closely, quickly and proactively to identify further solutions and increase social housing supports so that we can give those in emergency accommodation the help they need.”



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are working closely with the HSE and NGOs with a view to delivering 100 tenancies starting next year, while a new National Director of Housing First is due to be recruited to support the delivery of this very important programme.

HOMELESS NUMBERS

“The homelessness crisis is beginning to look like it is stabilising in Dublin, which is where our homeless problem has been most severe. However, the numbers continue to increase outside of Dublin, so actions that have arrested the increase in Dublin must be applied elsewhere,” according to Minister Murphy.

He noted that since the beginning of Rebuilding Ireland the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) has “worked tirelessly” to prevent people from losing their homes, in addition to securing housing for those who have already lost homes.

“This has resulted in over 600 preventions of homelessness, in addition to more than 2,000 exits from homelessness since the beginning of the year. That’s more than 2,600 people who would be homeless today if not for the co-ordinated efforts led by the DRHE.

“This is the product of many hours and weeks of work by the DRHE. We would ask people who feel they are at risk of homelessness to link in with the DRHE at the very earliest opportunity so that they, with their partners Threshold, can take