

Submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Community on Ireland 2040-Our Plan: National Planning Framework.

November 2017

Introduction

COPE Galway welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Draft “Ireland 2040-Our Plan”. Ireland’s recent experience with the economic crisis left many individuals and groups in poverty, saw cuts to most public and social services and left Ireland experiencing a homeless crisis of a scale never experienced before. While people of Ireland, as well as those in the non-profit sector, struggle to cope with the effects of this crisis, it is important to highlight that this should not be allowed to happen again and all future policy and planning must take this into consideration while continually seeking to tackle the ongoing effects of the crisis.

Ireland today faces many challenges such as an acute shortage of housing, increased homelessness, an increasing older population and the strain on public and social services caused by increased demand for these services. This submission is based on COPE Galway’s vision of a “Improved Quality of Life, in a home of your own for People affected by Homelessness, Women & Children experiencing Domestic Violence, and Older People” and will highlight some the issues experienced by clients of COPE Galway, that we feel need to be addressed.

COPE Galway is a local Galway charity that provides a range of services to some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in Galway. The services we provide are across three areas:

- Homeless Services
- Domestic Violence Services for women and children
- Services for Older People

Homelessness

COPE Galway operates services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes emergency and transitional accommodation, resettlement and tenancy support services for people who are homeless and moving on from homelessness, and services to prevent homelessness. The homeless situation in Galway has continued to intensify during 2017. This has been most apparent in the increase in the number of families both at risk of and becoming homeless. COPE Galway homeless services accommodated and supported 211 families with 512 children in 2016 compared to 166 families with 493 children in 2015. Currently there are 54 families placed and supported in emergency accommodation by the organisation, the highest number ever. There has also been a noted growth in the numbers rough sleeping in Galway over the past year and the current range of services available to those who are homeless in the city are struggling to deal with this.

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Domestic Violence

COPE Galway Waterside House provides Refuge accommodation and Outreach support to women and their children experiencing Domestic Violence. Supports include;

- One-to-one information and safety planning,
- 24hr telephone support, parenting advice,
- Direct support for children from qualified childcare workers,
- Referral to play therapy for children and adult counselling for women,
- Advocacy with regard to entitlements such as Housing, Social Welfare and Immigration status,
- Court preparation and accompaniment
- Outreach support in Galway City and County.

In addition, the service provides Training and Awareness on Domestic Violence to a range of statutory and voluntary agencies and carries out preventative and education work with students at both second and third level.

In 2016, COPE Galway Waterside House worked with 314 individual women and their 158 children experiencing Domestic Violence. The service provided 720 outreach appointments, 161 court accompaniments and answered 1,709 support and crisis calls. Due to lack of space, the service was unable to accommodate 204 women with 246 children who requested refuge 249 times.

Older People

COPE Galway's Older People's services support older people to continue living independently at home through the provision of a range of supports in the community including Meals-on-Wheels, lunch clubs, a Day Centre and Community Support Projects, all of which provide practical supports which help ensure older people continue to live in their own homes in the community.

In 2016 COPE Galway produced and delivered 45,000 meals to 392 older people through the organisations Community Catering Meals-on-Wheels service and catered for up to 100 people weekly across seven Lunch Clubs in Galway City. Our Day Centre and Community support Projects supported 118 people over the course of the year.

COPE Galway Submission on Ireland 2040 Our Plan: Planning Framework.

COPE Galway recognises that Ireland is changing and the best way to address this is to plan for this change. COPE Galway understands the importance of "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" in framing a new way forward as well

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as having an enormous bearing on the standard of living and quality of life of the population of Ireland. COPE Galway welcomes that the draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" recognises the challenges needed to be addressed in Galway such "housing choice and affordability, transport/mobility and urban quality, especially outside the core-city centre area"¹ and to make this possible it needs to "Identifying infill and regeneration opportunities to intensify housing and employment development throughout inner suburban areas" and "Progressing the sustainable development of new greenfield areas for housing and the development of supporting public transport and infrastructure, such as at Ardaun"².

Housing

COPE Galway welcomes National Policy Objective 33-"Target the delivery of 550,000 additional households up to 2040 in accordance with the policy objectives of Ireland 2040"³ as well as the fact the Draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" states one of the key National Policy Objectives is "50% new housing on infill/brownfield (Galway City and Suburbs)"⁴. This objective must be completed as Housing is an ongoing issue in Galway City and County. Ireland 2040 provides a target of 25,000⁵ houses a year yet the ESRI suggests 30,000 to 35,000⁶ housing units per year need to be supplied to meet housing demand.

While the Draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" states approximately 25,000 new homes will need to be provided in Ireland every year⁷, this should be reviewed to an estimated annual housing output of 30,000-35,000.

Ireland 2040 must prioritise the provision of social housing through building. There is a continued need for increased social housing supply. This is highlighted by the fact that there has been a 35.7% increase in the main applicant in a household qualifying for social housing being in some sort of employment⁸. In 2015, 2016 and the half of 2017 no new local authority homes were built in Galway County or City⁹ and in January 2017 it was reported that the building of 14 new social houses on Ballymoneen Road had been delayed.¹⁰ Galway County has also acquired 24 homes in 2015, 29 in 2016 and 8 to date in 2017 while Galway City acquired 26 in 2015, 2 in 2016 and 2 to date in 2017 giving a total of 81 local authority homes built or acquired by both local authorities since funding was received in 2015¹¹. Increased funding for social housing provision and the resourcing and supporting of local housing authorities and approved housing bodies to build this housing is necessary. The lack of available social housing has contributed to an increasing reliance on private landlords meeting social housing need through schemes such as Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rent Supplement. As there is an estimated need for 8,245 new housing units in Galway between

¹ Pg 58.

² Pg 59

³ Pg 85

⁴ Pg 39

⁵ Pg 88

⁶McQuin, K. Foley, D. O'Toole, C. ESRI. Quarterly Economic Commentary. Pg 56. Summer 2017

⁷ Pg 88

⁸ The Housing Agency .Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2016. Pg 12. December 2016

⁹Figure taken from <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>. Accessed 10th November 2017

¹⁰Galway Bay FM newsroom. " City Council Executive under fire over cost of building Social Housing in Knocknacarra". Galway Bay FM. 24th January 2017

¹¹Figures taking from <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision>. Accessed 10th November 2017

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2015 and 2023¹², social housing should be increased through building rather than through acquiring to safeguard against reducing the number of homes available on the private market.

While the Draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" mentions social housing, "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" should specifically mention social housing provision will be provided for through building.

Rent

There is currently an undersupply of accommodation in the rental market which is leading to an increase in the costs of rent¹³. While the Housing Need Demand Assessment will estimate future housing need and demand including those for rent, a strategy for the rental sector needs to be specified in the draft. This strategy should include measures on security for tenants and landlords, supply including maintaining existing levels of rental stock and promoting additional supply through measures such as build to rent and improving the quality of management and standards of rental accommodation.

COPE Galway welcomes the development 'Housing Need Demand Assessment' (HNDA) model. The draft needs to bring forward a strategy for the rental sector focused on increasing supply, standard and type of rental accommodation.

Single Person Housing

COPE Galway welcomes that the Draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" recognises the increasing demand for housing to cater for one and two person households¹⁴. In light of the changing demographic of Irish households with smaller household sizes and increasing one person households¹⁵, Local Housing Authorities need to continually strive to match an increasing and diverse household profile with appropriate responses to their needs including taking into consideration the housing needs of homeless individuals in their area. With some 5,250 adults homeless in September 2017¹⁶ it is widely acknowledged that "the long-term solution to the current homelessness issue is to increase the supply of homes"¹⁷. Housing First is widely regarded as a solution to the housing needs of long-term homeless. However it has been reported¹⁸ that the lack of single person dwellings has stalled delivery on the Government's commitment to tackle rough-sleeping and homelessness through housing led approaches and housing first.

With this in mind we would recommend that Draft "Ireland 2040-Our Plan" takes into account the specific housing needs of those who are long term homeless.

Vacant Properties

COPE Galway welcomes the drafts objective to implement measures to reduce vacancy rates¹⁹. In 2016 there were approximately 183,312²⁰ vacant residential units excluding holiday homes in Ireland. A CSO

¹² Galway City Council. "Galway City Council Development Plan". Pg 23. January 2017

¹³ The Daft.ie Rental Price Report. Pg 2. October 2017

¹⁴ Pg 88.

¹⁵ <http://www.cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016profile1-housinginireland/>

¹⁶ Pg 3. The Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Homelessness Report September 2017

¹⁷ Rebuilding Ireland. Pg 33

¹⁸ Holland, K. "Lack of one-bed homes 'biggest obstacle' tackling homelessness". Irish Times. Sep 25, 2017.

¹⁹ Pg 87.

²⁰ Figures taking from <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp1hii/cp1hii/vac/>. Access 10th July 2017

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report details that there are 13,654 vacant properties in Galway with 3,375 in Galway City²¹. With the high levels of homelessness being experienced both nationally and locally, COPE Galway welcomes the drafts objective to implement measures to reduce vacancy²² rates. COPE Galway feels that these measures could include a vacant property tax, which could incentivise the owners of vacant properties to bring them back into use. This tax could be calculated on the value of the property or the potential rental income and increased on a graduated basis the longer the property remains vacant. The revenue raised could be ring-fenced for further vacancy reduction measures and social housing output²³.

COPE Galway welcomes the drafts objective to implement measures to reduce vacancy. The draft needs to specify what necessary measures will be in place.

Health

COPE Galway welcomes the section 5.3-“Healthy Communities” of the draft. The draft recognises that demographics, new models of care and clinical practices, medical technology and increasing patients expectation, means the healthcare environment is constantly changing and that the pace of this change is increasing²⁴. COPE Galway welcomes the drafts recognition that older people “want to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible”²⁵ and that people are living longer, this brings with it a complex set of social and health care needs. In fact, growth in the number of people over 85 is at a rate of 4% with an expected quadrupling from 100,000 to 440,000 nationally by 2041²⁶. The stated government policy and the preferred choice of the majority of older people to remain living independently, requires significant investment in community support for older people. COPE Galway’s Older People’s services support older people to continue living independently at home through the provision of a range of supports in the community including Meals-on-Wheels, lunch clubs, a Day Centre and Community Support Projects, all of which provide practical supports which help ensure older people continue to live in their own homes in the community. In 2016 COPE Galway produced and delivered 45,000 meals to 392 older people through our Community Catering Meals-on-Wheels service and catered for up to 100 people weekly across seven Lunch Clubs in Galway City. Our Day Centre and Community support Projects supported 118 people over the course of the year.

COPE Galway also operates a range of services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness including Preventative Services for those at risk of homelessness, Emergency Accommodation for people who are homeless and Transitional Accommodation and Resettlement and Tenancy Support for those who are moving out of homelessness into independent living. It is well established that homeless peoples’ physical health is worse than the general populations and they are more likely to suffer from mental health conditions²⁷ The findings of a Simon Community health snapshot suggest that health provision for those

²¹Figures available at <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpr/censusofpopulation2016-preliminaryresults/housing/>. Accessed 11th July 2017

²² Pg 87

²³Simon Community. “Empty Homes: Unlocking solutions to the housing and homeless crisis”. Pg 5. March 2017

²⁴ Pg 77.

²⁵ Pg 80.

²⁶ Galway City and County Age Friendly Alliance . “Galway Age Friendly Programme”.Pg 6. May 2014

²⁷ O’Reilly, F. et al. Homelessness: An Unhealthy State. Pg 9. 2015

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who are homeless, needs proactive and co-ordinated primary health care services which can also direct people to the most appropriate source of health support needs²⁸.

COPE Galway welcomes the draft stating the best health care outcomes can be achieved by directing the model of care towards primary and community care where the majority of the health needs of the populations' health can be met locally²⁹. The current approach to healthcare is based on problem oriented care, gives little consideration to the person's experience, preferences and knowledge and instead focuses on professional knowledge and interventions on behalf of the person³⁰. This 'deficit' approach is not effective as care is provided to those most in need such as those at risk and emergencies rather than taking preventative or early intervention measures. This 'deficit' approach is more costly and has implications for the sustainability of this current approach³¹. Health Policy and Services need to move towards an asset based approach which strengthens and promotes factors that protect against poor health, supports good health and wellbeing as well as fostering communities and networks that sustain health. Early intervention and self-management are resourced and prioritised with care being delivered in the community therefore reducing pressure on hospitals³². This approach is based on creating and sustaining support in the community, outside of the traditional boundaries of health and social care services and promotes good health and wellbeing and strong social connections³³.

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Mental Health

Despite the prevalence of mental health problems and their often chronic and debilitating nature, Irish public health policy has repeatedly failed to provide the required resources to tackling these problems. Despite an increase in expenditure on mental health services it equates to only 6% of the overall health budget, a reduction in mental health funding as a proportion of the overall health budget in recent years³⁴ and is still below the 8.24% level recommended in "A Vision for Change"³⁵. Poor mental health costs the State an estimated €3 billion a year³⁶ and the proportion of overall ill health caused by mental ill health is estimated at 20–25%³⁷. As *A Vision for Change* highlights "it is evident that the progressively declining percentage of total health funding devoted to mental health is inequitable"³⁸.

²⁸ Walsh, K. Simon Snapshot Report. Pg 36. 2011

²⁹ Pg. 78.

³⁰ Age Action. Submission to Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare. Pg 3. 2016

³¹ Age Action. Submission to Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare. Pg 6. 2016

³² Age Action. Submission to Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare. Pg 3. 2016

³³ Realising the Value. Pg. 1. 2015. Available at https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset-based_approaches_in_a_health_and_well-being_context.pdf

³⁴ Paraphrased and figures taken from Page 4. "Mental Health Reform." Snapshot analysis of the HSE Mental Health Division Operational Plan 2017". 8th March 2017

³⁵ HSE. "A Vision for Change". 2006. Pg 178

³⁶ Stated by Deputy Thomas Pringle,

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2016111500052>. Same figure quoted for 2006 in Page 9. The Human Cost. An overview of the evidence on economic adversity and mental health and recommendations for action

³⁷ HSE. "A Vision for Change". 2006. Pg. 74

³⁸ HSE. "A Vision for Change". 2006. Pg. 178

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COPE Galway welcomes the draft statement on Mental Health provision including improving access to primary and community care facilities and the provision of additional Mental Health Units, Residential accommodation on a national basis³⁹.

Governance, Review and Monitoring

COPE Galway welcomes the draft statement that “Governance Statutory Backing for Ireland 2040 and Establishment of the Office of the Planning”⁴⁰. COPE Galway consider that while it is important that the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill will “provide a legislative basis for Ireland 2040, its monitoring and review into the future and the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator”⁴¹, the future monitoring and review must include consultation with non-profit organisations. This consultation will ensure that the future and current needs of Irelands vulnerable are being met.

COPE Galway has witnessed Government Policy state one thing yet experience on the ground reflects another. COPE Galway would like to remind the government of Pillar One of Rebuilding Ireland in which they stated “we will accelerate and expand the Rapid-Build Housing Programme to provide, in the first instance and as a priority, more suitable accommodation for families that are currently residing in commercial hotels, while more permanent tenancies are secured. Units delivered over and above the number needed for families in hotels will be used as standard social housing”⁴². As of August only 22⁴³, of the target of 800 in 2017⁴⁴ rapid-build homes had been delivered.

COPE Galway would also like to remind the Government of Pillar 1 of Rebuilding Ireland: “Address Homelessness-Provide early solutions to address the unacceptable level of families in emergency accommodation; deliver inter-agency supports for people who are currently homeless, with a particular emphasis on minimising the incidence of rough sleeping, and enhance State supports to keep people in their own homes”⁴⁵. The Homeless situation in Galway, however, has continued to intensify during 2017. This has been most apparent in the increase in the number of families both at risk of and becoming homeless. COPE Galway homeless services accommodated and supported 211 families with 512 children in 2016 compared to 166 families with 493 children in 2015. In order to ensure adequate monitoring and reviews are taking place non-profit organisations must be involved in all review and monitoring processes.

While COPE Galway welcomes the draft, this is with caution. Any policy created from this draft must be fulfilled.

³⁹ Pg 141.

⁴⁰ Pg 125

⁴¹ Pg 125

⁴² Rebuilding Ireland. “Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness”. Pg 86. July 2016

⁴³ Rebuilding Ireland. “Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, Third Quarterly Progress Report”. Pg 3 May 2017

⁴⁴ Rebuilding Ireland. “Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness”. Pg 35.

⁴⁵ Pg 13

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