



AN ROINN COMHSHAOL, ODHREACHTA AGUS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



DELIVERING HOMES SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

Statement on Housing Policy



DELIVERING HOMES
SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES

Statement on Housing Policy



FOREWORD





Good housing is the bedrock of communities. A house is a place of shelter and comfort where people can develop and which contributes to their ability to make the most of life's opportunities. Irish society places a strong value on quality housing. Pride in our homes and neighbourhoods is an important civic value: it helps to create a stable and caring society. In addition, good quality housing is vital to Ireland's continued economic progress. If Ireland is not seen by internationally mobile businesses and service providers as a place which offers good and affordable housing, then our economy will lose out on key investments and skilled personnel. We need good housing to maintain our competitiveness.

The **Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities** (December 2005) made a start in setting out the Government's vision for housing policy over the coming years, taking account of the challenges and opportunities presented through continued population and economic growth. The key objective outlined in the policy framework is to build sustainable communities, and to meet individual accommodation needs in a manner that facilitates and empowers personal choice and autonomy.

This approach has been endorsed and taken forward by the Social Partners in the *Towards 2016* partnership agreement. The ten-year national social partnership agreement provides an important framework to transform the housing sector in Ireland. Over this time we expect to provide more people with access to home ownership through a variety of forms and expand choice through a modernised private rented sector and the availability of good quality social housing options.

Substantial investment has been devoted to social and affordable housing measures in recent years. This is having positive impacts, with a decline in the number of households assessed as in need of social housing registered in 2005. This is a welcome trend and local authorities are well placed to deliver an expanding and diverse programme, through multi-annual housing action plans and availability of increased public investment. The programme of investment and the policy priorities reflected in this document underpin the approach to increased housing investment under the *National Development Plan 2007 - 2013* and the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016*.

Our challenge is to build the type of communities suitable for our fast changing society: communities where people are happy to live and in which all residents can participate and prosper. This statement, entitled **Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities** provides the integrated policy approach to address these challenges and focuses in particular on a programme of key actions. Implementation will require commitment from all stakeholders in the housing area - central government, local authorities and other housing providers, the construction industry and social partners. We look forward to working with all of these parties to deliver on this agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Roche'.

Dick Roche T.D.
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and Local Government
February 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noel Ahern'.

Noel Ahern T.D.
Minister of State for Housing
and Urban Renewal

CONTENTS

Foreword	03
Index of Boxes, Tables and Graphs	05
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	06
PART I - BACKGROUND	16
Chapter 1 - Policy Context	17
Chapter 2 - Vision for the future	21
PART II - ACTIONS	24
Chapter 3 - Housing Now - delivering sustainable communities	26
Chapter 4 - Housing Services	37
Chapter 5 - Paths to Home Ownership	43
Chapter 6 - Social Housing Supports	48
Chapter 7 - Supply of Housing for Special Needs	56
Chapter 8 - Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal	62
Chapter 9 - Managing and Maintaining Social Housing	67
Chapter 10 - Institutional and implementation reforms	70
APPENDICES	78
Appendix 1 - Action on Private Rented Standards	79
Appendix 2 - Incremental Purchase Scheme	82
Appendix 3 - Grants to adapt housing for the needs of Older People and People with a Disability	84
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	86
REFERENCES	89

An Irish language version of this document is also available. Both the English and Irish language versions are available on the Department website at: www.environ.ie

INDEX OF BOXES, TABLES AND GRAPHS

Box 1.1:	Actions focused on building sustainable communities	12
Box 1.2:	Actions focused on addressing housing needs, choice and responsibility	13
Box 1.3:	Actions focused on improving the effectiveness of delivery of housing programmes	15
Box 3.1:	Adamstown Strategic Development Zone	28
Box 3.2:	Greener Homes Scheme	31
Box 3.3:	Design	34
Box 3.4:	Summary of key actions in general housing sector	36
Box 4.1:	Range of housing services	39
Box 4.2:	Housing supports for people with special needs	39
Box 5.1:	Range of delivery mechanisms for affordable housing	44
Box 6.1:	The life cycle approach	49
Box 6.2:	Sustainable community proofing - sample toolkit	51
Box 6.3:	Range of delivery mechanisms for social housing	53
Box 7.1:	Dublin City Council financial contribution scheme	59
Box 7.2:	Proposed inter-agency protocols in relation to services for people with a disability	60
Box 8.1:	Regeneration Agencies	64
Box 8.2:	National Building Agency	64
Box 8.3:	Good practice in estate regeneration	65
Box 10.1:	Hierarchy of strategies and plans	73
Graph 1:	House completions 1997 to 2006	16
Graph 2:	Total housing expenditure	18
Graph 3:	Affordable housing expenditure	48
Graph 4:	Social housing expenditure (excluding housing renewal)	53
Graph 5:	State expenditure on voluntary and co-operative housing	59
Graph 6:	Spending on homeless services	61
Graph 7:	Traveller accommodation expenditure	62
Graph 8:	Expenditure on regeneration and remedial works	68
Graph 9:	Basis on which local authorities allocate housing units	74
Table 1.1:	Population in 2002: Age classification by tenure type	18
Table 1.2:	Housing Assessment of Need - 2005	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



To enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice¹.

Introduction

1. In December 2005, the Government published the *Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities* to provide a 21st Century vision for housing aimed at building sustainable communities.
2. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well-planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all².
3. This present policy statement - *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* provides greater detail on the actions required if the goals in the Framework document are to be achieved. It presents a vision for the future for housing. It is a companion to the National Development Plan 2007-2013: Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All, which provides the resources for the required investment and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016 which focuses particularly on social inclusion issues.
4. The broad approach to housing set out in the *Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities* has been endorsed and elaborated by the social partners in *Towards 2016*³. The fundamental aim is to develop the Irish housing sector over the next ten years, by delivering more and better quality housing responses and by doing this in a more strategic way focused on the building of sustainable communities. This aim is grounded in an expansive view of housing and its positive potential in contributing to overall social and economic well-being.
5. The statement builds on the progress made to date in responding to the unparalleled phases of economic, employment and population growth which has posed challenges for the housing sector. This response has involved:
 - unprecedented growth in housing supply, with over one third of Irish homes built in the last decade, and some 93,000 homes completed in 2006 - the highest rate per capita in Europe;
 - growth in employment in house building and in the value of the residential construction sector, which was valued at about €21 billion in 2005, equivalent to almost 16% of GNP compared to 8% in 1996;
 - continuing improvements in the quality of housing with the majority of Irish people indicating that they are satisfied with the quality of their accommodation⁴; and
 - provision of a greater range of accommodation choices with over 100,000 households assisted through various social and affordable housing measures over the past decade.

Social and economic context

6. Irish society has experienced very rapid change in the last ten years. It has been a time of opportunity and new found affluence for many. While significant progress has been made in tackling disadvantage, many people still have difficulty in providing for themselves and their families and are left behind by the progress around them. Housing must be used to the maximum degree possible as a lever to assist those who suffer social or economic disadvantage.
7. Given the resources and capacities now available to the country, it is right to aspire to a better quality housing environment for all Irish people and those who wish to live here. Sustainable approaches to housing and the building of communities are the bedrock of this positive vision.
8. While recognising and welcoming the strong contribution of market driven activity to Irish housing, targeted government intervention in housing continues to be important. The extent and nature of these interventions must be adjusted over time. These must have regard to the highly dynamic nature of markets. Interventions take place across a broad range of policy areas. A key challenge of modern government is to undertake integrated approaches across policy areas in ways that advance society and tackle the social and economic challenges of the moment.



Vision for the future

9. Forecast growth in the Irish economy and population indicate that strong demand for housing will continue. Output is expected to reduce gradually over the longer term. Nonetheless, the number of homes in Ireland may rise from 1.8 million at present to over 2.5 million by 2020. This poses significant challenges in terms of planning, delivery and community development.
10. Housing policy has been the subject of detailed examination and review throughout the last ten years. This has been in response to the severe pressures arising from high levels of price increase. But it has also reflected the fact that rapid societal change has had some of its strongest impact in the housing sphere - given the inter-relationship between housing and so many other areas of people's lives.
11. The most comprehensive recent study of housing issues was completed by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in 2004⁵. NESC, supported by its constituent social partners, sought to develop a shared understanding of the issues involved and the scope to take new approaches in housing. NESC considered that future challenges for housing would fall into three broad areas:
 - achieving high quality sustainable developments in urban and rural areas;
 - provision of an effective range of suitable supports for households with affordability problems; and
 - assisting the market in continuing to deliver a high level of supply consistent with demand.

12. NESC concluded that the tools were available to Irish society to respond to this challenge. This response should be guided by a vision of the kind of high quality, integrated sustainable communities that are worth building. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* responds to this challenge, setting out a practical programme to take this agenda forward.
13. The development of this statement has taken account of the broader vision for the development of Ireland outlined in *Towards 2016*. This has as its foundations “a dynamic, internationalised participatory society and economy with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic development is environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive”⁶. It involves a commitment to social and economic development in a way that leads to a better quality of life for all.
14. Importantly, the statement reflects two general orientations that informed the NESC report on housing. Firstly, that the key instruments to address the challenges for the future are in the areas of “planning, urban design, infrastructural investment, land management and public service delivery”⁷. Secondly, that a greater quantity of housing must not be at the expense of quality development.
15. The majority of people satisfy their housing need in the private sector. About 80% of Irish households are owner-occupiers⁸ and the private rented sector is growing. This level of private provision depends of course on significant Government support through:
 - capital investment in infrastructure;
 - planning and regulatory regimes which facilitate the efficient operation of the market; and
 - support to households under the fiscal and income support regimes.*
16. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* re-iterates the key issue for Government policy in the private housing area as ensuring sufficiency of supply to meet demand. This relates to planning of housing supply and the promotion of policies that seek to deliver quality housing in attractive neighbourhoods. Work is progressing on updating residential density guidelines, and addressing emerging issues such as the design and management of apartments.
17. The Government actively encourage the fulfilment of new households’ aspirations to home ownership. It is important to offer choices in a more mobile and dynamic economy. The modernisation of the private rented sector is one component of developing tenure choice.
18. The Government acknowledge also the important role of the State in providing choices for those who cannot meet their own needs in the housing market. The same principles of quality and sustainability must be reflected in policies to deliver affordable housing, or social housing supports. The passage of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006, marked an important step in encouraging planning for housing in a way that avoids undue social segregation. It is a fundamental thesis underpinning this statement, that in

* For example, Mortgage Interest Relief in 2005 was estimated to have cost the Exchequer almost €280m to 420,000 claimants (CSO Construction and Housing in Ireland 2006), while some €390m was spent in 2006 on rent supplement payments to approximately 60,000 claimants.

planning for affordable and social housing, local authorities should seek to actively provide for integrated communities, delivering accommodation choices for a wide range of households. In this context, policies should encourage a sense of personal autonomy and responsibility that underpins good community participation.

19. A clear aim of *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* is to achieve a step change in the provision of housing support to obtain more effective delivery in ways that ensure that individuals in need of support are offered options tailored to their needs. These responses should lead to better life opportunities and break cycles of disadvantage and dependency. A key element is viewing the individual's need from the perspective of their current position in their life cycle and tailoring supports to address the need at this point in time.
20. This reflects a central underpinning of the *Towards 2016* agreement and the commitments on housing reflected therein. This approach requires a holistic perspective on people's needs as they move through key life cycle phases - childhood, working age, older people. A particular focus is placed on people with a disability (who, will benefit from mainstreamed measures through all stages of the life cycle).
21. This approach allows supports to be geared to the particular needs of people in different phases of their life. For example, the Rental Accommodation Scheme launched in 2005 is recognised in *Towards 2016* as a mechanism, which by providing an accommodation solution for young people of working age, may provide the necessary springboard to accessing employment, training and other education opportunities which may lead to broader options for the individual in the future. For older people, grants to adapt their homes to address mobility problems, can supplement other supports to enable them to remain living independently in their home for as long as possible. These perspectives are reflected in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*, particularly in terms of the new approaches to better identify the need for housing supports and the future development of these supports.
22. Those providing such supports (local authorities and voluntary and co-operative housing bodies) must take a service-based approach that is client-centred. For more vulnerable households this will generally require an inter-agency response. A range of reforms to improve the quality of service and the effectiveness of provision is required to fulfil this ambition. This approach must engage individuals in receipt of housing supports in a new way. This will involve the development of new partnership approaches with other relevant support agencies to ensure that individuals' long-term needs are addressed in a holistic and effective way. It is not sufficient, for example, for housing supports to be provided in the absence of commitments by the individual or relevant agencies in relation to other interventions such as employment, further education etc. The development of a more holistic approach will require detailed work aimed at making social inclusion responses a reality for the individuals in receipt of the various kinds of housing support. This will seek to combine an approach based on personal activation with the delivery of high quality services to individuals.



23. This general approach will apply not only to new housing provision but also importantly to the tenants of existing social housing. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* provides for a planned and concerted increase in investment in existing social housing over the coming years. This provides an opportunity to tackle some long-standing problems in communities that have experienced multiple disadvantages. The focus will be on ensuring that this investment results in the development of strong communities rather than over-reliance on refurbishment of dwellings.

Actions to achieve the vision

24. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* sets out a range of actions focused on:

- building sustainable communities;
- responding to housing need in a way that maximises choice and responsibility; and
- effectively delivering accommodation programmes.

25. Effective implementation of many elements involves consultation with key stakeholders and social partners. Legislative change will be needed in some areas. Some of the key components to address these different themes are summarised below.

Building sustainable communities

26. A range of actions are proposed with impacts across the public and private provision of housing. Making connections in relation to physical infrastructure and social inclusion measures which will address the range of community needs are important in this regard. A summary of the actions proposed is set out below.

BOX 1.1: Actions focused on building sustainable communities

- Promote supply of sufficient homes of the right type, in the right locations, integrated with other infrastructure requirements.
- Build on existing suite of best practice guidance on urban planning, and develop new comprehensive planning guidelines on inter-related housing and planning matters to address emerging needs. This will include:
 - guidelines for planning authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing Design-Standards for Apartments (Consultation draft issued January 2007);
 - updated Residential Density Guidelines to be issued in 2007;
 - guidance to issue on responsibilities of local authorities for facilities in high-density estates during 2007; and
 - guidelines on Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities to issue in 2007, updating and replacing Social Housing Design Guidelines.
- Develop legislation, to ensure lands zoned and serviced for housing purposes are used in a timely fashion.
- Progressively improve the environmental sustainability of new housing through voluntary codes and building regulations.

BOX 1.1: Actions focused on building sustainable communities, cont'd

- State investment in housing support to seek the delivery of high quality mixed tenure estates, by requiring new proposals for social housing to be “sustainable community proofed”.
- Invest in the renewal and maintenance of social housing estates and prioritisation of good estate management. This will include:
 - capital investment available through the National Development Plan 2007-2013;
 - new funding arrangements to support housing renewal programmes by local authorities, with matching funds from DoEHLG eg. central heating programme and other programmes to be developed; and
 - benchmark audit of social housing stock to be taken in 2007/2008 to allow for monitoring of quality.
- Strengthen supports available to local authorities to deal with anti-social behaviour, through increased statutory powers and funding for a targeted approach in particular estates.
- Establish a **Sustainable Communities Fund** (€8 million being provided in 2007) to support local authorities in regeneration of communities and actions to address anti-social behaviour by providing revenue funding for such projects.
- Evolution of housing policy to reflect the diversity of communities (including, for example, the housing needs of new migrants and ethnic groups and people with a disability).

Housing need, choice and responsibility

27. A particular focus within the document is on interventions by Government to address the needs of those who cannot meet their accommodation needs fully from their own resources. Funding being provided under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, will allow the needs of some 140,000 households to be met over the period. Against this background, the emphasis is on ensuring that housing support is provided in a tailored way, reflecting the changing needs over a person's life cycle.
28. This also requires a programme of social housing reform highlighted in the *Housing Policy Framework – Building Sustainable Communities*. This reform is aimed at improving service and ensuring that social housing is delivered in a way that is fair and efficient. This agenda has been endorsed by the social partners in *Towards 2016* and legislation is being drafted to support the reform. Key actions proposed in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* to address issues concerning the need for housing support, improving choice and responsibility are set out in box 1.2.

BOX 1.2: Actions focused on addressing housing need, choice and responsibility

- Develop the private rented sector as an attractive tenure and continue regulating sector appropriately. Action on Private Rented Standards (2006) outlines a range of actions to improve standards, including a review which commenced in 2006 (Appendix 1).
- Work with other Departments and the industry to increase consumer information and protection in the private housing market. This includes, the development by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform of legislation to implement the recommendations of the Auctioneering and Estate Agency Review Group, including the establishment of the new Regulatory Authority.
- Underpin Housing Strategies with effective Housing Action Plans to support delivery of affordable housing and social housing supports. New guidance to be developed based on experience of first round of plans and policy directions in this statement.
- Needs of 60,000 households to be met over the period 2007-2009. Funding over the National Development Plan (NDP) period (2007-2013) will allow the needs of 140,000 households to be met. The mid-term review reflected in *Towards 2016* and the NDP will determine the outputs under the Housing Action Plans post - 2009.

Paths to home ownership

- Provide paths to home ownership from social housing and in response to demand for affordable housing. Some 17,000 affordable homes to be delivered over the period 2007-2009.
- Further expansion provided for under the NDP 2007-2013 leading to the delivery of 40,000 affordable homes over the period.
- Legislation being drafted to improve paths from social housing to home ownership involving:
 - new scheme of incremental purchase to broaden access to home ownership involving purchasing an initial equity stake (Appendix 2); and
 - new scheme of tenant purchase to include the sale of flats.

Social housing support

- Expand housing support programmes by commencing/acquiring 27,000 new homes for people in need of social housing over the period 2007 to 2009; assist further households through full implementation of Rental Accommodation Scheme, and targeted measures for those with special housing needs.
- Further expansion provided for under the NDP 2007-2013, which will mean that the accommodation needs of some 100,000 households seeking social housing options will be met over the period.
- Establish housing advice centres in all major housing authorities to provide information to new claimants and ongoing services to tenants.

BOX 1.2: Actions focused on addressing housing need, choice and responsibility, cont'd

- Roll out new programme of social housing reform (supported by legislation currently being drafted), which will include:
 - putting in place a new means of assessing social housing need;
 - ensuring that tenancy agreements reflect an appropriate balance of rights and responsibilities;
 - ensuring equitable rents and allocation policies; and
 - providing a system of redress for tenants.

Special Housing Needs

- Special housing needs to be particularly highlighted in Housing Action Plans.
- Revise homeless strategies following on from recommendations of the independent review of these strategies. Particular focus on situation of homeless people in long-term emergency accommodation with a view to eliminating such homelessness by 2010.
- Work to achieve effective co-ordination at local level of all services to Travellers in conjunction with work of the High Level Group on Travellers. Continued capital investment in Traveller Accommodation Programme and new procedures to be developed to improve management and maintenance of Traveller specific accommodation.
- National Housing Strategy for people with a disability to be developed by 2009.
- New grant schemes to replace grant support for adapting homes of people with a disability and older people, will be rolled out in 2007. The new schemes will be more streamlined with greater targeting to those most in need (Appendix 3).

Effective delivery of programmes

29. The National Development Plan 2007-2013 provides for some €18 billion in social and affordable housing programmes. It is an integral part of *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* that the commitment of these additional resources is accompanied by structural reforms to increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the overall policy response. The key actions in this statement to promote effective delivery are as follows:

BOX 1.3: Actions focused on improving the effectiveness of delivery of housing programmes

- Focus on maximising delivery of new homes to meet affordable housing demand and social housing need. Funding available to meet the needs of some 140,000 households over the period of the National Development Plan 2007-2013. Delivery to be supported through:
 - legislation being drafted to place Housing Action plans (which set out each local authority's integrated programme of housing interventions) on a statutory footing. These plans to include a rolling three-year implementation plan;
 - increased emphasis on project management;
 - support for housing practitioners in delivering the sustainable communities agenda, through provision of guidance and training with the assistance of the Centre for Housing Research; and
 - increased delegation to housing authorities based on Housing Action Plans.
- Introduce facility to establish specific regeneration agencies and new funding arrangements to aid the roll-out of housing renewal programmes nationwide.
- Give additional powers to housing authorities at county/city level, particularly from a strategic perspective but also powers to create entities (including joint entities) to provide housing services, develop or procure housing.
- Increased support to housing authorities from National Building Agency (new Regeneration Unit) and the Affordable Homes Partnership.
- Improve service to individual households seeking housing to maximise choice of tenure and location within the pool of available accommodation through expansion of local authority led Housing Advice Centres.
- Improve governance of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector together with the streamlining of support schemes and provision of sites/units to improve delivery by this sector.
- Develop new inter-agency responses on a more holistic basis to co-ordinate housing support interventions with other supports through joint agency/individual commitment according to individual need. In particular, establish inter-agency protocols to improve services in areas where there is an accommodation and care perspective.
- Provide opportunities for stakeholder consultation and research to inform policy development (eg through Housing Forum and Centre for Housing Research).

Conclusion

30. The coming decade is likely to be just as dynamic as the past. Housing policy and supports must reflect the needs of our growing population and greater cultural and ethnic diversity. It must respond to the rising expectations regarding the quality of accommodation on offer and the choice available to households. Taken together this comprehensive range of actions will address these challenges and transform the Irish housing sector in the period ahead.

PART 1: BACKGROUND



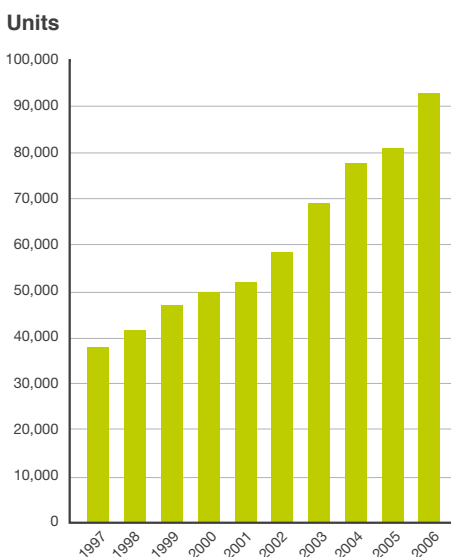
CHAPTER 1

POLICY CONTEXT

Overview

1. The core objective of housing policy in Ireland is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice. Despite the unprecedented challenges faced by the housing sector in recent years, due to demographic, economic and social change, this core objective remains valid.
2. Housing policy must take account of new conditions, particularly the need to promote sustainability in terms of environmental, social, spatial planning and community considerations and the stability and balanced growth of the housing market generally.
3. A more developed perspective is also required, having regard to the rising standards and expectations that are a feature of Ireland's changing society. Policies must seek to ensure that every individual's and family's housing circumstances contribute, as far as possible, to enhancing their overall quality of life.
4. The philosophy of more customer-centred public services has been highlighted in the work of the social partners in a number of recent NESC⁹ and NESF¹⁰ reports. This in turn underpins the approach in the new social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* which reflects the interaction between services required by people in the different stages of the life cycle. This policy statement examines the implications of this perspective for the evolution of housing policy and services over the coming decade.

Graph 1:
House Completions 1997 to 2006



Housing market - background

5. Remarkable progress has been made in meeting the challenges faced by the Irish housing sector in recent years. New records in housing supply have been set in each of the last twelve years with output at levels that are the highest output per capita in Europe. As a result, our housing stock is quite modern and energy efficient, with one in every three homes in Ireland built in the last ten years. Levels of satisfaction with the quality of Irish housing are generally very high¹¹. However, problems arise in relation to affordability of housing for low-income groups, the design of both housing and neighbourhoods, facilitating innovation and ensuring consumer satisfaction. The matching of both supply and categories of accommodation with demand in some locations is also a relevant consideration.
6. Increased output has provided more homes for purchase and for rent. The legal framework within which the private rented sector operates has been modernised through the Residential Tenancies Act 2004.
7. A more strategically focused planning system is in place with the National Spatial Strategy and Regional Planning Guidelines providing the framework within which Housing Strategies are devised. These in turn drive the local development plan process, to make the necessary connections between housing demand, and infrastructural and planning requirements.

Demand for housing

8. The overall demand for housing is influenced by a number of factors. Primary amongst these are demographic changes, availability of credit, prevailing interest rates and the level of real disposable income of potential house purchasers. Disposable income is influenced by the economic, employment and fiscal environment. Individual expectations in terms of affordability and price rises over the long term are also an influence, as is the level of investor activity. While investor activity is partly a function of the other demand factors referred to, it can also be affected by other factors such as the extent of alternative investment options available, the relative returns achievable and the preferences and perceptions of individual investors.
9. The combination of these factors has led to an unprecedented demand for housing over the past decade. The Irish population grew by about 8% in the six years between 1996 and 2002, but growth in the key household formation age group (25-34) rose by 18%¹². 2006 headline data indicate that the population has grown by a further 8% in the four years since 2002, the highest rate of population growth since 1861. A marked portion of this growth is attributable to inward migration. Net in-migration has averaged 46,000 annually since 2002, accounting for 58% of the increase in population since 1996, with natural increase accounting for the balance.
10. Population growth has been accompanied by a steady decline in average household size. Ireland traditionally has had a larger average household size than our EU partners but is now converging towards EU norms. In 1991, there were on average 3.34 people per household in Ireland but this had declined to an average of 2.94 by 2002¹³.
11. Demographic factors are likely to underpin a significant demand for housing into the future. Estimates prepared by the Central Statistics Office based on the 2002 Census, suggested that the Irish population would grow to 5 million by 2021. It seems likely that revised population forecasts flowing from the 2006 census results will project a national population of 5.3 million by 2021. Immigration flows will play an important role in determining population trends and consequent demand for housing over coming years. Taking account of all of these factors, a number of commentators have suggested that the demand for housing over the next 9 years to 2015 may be about 600,000 or almost 30% of the current housing stock¹⁴.

TABLE 1.1: Population in 2002: Age classification by tenure type*.

Age Group	Population in permanent households 2002	Tenure Type		
		Owner occupied	Local Authority rented	Private rented
0-17	997,525	80%	11%	7%
18-29	737,696	67%	7%	22%
30-64	1,644,260	84%	6%	8%
65+	391,261	88%	5%	5%
Total	3,770,742	80%	7%	10%

*Based on CSO data (totals do not add to 100% as some households did not specify tenure type)

Graph 2:
Total Housing Expenditure



12. It is also of note that population structure is likely to alter significantly over the coming years, with the most significant growth anticipated in the over 65 age group. Demographic change determines the type of housing required and the choice of accommodation made by different groups. It is illustrative to look at the tenure patterns of different age groups. Table 1.1, using 2002 census data, indicates that the levels of owner occupation increase with age*, while as might be expected, considerable numbers of young people in the 18 to 29 age group are accommodated in the private rented sector. About 7% of the general population live in local authority housing. The percentage in this tenure is much higher in the under-17 age cohort. These demographic patterns are of considerable relevance to policy development.

Housing support

13. The State fulfils an important role in providing support to households that cannot afford to meet their accommodation needs fully from within their own resources. Substantial additional investment has been made to increase output under social and affordable housing programmes, with average spending of around €1.5 billion between 2001 and 2005. Some 50,000 households have benefited through these measures in that period.

14. Multi-annual action plans covering all social and affordable housing supports have been put in place at local authority level. These seek to ensure that resources are used to best effect to break cycles of disadvantage and dependency by drawing together the range of housing supports, delivered through the different mechanisms including Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006, the Rental Accommodation Scheme, Public Private Partnerships etc.

15. The needs of the households supported through these different mechanisms are broad and diverse. Their needs range from those that, with a little assistance, can purchase a home, to those that have severe affordability problems, sometimes combined with other special needs. Therefore, policy interventions should seek to make available graduated supports to meet the broad spectrum of housing needs not met through the market.

16. In 2004, NESC provided an important analysis of the challenges facing housing policy in the medium term¹⁵. The report endorsed the need for a flexible and graduated approach to housing support. Taking account also of subsequent NESC reports^{16,17}, the social partnership agreement *Towards 2016* develops a wider perspective on all services based on a “life cycle approach” to social policy development. This perspective views need in a more dynamic manner, looking at the risks and hazards faced by an individual person in Irish society and the supports available to them at the different stages of the life cycle. The key groups identified are children, young adults, people of working age, older people and people with a disability.

* Irish National Survey of Housing Quality, ESRI, 2003 indicates that most people over 65 own their own home outright.

17. Assessment of need is a critical element in the determination of housing supports. Statute¹⁸ specifically provides for a triennial assessment of social housing need based on a number of categories. The most recent assessment of need, undertaken in 2005, showed that there were 43,684 households on social housing waiting lists, less than 3% of all households. This is almost a 10% decline on the numbers in 2002 and shows that overall growth in housing supply and the output of social and affordable housing is having a positive impact.

18. It is notable that the majority of people on waiting lists are single people, and also that a significant number of younger people appear on the lists (with 42% aged under 30 years, and 26% aged under 25 years).

TABLE 1.2: Housing Assessment of Need - 2005¹⁹

Age Group	Total Numbers in age group	Percentage of age group that are single person households	Percentage of age group that are single with children	Percentage of age group that are couples (with or without children)
0-17	33	30%	49%	21%
18-30	18,269	26%	58%	16%
31-60	22,307	52%	27%	21%
61+	3,075	83%	1%	16%
Total	43,684	43%	38%	18%

Challenges ahead

19. With revised population forecasts flowing from the results of the 2006 Census likely to project a national population of some 5.3 million by 2021, demographic factors will continue to underpin strong demand for housing. Most of the additional accommodation sought will be provided for by the private sector, both for owner-occupiers and renters. This presents considerable challenges for the physical planning of new housing and the provision of associated services. Part of this demand will translate into additional demand for housing support.

20. The key challenge will be to provide for all of these needs, taking account of the new directions in service delivery, focusing on individual and community needs, and to absorb population increases in a sustainable manner, reflecting our economic, social and environmental priorities.

CHAPTER 2

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

1. The opening section on housing in *Towards 2016* states “..the longer time-frame of a ten year agreement allows for pathways to be developed to transform the Irish housing environment, to improve not only the responsiveness of services but also the quality of services.” In settling on this transformation process, it is vital to have an overarching vision of how the sector should develop. This vision is not limited to the physical aspects, - the “bricks and mortar”, - but is more firmly grounded in the concept of community development and the quality of services that individuals and families should expect.
2. The NESC report on housing highlighted the need to have a clear vision of the kind of high quality, integrated, sustainable neighbourhoods that are worth building. The Housing Policy Framework, launched at the end of 2005, set the building of sustainable communities as its guiding principle and this approach has been endorsed by the social partners in *Towards 2016*.

What are sustainable communities?

3. Sustainable communities have a high quality natural and built environment, with a dynamic and innovative economy, good transport, supportive community and voluntary services, and are environmentally sound. In December 2005, an Informal Council of EU Ministers agreed the Bristol Accord²⁰. This accord defines sustainable communities as places “where people want to live and work, now and in the future”. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are “safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, offer equality of opportunity and good services for all”.
4. The quality of the housing environment is central to creating a sustainable community. Therefore, housing policy must seek to build sustainable communities where, as recommended by NESC, quality and quantity of construction are complementary goals. This means providing a sufficient supply of good quality housing in Ireland in the most suitable locations and of the type required by those seeking accommodation.
5. NESC stated that in the Irish context planning is a most important policy influence on the quantity, price and sustainability of housing. NESC acknowledged the role of recent planning policy initiatives, such as the National Spatial Strategy and the Residential Density Planning Guidelines. Within these frameworks, new housing should be provided in a planned and sustainable fashion, making a positive contribution to the built environment and social integration. Planning for future housing must take account of the needs of a modern, dynamic and multi-cultural society reflecting a diversity of housing needs.

6. Sustainability involves the construction of homes that are structurally sound, energy efficient, environmentally friendly and adaptable over time to changing household needs. Best use must be made of the country's land resources in the construction of new housing schemes by integrating housing provision with necessary transport and other physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and amenities.
7. These principles are particularly important in the context of the pressing challenges of climate change. Energy efficiency within the home and in its relationship with transport and other infrastructure is critical if Ireland is to achieve the required reductions in carbon emissions.
8. The private and public sectors need to work together to improve not just the quality of housing developments themselves, but also to ensure that housing developments add to the character of areas and reinforce the vitality of the local community. Housing must be well integrated with the provision of supporting services such as schools, community facilities and amenities.

Housing need, choice and responsibility

9. Communities are inevitably made up of individuals from different backgrounds, income groups and at different stages in their lives. Accommodation choices will vary with life experiences. While the majority of households can fund these choices from their own resources, there is an important role for the State in providing support to those who cannot afford to meet their own accommodation needs. Indeed, the provision of good quality affordable accommodation in sustainable communities is an important factor in improving the life opportunities of the more vulnerable and disadvantaged people within Irish society.
10. This system of housing supports should be flexible enough to deal with the changing circumstances of the individual, while ensuring equitable treatment. The concept of a "life cycle approach", where social services are tailored to meet needs as they change over a person's lifetime, is a key underpinning of the *Towards 2016* agreement. It is also an important influence in framing the proposed reforms to the system of housing supports set out in this document.
11. The approach also seeks to encourage choice, personal autonomy and a sense of community involvement. In particular, the relationship between those seeking accommodation and housing providers should discourage dependency.
12. Viewing services from the individual's perspective and taking into account life cycle issues allows important connections to be made with other social services - health, education, employment initiatives - which can assist the individual in improving their life opportunities. The ultimate aim must be to break cycles of disadvantage and dependency.



Efficient delivery of programmes

13. The significant increase in the housing investment programme under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 will allow for the expansion of the range of options available and an improvement in the quality of social housing. It is an integral part of *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* that the commitment of additional resources should be accompanied by structural reforms, to increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the overall policy response. Effective delivery of programmes must be consistently reinforced.
14. Local government housing authorities have the key responsibility for driving the process at local level and ensuring that needs are properly identified, that the provision of accommodation is undertaken in an efficient manner, that standards of accommodation and management are maintained and improved and that an effective support mechanism is in place to inform and assist those in need of housing support. In an increasingly challenging sector, there is a need to ensure that the available organisational resources and skills are marshalled in the best way.

Conclusion

15. The coming decade is likely to be just as dynamic as the last. Housing policy and supports will need to reflect the demands of a growing population and greater cultural and ethnic diversity, changing social and economic conditions and rising expectations regarding the quality of accommodation on offer and the range of choice available to households. In meeting these challenges, the central guiding principles of housing policy must address three key goals - building sustainable communities, responding to housing needs and delivering housing services efficiently and effectively.
16. The actions set out in Part II reflect the Government's approach to achieving these goals. It is part of a shared vision for the development of Ireland, which is well articulated in *Towards 2016*, which outlines the key foundations as "*a dynamic, internationalised and a participatory society and economy with a strong commitment to social justice, where economic development is environmentally sustainable and internationally competitive*". The nature of communities and the vibrancy and connectivity within neighbourhoods will be important influences on the development of such a dynamic and inclusive society, just as the availability of a home, in a good environment, is an important influence on the life opportunities of the individual. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* seeks to deal with both aspects, by outlining actions that will bring benefits to individuals and communities, and to Irish society as a whole.

PART 2 - ACTIONS



Introduction

1. Part I set out the strategic context and vision for the development of housing in Ireland over the next decade. Implementing this policy requires a mix of actions, with connections to other policy areas.
2. The *Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities* set out the agenda at a high level and this has been endorsed by the social partners in *Towards 2016*. The Government and Social Partners have committed to working together over the life of the agreement to achieve the vision set out in the Housing Policy Framework, with a particular focus on the following five main areas:
 - Continuing improvements in the quality of houses and neighbourhoods, including improvement of consumer information in relation to housing;
 - Providing tailored housing services to those who cannot afford to meet their own housing needs, and in this way responding to the broad spectrum of housing need;
 - Developing inter-agency cooperation where there is a care dimension;
 - Maintaining the impetus for the delivery of housing at affordable prices to the market, including through State supported schemes, and other appropriate innovations, such as measures to support first-time buyers; and
 - Progressing the social housing reform agenda set out in the *Housing Policy Framework - Building Sustainable Communities*.
3. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* is framed against that background, and the planned investment under the National Development Plan 2007 to 2013.
4. This part focuses on the actions to deliver on the proposed vision, which are set out in the following chapters. Chapter Three deals with planning for housing and sustainable neighbourhoods. Chapter Four outlines the approach to the provision of housing services. Chapter Five deals with paths to home ownership. Chapter Six contains the actions relating to social housing supports, with Chapter Seven focusing on special housing needs. Chapters Eight and Nine deal with the existing housing estates, both in terms of renewal of housing and neighbourhoods and ongoing management. Finally, Chapter Ten addresses important institutional issues, as part of the drive to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of service delivery.

CHAPTER 3

HOUSING NOW - DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

“...quality sustainable development and an adequate quantity of housing can be complementary goals” (NESC 2004²¹)

1. Anticipated national and regional population growth will require the continued expansion of the overall housing stock in Ireland. Supply must be sufficient and be aligned in terms of the type of housing needed and the location of demand. In continuing to increase the number of homes in Ireland, we must ensure that we achieve **quality** in terms of neighbourhoods and homes and **choice** in terms of the tenures available to families.
2. These goals influence policy relating to:-
 - planning for housing and urban design;
 - housing design and quality; and
 - consumer information and protection.

Planning for housing

3. NESC set out a clear definition of sustainable, integrated neighbourhoods, which are much less car-dependent and more easily served by effective public transport. This pattern of development is essential to underpin the longer-term success of the substantial investment in public transport under *Transport 21*²². Sustainable neighbourhoods are areas where an efficient use of land, high quality urban design and effective integration in the provision of physical and social infrastructure such as public transport, schools, amenities and other facilities combine to create places people want to live in.
4. Additional features of sustainable neighbourhoods include:
 - compact, energy efficient and high quality urban development;
 - accessibility via public transport networks and also meeting the needs of the pedestrian and cyclist; and
 - provision of a good range of amenities and services within easy and safe walking distance of homes.

The development plan process is a key instrument in putting the policies in place to create sustainable neighbourhoods.



Extract from Adamstown SDZ Planning Scheme prepared by South Dublin County Council, www.adamstown.ie

5. The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) has issued and will continue to develop planning guidance relevant to the concept of sustainable neighbourhoods. New planning guidelines on the preparation of development plans are being finalised following extensive consultation. These guidelines cover many areas of relevance to the concept of sustainable neighbourhoods. Different aspects of sustainable communities have been addressed through other guidelines and interactions. For example, in 2001, the Department issued planning guidelines on childcare facilities, recommending the provision of such facilities as part of residential developments in excess of 75 new dwellings.
6. There will be enhanced co-operation between the DoEHLG and the Department of Education and Science, and between both Departments and local authorities, drawing on their planning powers, to develop innovative and progressive ways of linking new schools provision to the development of new residential areas. This will draw on various best practice initiatives now emerging around the country to facilitate the timely and efficient provision of new schools.
7. The development of sustainable neighbourhoods contributes to the provision of attractive and competitive locations that will support the Government's objective for more balanced regional development. The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is the Government's policy framework for balanced regional development. It makes provision for strategically-located urban centres, particularly gateways, with the critical mass necessary to drive wider regional development. Planning frameworks at regional and local levels must reflect the objective of building sustainable communities and neighbourhoods in a manner and at locations consistent with the NSS.
8. The NSS gateways are locations where major population, housing and wider economic growth is anticipated for the future. A well-structured and focused approach to high-quality local planning, and integration in the provision of the necessary physical and social infrastructure with major new housing development, can ensure the gateways' long-term attractiveness to development and investment.
9. Working within national and regional frameworks, as outlined above, the development plans of local authorities have a key role to play in making the concept of sustainable communities a reality. Housing Strategies, provided for under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006, determine housing requirements under local development plans. Experience has been built up since the first strategies were completed. Ongoing experience in drawing up, reviewing and implementing the Local Authority Social and Affordable Housing Action Plans has provided additional perspectives on housing demand and housing needs.

10. The strategies can be further developed to assist the determination of not only the quantum of housing demand, but also the nature of demand (e.g. family or single accommodation as well as tenure choice) and the location of housing demand within areas. The Department will work with local authorities in developing housing strategies further to fulfil their potential as a tool for building sustainable communities.

BOX 3.1: Adamstown Strategic Development Zone

Adamstown is the first 'Strategic Development Zone' or 'SDZ' provided for under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006 to be developed. It is a new urban district on a greenfield site adjoining the main Dublin-Kildare railway line, 10 miles (16km) west of Dublin City Centre, being developed over 10 or more years and based on an approved Planning Scheme or Masterplan prepared by South Dublin County Council. Designation as a SDZ effectively guarantees that facilities and infrastructure for this new community must be provided in tandem with housing development. Adamstown will provide up to 10,000 new homes, along with a range of shopping, leisure, civic & cultural facilities. A new railway station, bus corridors, roads, schools, parks, community buildings, childcare facilities and drainage networks are required for Adamstown. The first residents moved into Adamstown towards the end of 2006.

11. The sustainable neighbourhood is also better able to support the social integration of different income groups. This wider goal is now a core element of housing policy. It involves providing appropriate housing mix, in terms of tenure, adaptation for special needs and community supports.
12. The growth of immigration has led to increased cultural diversity. Sustainable neighbourhoods provide a means for newcomers to integrate and participate fully in Irish society. The recent NESC study on Migration Policy²³ suggests three broad goals which should inform our policies in this area - economic and social development, the rule of law and integration. The report noted that the emergence of distinct migrant communities is a common feature of migration around the world and acknowledged the richness and diversity that such new communities are already bringing to parts of our cities.
13. However, NESC considered that if a significant degree of migrant concentration were to become associated with deprivation, this could impede the progress of integration. NESC stressed the importance of factoring such issues into public policy efforts in order to ensure the long-term success of migrant integration. A focus on building sustainable communities should ensure better social integration, which will enhance the vibrancy of communities for all. To inform evolving policy in this area, the DoEHLG is supporting research under the auspices of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism to consider issues arising for neighbourhood planning, housing provision and estate management policy from increased ethnic and cultural diversity.



Urban design and housing quality

14. There are currently about 1.8 million homes in Ireland and this may rise above 2.5 million by 2020. While this poses a significant challenge from a planning perspective, it also offers an opportunity to deliver new development of the highest physical and environmental quality that contributes to the achievement of more sustainable communities and balanced regional development.
15. The sustainability of communities is dependent on a balanced pace of development reflecting the type of location, urban, small town or village and on providing associated infrastructure to ensure that there remains a coherent sense of place and sense of community.
16. An ambition for enhanced quality in meeting Ireland's housing needs over the next 10 years will depend on the development of an effective partnership between developers and their design professionals such as architects, and the regulatory and policy context set by the DoEHLG, and local authorities. To support the partnership outlined above, further guidance will be rolled out in respect of three key and interrelated aspects of the planning and development of new housing:-
 - Linking the development of new housing with the provision of essential supporting physical and social infrastructure and services - the infrastructure;
 - The achievement of high quality urban design coupled to the development of compact and sustainable settlement - the neighbourhood; and
 - The level of accommodation and ancillary services and amenities provided - the dwelling unit.
17. Best practice guidance will draw on previous initiatives such as the basic principles set out in the NSS, existing residential density guidelines, international research and guidelines on sustainable neighbourhoods and sustainable settlement patterns generally. As part of this process, draft *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for Apartments* were published for consultation in January 2007. The primary aim of these draft guidelines is to promote sustainable urban housing by ensuring that the design and layout of new apartments will provide satisfactory accommodation for a variety of household types and sizes - including families with children - over the medium to long term.
18. The DoEHLG is reviewing the current Residential Density Guidelines with a view to updating them this year. The updated and expanded guidelines will focus on the quality of new developments. They will also take account of the extensive experience built up since the introduction of the guidelines in the design, assessment and development of higher density proposals.
19. Architectural inputs to the assessment of new development proposals, an enhanced use of three-dimensional urban master-plans and new models of linking development to infrastructure provision are all tools that need to be utilised in delivering enhanced quality.

Rural housing

20. The DoEHLG published *Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Rural Housing* in April 2005 following a lengthy consultation process. These Guidelines attempt to strike a balance between providing a good planning framework for rural housing and facilitating those who are part of, or have links to, local communities to build a house in rural areas.
21. Within the overriding consideration of good planning and design, the Guidelines provide that reasonable planning proposals on suitable sites in rural areas for persons who are part of, contribute to or have links with, the rural community should be accommodated. The Guidelines also seek to accommodate demand arising for housing in areas which are suffering from population decline.
22. In rural areas under strong pressure from nearby large urban areas, the Guidelines call for urban-generated development to be directed towards areas zoned for new residential development, but make it clear that the housing requirements of those who are part of the rural community in these areas should still be facilitated. In rural areas where there are relatively few towns and villages, the Guidelines indicate the key objective is to maintain vibrant rural population while respecting and consolidating the traditional forms and patterns of housing development in these areas e.g. clusters of housing.
23. The DoEHLG is monitoring trends in planning decisions since the Guidelines were published in order to assess their effectiveness. The DoEHLG will continue to work closely with planning authorities to ensure implementation in a proper and sustainable manner.

Land for housing

24. While efficient use of land through the application of appropriate density is a critical underpinning of sustainability, it is also important to ensure that sufficient land is made available for housing. Housing strategies have proved a useful tool in determining this demand, and the most recent draft planning guidelines urge local authorities to ensure sufficient land is zoned for housing. Active land management strategies have been put in place by local authorities to manage their own land banks. In the Greater Dublin Area, the Affordable Homes Partnership is pursuing a number of initiatives to bring land into use primarily for the delivery of new affordable homes.
25. Considerable investment has been made in servicing of land, and the inventory of zoned and serviced land taken in June 2005, indicates the availability of some 14,800 hectares nationwide with an estimated yield of 460,000 housing units. The Government wish to ensure that zoned land is used as promptly as feasible for residential purposes. Therefore, legislation is being developed to give powers to planning authorities to act on a selective basis to accelerate the development of appropriate zoned land for housing, through a “use it or lose it” scheme.



Consumer information and protection

26. Home-ownership remains the most popular form of tenure in Ireland. For most individuals the purchase of a house may be the largest single investment in their lifetime. It is important, therefore, that appropriate protections are in place at the different stages of this transaction and assurance is provided, as far as possible, with regard to quality. This involves both ensuring appropriate regulatory frameworks are in place and encouraging innovation in terms of construction and product, yielding positive value for money and environmental sustainability outcomes.
27. An efficient well-functioning housing market requires that potential clients be well-informed regarding dwelling quality, expected lifetime performance of the dwelling as a whole and its key components, expected running costs, maintenance requirements and related issues. All of these influence the overall sustainability of new housing. *Towards 2016* reflects a particular commitment to improve consumer information in relation to housing.
28. One aspect of this will be addressed with the introduction of energy rating requirements from January 2007*. A building energy rating gives an objective scale of comparison for the energy demand and performance of a building. It will allow prospective buyers or tenants to factor energy performance and costs into their comparison of different properties and into their ultimate decision. The DoEHLG is commencing work on introducing higher building code standards for energy conservation.
29. In March 2006, the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources launched the “Greener Homes” scheme that allows individual householders to obtain grants for the installation of renewable technologies, to assist in improving the energy performance of their homes.

BOX 3.2: Greener Homes Scheme

The scheme is being rolled out over a five-year period from March 2006 and provides grants for the installation of renewable technologies, including wood pellet stoves and boilers, solar panels and geothermal heat pumps. The scheme is operated by Sustainable Energy Ireland, www.sei.ie

30. These initiatives form part of the broad Government objective to improve the environmental sustainability of buildings, which, together with sustainable settlement patterns and transport, are elements of the broad sustainable communities agenda.
31. Purchasers of new housing should also have access to detailed information on the key elements of the dwelling that potentially affect its overall performance, efficiency and running costs. These include specific details in relation to the location of wiring, pipes, ducts, meters, valves, stopcocks, and maintenance/replacement cycles of key elements and services. The DoEHLG will work with the industry to ensure that appropriate information is made available.

* As with all major changes affecting the building code, the new system of Energy Rating will be introduced in phases, starting with new dwellings for which planning permission is applied on or after 1 January, 2007, then non-domestic buildings for which planning permission is applied on or after 1 July, 2008 and finally to all buildings, new or otherwise, when offered for sale or letting after 1 January, 2009.

32. A number of significant developments relating to the process of house purchase and ownership are under way, which should result in important benefits for house buyers and householders. The report of the Auctioneering and Estate Agency Review Group to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, published in October 2005, contained a number of valuable recommendations that will impact positively on housing, including:

- A new Property Service Regulatory Authority is to be established to regulate the auctioneering/estate agency business and related matters;
- The functions proposed for the Regulatory Authority include licensing and regulating property managing agents, which will be subject to oversight by the Authority and to its vetting and complaints procedures;
- The Regulatory Authority will also have responsibility for regulating property-letting agencies, which have not been subject to regulation up to now;
- The new Authority will also have a consumer information function and will be well placed to consider how consumer issues in relation to management companies should be approached; and
- In relation to the issue of “gazumping” the Review Group report indicated that any Government action to outlaw or prohibit the practice would require changes to the Law of Contract. It concurred with a previous Law Reform Commission conclusion that the only practicable way to protect buyers would be through consumer information and recommended that the Property Services Regulatory Authority should address this as a priority.

33. Legislation to implement recommendations of the Review Group, including establishment of the new Regulatory Authority, is being developed by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Private housing and apartment management

34. In addition to regulation of managing agents by the new regulatory authority, action is also being undertaken in a number of other areas to address issues that have arisen in relation to management of private multi-unit developments. The DoEHLG is involved primarily in pursuing, through engagement with the construction industry, practical measures to address problems in this area that involve the role of developers, including issues such as:

- circumstances where management companies and charges can apply;
- extent of management companies’ responsibilities;
- adequacy and reasonableness of charges and provision of sinking funds;
- time limit for the transfer of company control from developers to owners and proper administration in the interim, including contracts with managing agents; and
- information to buyers on management arrangements and charges.



35. Planning-related issues relevant to management arrangements are also being addressed. Planning authorities have been advised that management companies should not be conditioned for “traditional” housing estates and, pending further guidance, should only be conditioned in mixed estates in cases where they would clearly be of benefit to the residents. Planning authorities have been reminded of their responsibilities in relation to the taking in charge of traditional housing estates. A Working Group involving relevant interests has been set up to delineate the extent of the local authority responsibilities for facilities in high-density estates. It is intended that following completion of the Group’s work, further guidance will issue to planning authorities this year.
36. The DoEHLG is also working with other relevant agencies that are engaged in action relating to property management, including input to: recent reports on the subject by the National Consumer Agency and Dublin City Council, legislation being developed by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to property services and by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in relation to company law (under which management companies operate), and a study by the Law Reform Commission on legal issues relating to management of multi-unit structures generally.
37. The report on *Management Fees and Service Charges Levied on Owners of Property in Multi-Unit Dwellings* published in October 2006 by the National Consumer Agency, accompanied by a consumer information booklet, has made an important contribution to awareness and analysis of issues surrounding residential property management. While aimed particularly at consumer issues relating to charges, the report also deals with various issues relating to the regulation and operation of management companies. Similarly, the report entitled *Successful Apartment Living*, published by Dublin City Council in June 2006, contains valuable information relating to and an examination of practical issues regarding multi-unit management arrangements and the local authority role in that context.
38. Availability of adequate information regarding property management, better understanding of how the system operates and the roles and responsibilities of the various parties are essential to address concerns that have emerged in this area. Key information issues include the need for awareness that management companies are essential for multi-unit complexes, that property owners have fundamental responsibilities in that regard (including payment of appropriate charges) and rights in relation to the operation of companies, that management arrangements are primarily the subject of private contracts and hence buyers need to obtain good legal advice and information in that context, including details of management arrangements and levels of charges.
39. The Law Reform Commission has published a consultation paper on legal issues relating to multi-unit management²⁴. This will be followed in due course by a final report, which will enable Departments to consider what further measures may need to be taken in this area.
40. Achievement of effective management arrangements, in tandem with prudent policy and practice in relation to the composition, scale, location, design, quality, and pace of new developments, is a key element in securing sustainable communities, particularly in the context of greater prevalence of private multi-unit developments.

Stage payments

41. The DoEHLG has pursued agreement with the construction industry for the voluntary phasing out of the practice of stage payments in house purchase contracts in housing estates. This practice, which operates in a limited number of areas, involves house buyers being obliged under contracts to make payments to the builder at a number of set intervals in line with construction progress. A commitment has been given by the Construction Industry Federation to phase out the practice within a relatively short timeframe. It is hoped to finalise details shortly, which would be incorporated in an industry code of practice and reflected in standard house purchase contracts. While any possible legislative measure in this area would fall to be considered in the context of the law relating to property sale and conveyancing and associated contracts, it is envisaged that the voluntary approach being developed will prove effective and that it will not be necessary to have recourse to legislative action.

Encouraging quality, innovation and sustainability

42. Quality may not be easily defined but it can be described and includes a totality of features and characteristics that satisfy a variety of needs. In the built environment, quality encompasses good planning and design. It embraces durability of construction and the effective use of materials, colour details and landscaping. Integrated with the provision of physical and social infrastructure these collectively contribute to sustainability and each of its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Importantly, quality can provide value for money by enhancing how an area or a building performs, thereby reducing lifetime costs.

BOX 3.3: Design

“Design is a creative activity and definitions of quality in design are elusive. It cannot be reduced to codes and prescriptions.....However, it is possible, to distinguish good design from bad design..... Good design... is fit for purpose, sustainable, efficient, coherent, flexible, responsive to context, good looking and a clear expression of the requirements of the brief.Assessing quality is to a large extent an objective process. Ultimately...some questions come down to individual taste and preference. What matters is quality, not style.”

(Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)²⁵

43. The Government support and encourage the adoption of new technology and innovative approaches to design and construction of dwellings aimed at improving productivity and enhancing quality and performance of new dwellings. It is considered particularly important that the widespread adoption of any new developments of this nature is based on adequate certification having regard to the nature of the measure and the purpose for which it is used. Key factors are practicality of application, durability, and maintenance and repair characteristics. The benchmark for performance should be equivalent traditional methods.

44. The DoEHLG's requirement that new building systems are properly certified and sufficiently durable is providing a reasonable level of quality assurance and this process must continue and intensify. Development and implementation of policy initiatives in relation to quality and sustainability should be informed by real evidence regarding quality and performance characteristics being achieved in practice. This will involve on-going targeted assessment of achievements in practice.
45. The DoEHLG will work with industry to explore the potential to improve the sustainability of new housing building on the experience of energy rating. This will cover a wide range of relevant issues affecting sustainability, quality and overall performance. Initiatives in this area may be advanced on a voluntary basis initially with a view to incorporation in the building regulations.

Expanding choice - developing the private rented sector

46. The private rental sector has an important role in helping to meet accommodation needs which seem likely to increase in line with modern trends such as greater labour mobility, reducing household size and changing lifestyle preferences.
47. The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provided a comprehensive reform of the private rental sector. It introduced a modern legislative code that strengthens tenants rights and supports a more professional approach by landlords. The Act delivers far reaching reform including: improved security of tenure through a system of four-year tenancy cycles; new tenancy termination procedure; including longer notice periods linked to length of tenancy; rent determination at open market rents and the establishment of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB).
48. The PRTB is developing operational processes that will be increasingly effective as the work of the Board progresses. Since its establishment the Board has managed tens of thousands of enquiries and has provided an extensive range of information and support directly and through its website, www.prtb.ie, literature and guidance. A new system for tenancy registration is in place with nearly 130,000 tenancies registered along with a dispute resolution service that replaces the Courts and involves mediation or adjudication and tenancy tribunal hearings.
49. The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 will be reviewed to ensure that all aspects of the Act are operating as intended and to identify any areas where greater effectiveness can be achieved. The Act will be amended as appropriate in consultation with the PRTB, which has a statutory role in this regard.
50. In September 2006, an outline of actions on private rented standards was issued. The full statement is at Appendix 1. It proposes actions to be pursued through a positive partnership approach and in conjunction with local authorities and other relevant parties. This will entail a balanced programme of promotion, information, appropriate regulation and strategic enforcement. A key objective of the programme is to achieve a more effective approach to tackling sub-standard accommodation through a combination of improving resourcing, co-ordination, planning and prioritisation.

Conclusion

51. In addition to ongoing efforts to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of housing to meet demand, actions are proposed across a broad range of areas. These are designed to improve urban design, including integration of housing and amenities, quality of dwellings, promotion of innovation and addressing consumer concerns on issues such as apartment living and housing transactions.

BOX 3.4: Summary of key actions in the general housing sector

- Promotion of sufficient supply of housing of the right type in the right locations, by ensuring that housing strategies are regularly updated and integrated with other infrastructure requirements as part of county/city and national development plans.
- Underpinning of housing strategies with housing action plans to deliver affordable housing and housing supports.
- Development and appropriate regulation of the private rented sector, making it more attractive both to those seeking housing and to accommodation providers.
- Development of new comprehensive planning guidance on interrelated housing and planning issues including:
 - revised minimum floor area standards/facilities for apartments, particularly from the point of view of ensuring higher proportions of family and child friendly development;
 - a review and update of the existing residential density guidelines, to take account of housing trends and policy development since the guidelines were first issued in 1999; and
 - a new best practice manual in relation to the planning and design of residential neighbourhoods and housing layouts, the scale and pace of development, including encouraging the use of sustainable transport modes, maximising energy efficiency and adaptation to climate change and planning for amenities such as playgrounds and child-care facilities.
- Work with relevant agencies to promote an effective general regulatory environment or standards of practice, as appropriate, in relation to housing.
- Development of legislation to ensure lands zoned and serviced for housing purposes are used in a timely fashion.
- Encouragement of appropriately certified innovative approaches in housing construction to improve productivity and output in the residential market and enhance quality and performance.
- Progressively improve the environmental sustainability of new housing through building regulations and voluntary codes.

CHAPTER 4

HOUSING SERVICES

1. The core objective of Irish housing policy is to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice. For the majority of households, these needs can be met from their own resources through the private market.
2. Some households will require support to ensure they have reasonable accommodation. The nature of the support may vary. Some households are only marginally below the income levels required to sustain home ownership and may require only a once-off financial input to make home ownership more affordable. Other households may face a range of obstacles that require continued support or multiple interventions.
3. Therefore policy interventions should seek to make available a flexible and graduated system of housing supports to meet the broad spectrum of housing need not met through the housing market. This can range from discounted housing for purchase or rent (affordable housing), through incremental purchase of an equity stake in housing provided by a local authority (or a voluntary and co-operative housing body), to social housing for rent. The assessment of the appropriate level and kind of support must be set in the context of the point the individual applicant is at in their life cycle.
4. Experience of working with particularly vulnerable groups, for example, the homeless, indicates that accommodation needs cannot be addressed in isolation. Cross-agency co-operation and case management approaches are essential in achieving better outcomes for the individual and indeed are a core element of Government strategy in a number of areas, for example, the National Drugs Strategy and Government strategy on addressing homelessness.
5. The aim must be to use resources to best effect to tailor support to an individual's or a family's accommodation needs and optimise the number of households that can receive housing support.

The services approach

6. A step change is required to lift the overall quality of provision and service, as part of a policy that is clearly focused on marshalling resources around particular needs and delivering these in a community context. Such an approach can provide for greater choice and requires greater individual responsibility. Developing housing support in this way must be guided by a customer-centred approach.
7. The local government customer base is large with actions often having wide community impacts. This must be taken into account when framing approaches. Links must be made to other public services, particularly activation measures that encourage greater labour market participation and independence amongst people currently facing multiple disadvantages.

8. Greater clarity regarding entitlements and development of a broad suite of housing support options, will offer greater choice and service, so that suitable options can be chosen in light of needs.
9. This approach also allows the local authority to set standards for service delivery and to monitor and evaluate performance in a constant drive to improve the outcomes for both the individual and society.

Inter-agency service delivery - individual responsibility

10. Alongside the delivery of high quality housing supports, there is a need to ensure the delivery of other support interventions in a timely and relevant way. This requires an effective partnership between the local authority and other service providers. It also requires the personal commitment of the individual to engage with a process aimed at ensuring their long-term needs are met. This approach presents a strong challenge to service providers to find ways of co-ordinating interventions in a personalised and effective way. It draws on the wish of people to improve their situation and maximise their opportunities in life.
11. Work will be undertaken to develop a personal activation service delivery model that seeks to combine the joint commitment of the individual and the service providers to obtain progress and achieve the best long-term well-being of the individual. There are challenges in achieving this approach. Nonetheless it goes to the heart of effective social inclusion strategies. Best practice across the public service will be drawn upon to develop models of delivery, which build on the contact made between individuals and service providers across a range of different areas.

Graduated and flexible system of housing supports

12. New delivery mechanisms, such as voluntary and co-operative housing, Part V arrangements and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) have expanded the choice available in terms of social housing.
13. Indeed, the NESC report suggested that the passage of Part V legislation was among the more innovative policy interventions in recent years. This legislation places an obligation on developers to enter into an arrangement with local authorities to provide some social and/or affordable housing (or sites or money in lieu) as part of private housing developments. While this obligation does not arise for a substantial component of annual housing production*, Part V arrangements are likely to contribute significantly to increased output of social and affordable housing over the coming years and provide a basis for improved social integration. These various mechanisms must be drawn upon to deliver appropriate support for individuals, determined by their need.



* Part V does not apply to one off houses, housing on land under 0.1 hectare, or on unzoned lands and there are currently planning permissions being built out which predate Part V obligations.

14. The full range of housing options available to new applicants is set out in box 4.1:

BOX 4.1: Range of Housing Services

- Housing Advice
- Paths to Home Ownership:
 - affordable housing - purchase of a house at discounted price;
 - shared ownership - purchase of a home through purchase of initial stake and the balance is rented from the housing authority;
 - incremental purchase of a house owned by local authority (new mechanism); and
 - tenant purchase of local authority dwellings at discounted prices.
- Social rented accommodation - housing provided at a rent related to income.

Special housing needs

15. Across the range of supports, there is a need to pay particular attention to those with special housing needs. The range of supports available are set out in box 4.2 below.

BOX 4.2: Housing Supports for those with Special Needs

- Homeless accommodation and supports
- Traveller - specific accommodation
- Grants to adapt housing for the needs of older people and people with a disability
- Schemes to exchange private housing for sheltered accommodation for older people
- Sheltered accommodation for older people
- Sheltered accommodation for people with a disability
- Adapted social housing for people with special needs

New supply

16. The level of demand for the different elements of housing support is the result of a complex interaction between private market activity, demographics, economic circumstances and personal choice. Therefore, the ratio between private housing, affordable housing and social housing may vary over time, and vary from region to region depending on the particular demographic profile of the area. Furthermore, housing needs can be met from a variety of sources, private sector, local authority and the voluntary and co-operative housing sector and under a range of different tenure and contract forms.

17. Reflecting these principles and taking cognisance of current and emerging needs, the Government have committed additional investment in housing in order to boost the overall number of households assisted through the various options available. This involves:

- the commencement/acquisition of an additional 4,000 new social housing units over the period 2007 to 2009 above the 23,000 already committed to in the Housing Policy Framework. This will bring the total number of new commencements/acquisitions in the period to 27,000 units [through a combination of local authority (20,000), voluntary and co-operative housing (6,000), and RAS long-term contractual arrangements for new supply (1,000)];
- in addition, further households will benefit from full implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, involving contractual arrangements with landlords for existing properties transferring from rent supplement; and
- providing 17,000 units of affordable housing over the period 2007-2009.

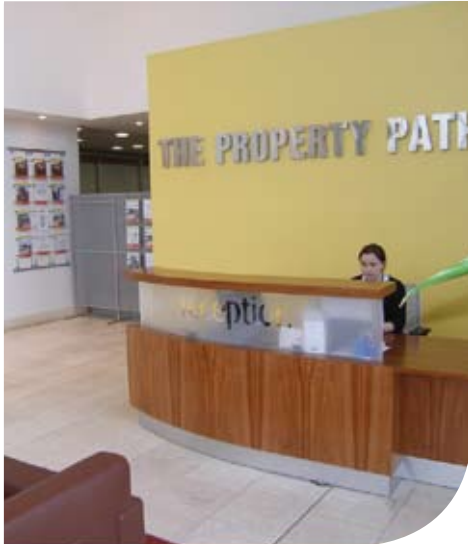
18. Through this level of new supply, together with filling vacancies in existing stock and other social housing options, it is anticipated that the needs of some 60,000 households will be assisted over the three-year period to 2009. Following a strategic review, the progression beyond this point will be determined, particularly in relation to the appropriate balance between measures. An important input to this process will be the review scheduled for 2008 under *Towards 2016*.

19. It is envisaged that the continuation of a high level of investment under the longer time frame of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 will result in the addressing of the needs of some 140,000 new households.

Planning response to local housing need

20. The Housing Strategy is the key document for assessing the broad requirements in terms of housing needs. In 2004, a new framework for the planning and delivery of social and affordable housing was introduced, with the initial round of multi-annual action plans. These action plans have a strategic component focusing on the needs of the area and the context for delivery and a programme component directed at providing a coherent and integrated multi-annual plan for the delivery of the various housing supports to meet the identified need.

21. These action plans are the key instrument for planning the holistic supply response required to meet the various local needs. It is envisaged that the need for housing support will be reviewed in advance of each new action plan period, as part of a planning process which requires drawing together an analysis of housing need, review of land and housing assets [property numbers and quality contracted accommodation], state of the private market, staffing resources, etc. Better information on the nature and extent of need will allow for better planning of the level of output required under different housing supports within individual local authority five-year action plans.



Housing advice

22. The availability of a range of supports will be actively promoted through the expansion of local authority led housing advice centres and through the use of a range of communications opportunities. Primarily the advice centre will focus on:-

- determining eligibility for affordable housing; and
- assessing need for other housing support.

23. Advice would also be available to existing tenants, so that they could consider other options (eg. affordable housing) or highlight difficulties sustaining tenancies.

Ongoing housing services to tenants

24. Tenants may seek a transfer to a new location, and at any point can obtain housing advice. This could lead, for example, to an affordable housing option should their circumstances change. In any event, local authorities will provide tenants with advice on their housing options when conducting reviews of their rents.

25. Tenancy agreements will continue to set out the relationship between the tenant and the local authority and will detail the rights and responsibilities of tenants as regards their rented local authority dwelling. In so far as is practicable, standard tenancy agreements will be pursued across all social housing tenures, including local authority housing, voluntary and co-operative housing and the rental accommodation scheme (RAS).

26. Tenant participation and consultation is critical to ensuring best practice in housing management and to the achievement of sustainable and vibrant communities. Tenant based groups will be encouraged to work with local authorities to harness resources for their estate, to improve its social or physical environment and enhance social interaction within the community.

27. To ensure that tenants can sustain their tenancies, tenants will be interviewed in detail about their financial and family circumstances before the initial allocation of a dwelling, and regular rent reviews will ensure that rents are set at the correct level reflecting the tenant's changing circumstances. In exceptional cases, as part of the rationalisation and development of rent policy, where the payment of the normal rent would give rise to hardship, provision will be made for local authorities to accept a lower rent than that required.

28. Issues relating to the maintenance and management of estates are set out in Chapter Nine.

Equality and diversity

29. In promoting sustainable communities and delivering housing services, it is important to acknowledge and take into account the diversity of these communities across the nine grounds covered by equality legislation. This diversity within communities has implications for the design of housing, access to housing, service provision in relation to housing and developments within institutions with responsibilities in this area of policy and provision.
30. The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination, sexual harassment and harassment, and victimisation, in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and educational establishments. The Acts require the provision of special treatment or facilities for people with disabilities where without this it would be impossible or unduly difficult to access the accommodation subject to a nominal cost exemption. The Acts contain a number of exemptions and do not prohibit housing authorities or bodies from providing different accommodation solutions to various groups. Positive action is allowed to cater for special needs or to promote equality of opportunity for those who are disadvantaged.
31. The Acts cover the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. This policy statement on housing seeks to support and ensure compliance with the Equal Status Acts, recognition for diversity and the particular needs that flow from this diversity and a pro-active promotion of equality including through the use of positive action.

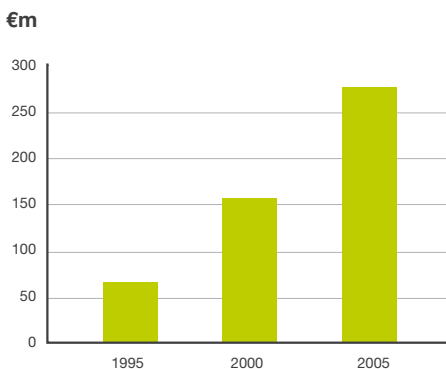
Redress

32. An important component of the services approach underpinning housing policy, is the need for those who feel they have a legitimate complaint in relation to assessment for services or ongoing tenancy to have a right of appeal.
33. Legislation will be introduced to provide for internal local authority reviews of prescribed housing decisions relating to individual households. This new procedure should lead over time to improved decision-making by housing authorities and to greater transparency for all concerned.

CHAPTER 5

PATHS TO HOME OWNERSHIP

Graph 3:
Affordable Housing Total Expenditure



Introduction

1. The Government believe that home ownership should be available to as many people as possible where this is their preferred option. Home ownership can be an important factor in underpinning social stability and promoting good civic values. The Government will support access to housing by first time buyers, through:-

- Affordable housing, including shared ownership
- Paths from social housing to home ownership (Tenant Purchase Scheme and Incremental Purchase Scheme)

Affordable Housing

2. Affordable housing offers an opportunity to first time buyers to acquire homes at a discount from market prices. It provides access to home-ownership to those who are priced out of the market. The demand for affordable housing is particularly influenced by market conditions and the supply of “starter homes” in particular localities. The demand for affordable housing supported by the State is greatest in larger urban areas, as market provision tends to meet needs elsewhere.
3. Affordable housing contributes to the aim of building sustainable communities by ensuring that first time buyers on lower incomes can purchase homes in areas close to their families and places of work. It is also intended that availability of affordable housing will introduce some competition into the provision of homes for first time buyers, thus having a moderating effect on house price inflation.
4. Significant progress has been made in delivering such housing over recent years. Output under the various affordable housing schemes has been increasing steadily since 2000. The Government’s priority will be to ensure that delivery is expedited and in this regard it is anticipated that the work of the Affordable Homes Partnership will contribute towards maximising output in the Greater Dublin Area.

Future directions

5. Housing strategies are an important tool in assessing the demand for affordable housing for new households. The strategies facilitate consideration of the component that can be met through market provision and areas where State support is required. Local authorities will be required in revising their housing strategies in future to include a clear exposition of their approach on affordable housing. In metropolitan areas, which cross over local authority boundaries, the development of a joint affordable housing strategy will be encouraged. The components of the strategy should then be reflected in the appropriate county/city Housing Action Plan.

- Over the full period of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, it is anticipated that some 40,000 affordable homes will be delivered. This reflects the commitment by the Government in *Towards 2016* to the delivery of at least 17,000 units of affordable housing over the period 2007 to 2009 and assumes similar rates of progress in subsequent years. It is intended to review progress in the medium term to assess the demand for affordable housing in the light, particularly, of market developments.
- There are a range of mechanisms for the delivery of affordable housing - Shared Ownership Scheme, "1999 Affordable Housing Scheme", Part V Affordable Housing and the Affordable Housing Initiative. Currently, eligibility for affordable housing can vary depending on the scheme. It is proposed to break the link between these delivery mechanisms and the affordable housing product. The focus, therefore, will be on optimising the output of affordable housing through Part V arrangements, construction on State or local authority lands, or units acquired through purchase, land exchanges, partnering with private sector or the voluntary and co-operative sector.

BOX 5.1: Range of Delivery Mechanisms for Affordable Housing

- New construction on local authority or State lands, mainly in integrated mixed-tenure estates but also in small single-tenure estates where appropriate.
- Part V arrangements.
- Units resulting from exchanges of State lands.
- Projects developed by the voluntary and co-operative sector on their own lands (or lands supplied to them by a local authority).
- Units in the private market acquired by local authorities or individuals through shared ownership.

- The units will then be offered to eligible purchasers, in a manner which maximises choice and ensures that there is a range of properties at affordable prices to meet the needs of the broad range of households in this category. This should lead to a more streamlined and simpler access to affordable housing for individuals.



- While often the development on lands owned by local authorities or the State will produce houses at lesser cost than market prices, sometimes a subsidy will be required to make the home affordable for the target group. Capital grants are available from the DoEHLG to subsidise the costs, and use may also be made of Part V funds by local authorities*.

* While a range of options are open for consideration in terms of how developers satisfy the requirements of Part V, priority is given to concluding Part V agreements which secure the early delivery of completed homes, either directly by the developer or through the early development of homes on land transferred by the developer to the relevant local authority. Financial settlements should only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and must be ringfenced for reinvestment in housing.



10. There is considerable scope for local authorities to act as facilitators of affordable homes provision. This is particularly relevant for projects delivered through Public Private Partnership arrangements and the direct sales framework agreed in relation to Part V affordable houses. In such cases the housing developer handles marketing and direct sales to eligible applicants. This allows for a more streamlined and timely delivery of units and gives greater clarity of responsibility.
11. A key role for the local authority, as part of their housing advice services, will be determining eligibility. The general income limits which apply for affordable housing are dictated by relevant local markets. It is proposed that in future, local authorities will set local limits based on local circumstances, market prices of starter homes etc, within national parameters set by the DoEHLG.
12. A number of financial institutions have mortgage products specifically designed for affordable homes purchasers. Where eligible purchasers are not qualified for such products, they may apply for mortgages from the relevant local authority.

Affordable Homes Partnership

13. Given the particular affordability issues in the Greater Dublin Area, the Government established the Affordable Homes Partnership in August 2005 to co-ordinate and accelerate measures for the delivery of affordable housing in and around the capital. Since then, the Partnership has advanced a number of important initiatives including the exchanging of a number of State properties for the early delivery of completed homes and the identification of additional private lands that could be developed primarily for affordable housing. In addition, the Partnership has acted on behalf of the Government to purchase additional housing in the market, to be made available at discounted prices to eligible affordable purchasers.
14. The Partnership's role has been expanded under *Towards 2016*. While maintaining its focus on delivery in the Greater Dublin Area where affordability problems are most acute, its growing experience will be used to assist roll out nationally. This will include communication campaigns in relation to affordable housing matters, development of common approaches by local authorities to the implementation of Part V and common application systems for affordable housing.
15. The Affordable Homes Partnership will be launching a website to provide nationwide information on affordable housing and the associated eligibility conditions. Further information, including a booklet on affordable homes, produced jointly by the Affordable Homes Partnership and the DoEHLG is available at www.affordablehome.ie.

Enhancing supply and innovative approaches

16. As indicated in *Towards 2016*, the Government are interested in exploring other innovative means of enhancing the supply of affordable housing. As part of this process, the Affordable Homes Partnership has commissioned a study to consider ways in which the supply of affordable housing might be enhanced.

17. This study will give some consideration to the concept of “**affordable renting**” which was identified in the NESC report on housing as an area which might be developed over the medium to long-term, as an alternative to affordable housing for purchase. NESC acknowledged a range of complexities associated with developing such a model (funding, institutional arrangements, legislative and regulatory frameworks, need to attract corporate investment). The fiscal framework is also of relevance.
18. The Department is committed to piloting the affordable rental approach but further study is required before an appropriate pilot can be progressed, not least in relation to the potential target group and the conditions of eligibility. The current affordable housing study may provide some input in this regard. The matter will be pursued in the context of the commitment on affordable housing in *Towards 2016* which is set in the context of an emphasis throughout that agreement on developing innovative and joint policy approaches with the social partners.



Paths from social housing to home ownership

19. Our high levels of home ownership in Ireland are due in no small part to the availability of tenant purchase schemes within the social housing stock. About one in four of owner occupied dwellings in Ireland are former local authority dwellings²⁶. The Government consider that facilitating those eligible for social housing to acquire a stake in their home is an important component of housing policy directed at building sustainable communities. Facilitating low-income families to acquire a home, can give greater stability for communities, allows for greater tenure mix, and encourages a sense of ownership and personal autonomy.
20. At any stage social housing tenants can apply for affordable housing, but specific options are required for households who cannot afford to purchase a house but have reasonable expectation of and the desire for home ownership in the future. It is proposed to introduce a new scheme - “**incremental purchase**” - targeted at this group.
21. Existing social housing tenants will still be able to purchase the dwelling which they rent under tenant purchase arrangements or subject to conditions and availability, opt to buy a new dwelling under the incremental purchase model.

Incremental Purchase

22. The new incremental purchase scheme will broaden access to home ownership for lower income groups. Applicants for local authority housing may opt to purchase, if their income permits, at the point of allocation of the dwelling. This will involve purchasing an initial equity stake through a mortgage. The remaining stake will be purchased over a period in predetermined instalments. Legislation to underpin this new scheme is being prepared. The terms of the scheme will be announced in due course, but the general concept is further detailed at Appendix 2.

Tenant Purchase

23. Existing tenants of local authority owned properties will continue to be facilitated to purchase the accommodation that they currently occupy. However, reforms are needed to the existing model to implement a more cost effective and equitable system. Legislation to underpin a new scheme of tenant purchase is being drafted. This new system of tenant purchase involves the introduction of a scheme for the sale of flats and revised terms.

Tenure flexibility

24. A system of flexible tenure will be introduced, whereby purchasers who find difficulty at a subsequent point in sustaining their purchase, may be able to reverse some of their equity holding in the property.

Role of Voluntary and Co-Operative Housing Sector

25. The primary focus of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector is social housing, although some bodies are developing mixed tenure estates. The DoEHLG is working with the voluntary and co-operative sector, through the Working Group on Voluntary and Co-operative Housing, to see how the home ownership aspirations of some tenants in this sector could be addressed. In the course of 2006, the DoEHLG engaged actively with the sector with the objective of determining the modalities of a pilot scheme for some new homes. A number of issues have been identified by the sector that require further work. Having regard to these and development of approaches to facilitating paths to home ownership from social housing generally, it is intended to initiate a pilot scheme in 2007 based on the incremental purchase model.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL HOUSING SUPPORTS

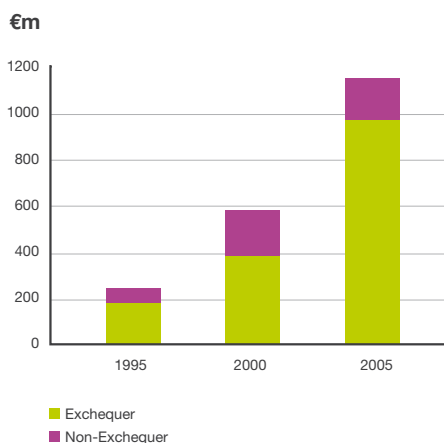
Background

1. Substantial additional investment has been made in social housing over the past number of years. The range of programmes has broadened, with additional households now being offered wider affordable housing options for example. Delivery methods have also diversified with the growth in voluntary and co-operative housing, innovative arrangements being applied to regeneration in areas such as Fatima Mansions, to broaden the housing mix and with housing now coming on stream through Part V arrangements.
2. The new Rental Accommodation Scheme is the latest move in adapting policy to meet changing needs. The scheme requires local authorities to source accommodation from the private rented market, to meet long term housing needs of households dependent upon rent supplement. The primary objective of the scheme is that rent supplement recipients will have their long-term housing need catered for by local authorities using accommodation-based solutions. The scheme commenced in 2005 and will offer a new social housing option to growing numbers of households over the coming years.

Assessing housing need of new applicants

3. An objective and comprehensive assessment of a person or family's housing need is an essential first step in putting in place a modern system of housing supports. In framing responses, account should be taken of individual and family circumstances and each person's position in the life cycle. The approach should also seek to encourage choice, personal autonomy and a sense of community involvement.
4. To advance these goals, a new means of assessment is being developed to provide an improved basis for policy development and service delivery to ensure that all people can live with maximum independence within their community. There are a number of key concerns about the present system of needs analysis, which, given the changing trends in housing need, are likely to grow over time. The current needs assessment process, despite the advance in IT solutions at the last statutory assessment in 2005, is still producing an incomplete picture of the level and type of housing need.
5. A new approach to the assessment of housing need is required. The key components of a new approach would be:
 - an objective set of criteria to enable local authorities to assess need for housing support, including accommodation;
 - a rigorous but fair and consistent approach to means testing;
 - early assessment by housing authorities to build up individual case histories of requirements and support responses;
 - the identification of special needs;

Graph 4:
Social Housing Expenditure
(excluding housing renewal)



- timely identification and updating of needs; and
 - maintenance of a record of household preferences to reflect as far as possible individual choice.
6. In developing a new set of objective criteria, account will be taken of international best practice and work is being progressed in consultation with the Housing Forum and other key stakeholders.
 7. It is envisaged that the new approach will involve two stages. The first stage will involve a preliminary assessment to identify those with a short-term need (including that for emergency accommodation) and those for whom income support of short-term duration is the appropriate response. Housing advice should direct individuals to the most appropriate housing support available, taking a developmental and personalised perspective.
 8. This process involves early engagement with individuals seeking housing support, including providing information on alternative options outside the supported housing sector to those who are not eligible for immediate housing support. Providing housing advice will become a core function of local authorities as part of the housing services they provide.
 9. The second stage of the assessment will examine longer-term housing need. This will be determined by reference to existing housing conditions, severity of household need, eligibility for housing support and the availability of housing options, having regard to the preferences expressed by the applicant.
 10. An important new component will be the incorporation of the “life cycle” approach into the assessment of need, reflecting the fact that different households may experience a need for different types of housing supports, at various stages in their life cycle. The duration and extent of this may also vary over time.

BOX 6.1: The Life Cycle Approach

Towards 2016 developed a new framework, based on work by NESC, within which to “address key social challenges by assessing the risks and hazards which the individual person faces and the supports available to them at each stage in the life cycle. The key life cycle stages are Children, People of Working Age and People with Disabilities (who, in accordance with the policy of mainstreaming will benefit from measures at all stages of the life cycle)”. The agreement notes that the life cycle approach adopts the perspective of the person as the centrepiece of social policy development and this perspective should help policy evolve in a manner which encompasses actions across a range of departments and agencies.

11. To date “housing need” has been closely approximated with the need for a local authority housing tenancy. This response is not always appropriate. As the range of possible housing supports have been expanded, and further options are proposed in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*, the provision of a local authority house may not be the most appropriate approach

for an individual at a particular point in time. For example, *Towards 2016* in referring to the housing options for young adults, highlights the importance of implementing the **Rental Accommodation Scheme** “to help to provide the necessary springboard to accessing employment, training or education opportunities which may lead to broader accommodation options for the individual in the future”.

12. The income of households is of critical importance in determining the range of suitable options. While the life cycle approach will focus on the longer-term economic potential of the household, through employment or education, there is also a need to establish income at the point of assessment. For these purposes, it is proposed that means testing for social housing should draw on existing systems rather than duplicating effort across social services. It is proposed that an income/means threshold will be set by housing authorities, within overall national parameters for each type of housing support. This will have regard to local circumstances and the need for transparency, equity and flexibility within the system.
13. It is intended to move the focus from tri-annual strategic assessments of need to more regular, monthly or quarterly reporting and monitoring.

Social housing options

14. With the expansion of social housing options, an individual may now be offered social rented accommodation through:-
 - (a) arrangements with private landlords for long or short leases, for single or multiple units (RAS);
 - (b) units available in property owned or leased by the voluntary and co-operative sector;
 - (c) units available in property owned or leased by the local authority which they have either built, procured or acquired through Part V arrangements.
15. In the future, prospective tenants will be offered housing support based on accommodation suitable to their needs and with some choice provided, e.g. location, tenure. At that point they may opt either to rent the property or commence incremental purchase, if their income would support it (see Chapter Five). Thereafter, if their circumstances change, they can seek to transfer to another type of house or location and remain as social housing renters or move to homes available under affordable housing or incremental purchase schemes if they wish to commence purchase. The stock of housing available for social housing needs will remain in that tenure, for as long as the housing authority determines there is such a need in the location.

Delivering quality - building sustainable communities

16. Social housing plays an important role in tackling social exclusion and addressing poverty in Ireland. For this reason, housing and accommodation is one of the elements of the Irish National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. Providing an affordable, stable home, allows households to access other public services and connect with and participate in their community.



17. Successful outcomes for the individual and communities from the supply of housing services, depends upon the successful planning and execution of individual projects. Unfortunately, not all past investment has achieved the results originally sought. Most local authorities have estates that are unpopular with existing and potential residents. Some present acute problems of disadvantage. This may be due to poor quality of initial design, failures of management or anti-social behaviour. This has often led to the isolation of local authority estates from the rest of the community, with little diversity of household type or tenure. Whatever the cause, over the years poor housing conditions tend to be associated with a range of issues of poverty and severe disadvantage.
18. Plans in the 1990s²⁷ sought to re-orientate social housing to deal with this legacy of social segregation. Increasingly, local authorities have been encouraged to provide new housing in smaller developments and to avoid, where possible, adding to existing large scale local authority housing estates, in order to mitigate the extent and effects of social segregation in housing and to improve the social mix in housing areas. The new delivery mechanisms available, particularly Part V arrangements and RAS, give local authorities greater flexibility in meeting this objective.
19. Particular account needs to be taken also of the implications for housing supply of growing cultural and ethnic diversity. International experience points to the tensions that can arise for society when poor quality housing arises in a more multi-cultural setting.
20. **Sustainable community proofing** will be introduced for all new projects. Based on a simple toolkit, a series of critical questions should be asked before the commencement of a project to determine the appropriate profile of supply. It is proposed, in conjunction with the Centre for Housing Research, to develop the appropriate toolkit and to publish best practice guidance on delivering sustainable housing.

BOX 6.2: Sustainable Community Proofing - Sample Toolkit

- How does the proposed project respond to needs identified in the Housing Action Plan?
- What is the context for the project - the location, size of site, existing tenure mix in the area?
- What tenure mix would best ensure a good sustainable community in the area?
- How will the community develop over the next 5, 10 years?
- What connections need to be made to other services and infrastructure? [schools, public transport, servicing of land, civic amenities]

21. Ideally, all new construction projects should include a portion of social rented accommodation, including special needs housing, homes for incremental purchase, affordable housing and private housing. Determining the nature of projects and the appropriate mix is dependent upon the context or setting. Part V and RAS can assist in bringing better tenure mix, by for example, bringing greater levels of supported housing to areas which are currently dominated by private development. Similarly, higher levels of supply of homes for purchase should be encouraged in areas where there is currently a high concentration of social housing.
22. In undertaking analysis of the neighbourhood, account should be taken of the numbers being supported in private rented accommodation through rent supplement. Other infrastructure needs and supports should also be identified at this project appraisal stage, so that delivery of these can be facilitated internally within the local authority or through other mechanisms.
23. In designated area, linkages to RAPID (Revitalisation of Areas by Planning Investment and Development) initiatives form an important component in the building of both new social housing and the regeneration of existing social housing (Chapter Eight). The Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs initiated a process in 2006 to develop a strategic framework for the RAPID programme for the period 2007 to 2013, which will have a greater focus on a limited number of strategic themes and strengthened focus at local level to achieve greater integration of effort by State agencies, local authorities and greater engagement of the community. These themes concern community safety; support for families; support for the development of young people; development and rehabilitation of the built environment, including housing; education; health; and opportunities for employment and training of residents of the designated areas.

Delivering quality - social housing standards

24. In the Housing Policy Framework the Government placed a particular emphasis on improving the quality of social housing. In terms of quality, social housing should be seen as on a par with equivalent private housing including affordable housing. Social Housing Design Guidelines provide comprehensive guidance on the design of social housing, incorporating the principles and criteria underlying most recent thinking on housing provision and regeneration, with increased emphasis on sustainability, including energy efficiency and environmental protection.
25. These recommended standards evolve over time, and the DoEHLG will issue new guidance for local authorities on procuring housing solutions for sustainable communities* this year. The guidelines will be kept under continual review to ensure that they reflect the highest possible standards coming from the quality agenda for urban design and sustainable housing set out in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*.

* These guidelines to be entitled "Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities" will update and replace the Social Housing Design Guidelines issued in 1999.

26. Greater innovation will be encouraged, building on those initiatives taken already by many local authorities in building sustainable housing. Energy-efficient practices, that meet the approval of Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI), in the design and construction of social housing provided by local authorities or the voluntary and co-operative housing sector will be supported through capital funding schemes. As these processes are validated they will be reflected in the recommended standards.

Delivering social housing supports

27. Having identified the range of social housing supports required to meet needs in particular locations, the local authority should plan the delivery through appropriate combinations of the range of instruments available. The mode of delivery of a new home is not of relevance to the new applicant. What is of particular relevance is the level of choice, the location, the facilities in the neighbourhood and whether the home is for rent or for purchase under the various paths to home ownership.

BOX 6.3: Range of Delivery Mechanisms for Social Housing

- New construction, mainly in integrated mixed tenure estates but also in small single tenure estates, where appropriate;
- Part V arrangements;
- Rental Accommodation Scheme - multi-unit contracts with landlords;
- Rental Accommodation Scheme - contracts with individual landlords;
- Projects developed by the voluntary and co-operative sector on their own lands (or lands supplied to them by a local authority); and
- Units owned by local authorities and managed by the voluntary and co-operative housing sector.

28. The NESC report on housing in 2004 recommended expanding the availability of social housing. In *Towards 2016*, the parties acknowledged that NESC had suggested that an additional 73,000 social housing units should be provided from the end of 2004 to 2012. The parties indicated that this target was of continuing relevance to the expected response over the term of the agreement. The parties further agreed that implementation should be assessed in the light of work on the assessment of need, the emerging picture in relation to need, the evolution of the various housing programme, the outputs achieved and available resources.

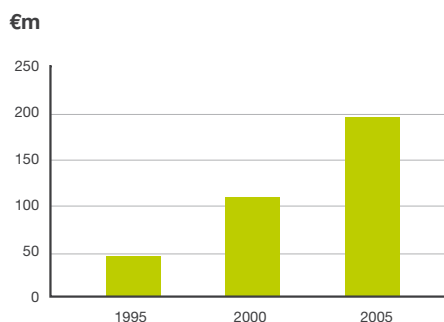
29. Over the period 2007 to 2009, some 27,000 new homes will be commenced or acquired for those in need of social housing, through a combination of measures (local authority, voluntary and co-operative and RAS long term contracts for new supply). The resources being made available under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 will allow for similar levels of activity post 2009, leading to some 63,000 commencements or acquisitions over the period and resulting in some 60,000 completions or acquisitions over the seven year period. The actual delivery under Housing Action Plans will be determined as part of the mid-term review of the Plan.

30. Other households will benefit as they transfer to RAS with their existing landlords, as vacancies arise and through adaptation of the existing housing*. It is anticipated that some 100,000 households will have their accommodation needs met over the period 2007 - 2013 through social housing options. The programme in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* to improve the quality and management of the existing housing stock should reduce the number of homes which are hard to let and improve turn around times for filling vacancies in the stock.
31. If households opt to purchase their homes through incremental purchase (Chapter Five refers), this will allow greater output to be achieved from the available Exchequer resources.
32. The overall aim of the approaches outlined in *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* will be to expand the range of choices, by increasing both the quantity and quality of social housing available to those in need of social housing. The increased resources available under the National Development Plan will be used in ways that maximise the number of households in need who receive housing support.

Role of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector

33. The voluntary and co-operative housing sector has made a major contribution to housing provision in Ireland. The sector has much to offer in terms of volunteerism, innovation, management skills and its not-for-profit ethos. The funding provision for the voluntary and co-operative schemes has been increased significantly over the last number of years. The progress made to date in developing the sector needs to continue. The multi-annual housing action plans process gives new clarity to the sector on the expected response in each local authority area. This expectation presents new challenges and new opportunities for the sector.
34. Important areas for development over the coming years will include special needs housing, managing homes coming through Part V arrangements and involvement in the Rental Accommodation Scheme. It is also envisaged that the sector will become more involved in the provision of home ownership options through incremental purchase and affordable housing schemes. Changes are proposed to put the sector on a better footing to meet these challenges.
35. Firstly, it is proposed to introduce new funding arrangements to optimise the resources available to deliver increased output while reflecting the diversity of project types that the sector manages. As part of this process, it is proposed to rationalise and streamline administrative and approval arrangements. For some projects, forms of contested procurement will apply to ensure that there is equitable access to projects by various bodies, and that value for money is obtained. It is proposed that 100% funding will be provided for projects where all the beneficiaries have been assessed as being in need of social housing.

Graph 5:
State Expenditure on Voluntary
and Co-operative Housing



* Extensions to local authority housing or Improvement works in lieu of local authority housing.



36. Secondly, it is recognised that some support is required for the sector to underpin delivery and, under the *Towards 2016* agreement, the Government have committed to the provision of additional sites and land for the purpose of meeting identified housing need. It is expected that land/sites sufficient to supply some 3,000 dwellings will be identified and made available over the period 2007-2009.
37. Thirdly, there is now a need for more formal accountability in relation to the activities of the sector. Some bodies operate nationally and are monitored by a number of housing authorities which can lead to differences of approach. Mechanisms for monitoring these activities, such as oversight of accounts, tenancies, rents and letting criteria employed by the sector, need to be put in place to ensure that funding provided by Government to the sector is spent as cost-effectively, efficiently and equitably as possible.
38. These issues will be progressed through the Working Group on Voluntary and Co-operative housing, which plays an important role in dealing with practical issues impacting on the sector's development. The Housing Forum will oversee the work programme of the Group.

CHAPTER 7

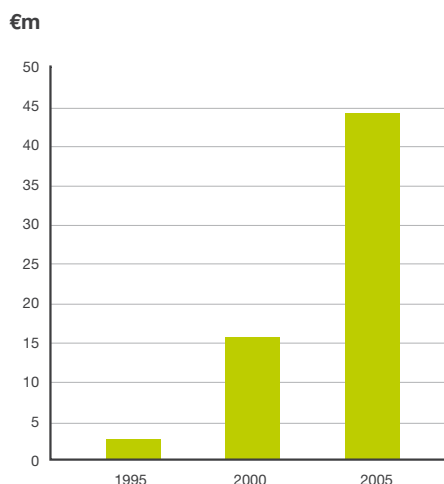
SUPPLY OF HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Within the housing sector, specific actions are required to address the wide range of special housing needs. These needs may influence the design of housing (to meet cultural preferences or mobility and socialisation needs) or nature of support, where accommodation only forms one element of the response to problems experienced by vulnerable groups. While responding to these needs primarily falls to social housing providers, the scope for encouraging provision within the private sector, particularly with regard to the needs of older people and people with a disability, should not be overlooked.
2. For the most vulnerable groups (eg. homeless persons, persons with addictions, persons with mental health issues), interventions in this area generally require an inter-agency response particularly where there is a care dimension to the supports required. The multi-annual action plans provide an opportunity at a strategic level to determine the overall requirements for different types of housing for the various special needs. It is proposed to develop protocols to cover the type of engagement required between housing providers and other agencies, e.g. Health Services Executive (HSE), Regional and Local Drugs Task Forces, etc., to ensure that at project level there is clarity around the needs, the appropriate response and the funding required for both capital and ongoing costs.
3. The following approaches will be taken:-
 - Housing Strategies and Housing Action Plans will reflect specific strategies for different special needs categories, developed with inter-agency co-operation; and
 - Protocols will be established for inter-agency co-operation with regard to all special housing needs.
4. As set out in Chapter Six, it is envisaged that the voluntary and co-operative sector will play a particular role in providing accommodation options for people with special needs.

Homelessness

5. Since the launch by the Government of *Homelessness, an Integrated Strategy (2000)* and the *Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)* significant progress has been made in addressing the accommodation and care needs of homeless persons. Greatly increased levels of Government funding have supported this. It is generally accepted that there is an adequate supply of emergency accommodation now in the major urban areas. It is also recognised that the primary objective is now to provide transitional programmes, where necessary, and in due course long term accommodation with necessary care supports,

Graph 6:
Spending on Homeless Services





to enable people to move from emergency accommodation to independent living. The current strategies of both the statutory and voluntary sectors must be amended to reflect this objective. Existing funding mechanisms will be re-targeted to support the amended strategies.

6. In order to further progress the long term response to homelessness, the DoEHLG will:

- Amalgamate and update the existing Homeless Strategies, having regard to the recommendations of the independent review of the Strategies. In this context, a National Homelessness Consultative Committee is being established. Measures will be adopted to achieve the more effective operation of homeless fora and improved co-ordination of service provision to ensure a more coherent and comprehensive response to the needs of homeless persons;
- On the basis of established need, the provision of long-term accommodation and associated care supports will be promoted through social and voluntary housing, the private rented sector (including the use of the Rental Accommodation Scheme) and the provision of dedicated accommodation and support systems for homeless persons who are assessed as being not capable of independent living;
- Continue to provide the funding necessary to support the provision of accommodation and related supports to homeless persons and develop a more effective and transparent funding mechanism for both the accommodation and care elements through greater co-ordination at local level between the local authorities and the HSE; and
- The situation of homeless persons who are currently in long-term emergency accommodation is of particular concern. The revised strategies will include the objective for the elimination of such homelessness by 2010*.

Travellers

7. Since the enactment of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, each local authority has adopted two Traveller accommodation programmes. The first programmes covered the years 2000 to 2004, and the current programmes run from 2005 to 2008. Capital investment in Traveller Accommodation Schemes has been increased very significantly since 2000.
8. During the period of the first programmes (2000-2004), 1,371 additional Traveller families were provided with permanent secure accommodation. During these years there was a 50% reduction in the number of families living on unauthorised sites - down from 1,207 families at the start of the programmes to 601 families at their completion.

* Towards 2016 notes that this commitment is set in the context of an understanding that this involves addressing the needs of up to 500 households.

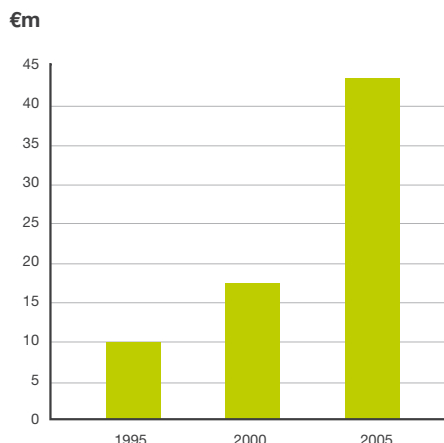
9. There is a noticeable trend in the increasing number of Travellers meeting their accommodation needs successfully through the private rented sector. Almost 7% of Traveller families lived in such accommodation at the end of 2004, and this figure had increased to almost 10% a year later.
10. A number of issues surrounding Traveller accommodation, however, remain to be satisfactorily resolved. New strategies have been put in place to deal with them. For example, local authorities are now obliged to include annual targets in their current (2005-2008) Traveller accommodation programmes, to facilitate the assessment of performance on an annual basis.
11. The Centre for Housing Research under the aegis of the DoEHLG is carrying out an evaluation of the management and maintenance systems of Traveller-specific accommodation. This will help to determine what new practices and procedures need to be adopted so that problems can be tackled in a comprehensive manner.
12. In order to further improve the accommodation position of Travellers, especially those families still living on unauthorised sites, the Department will:
 - Continue to facilitate, at national level, the development of strategies devised to accelerate the provision of Traveller accommodation;
 - Work to achieve effective co-ordination, at local level, of the provision of all services to Travellers in conjunction with the work of the High Level Group on Traveller issues;
 - Support the introduction by local authorities of systematic procedures for the management and maintenance of Traveller-specific accommodation; and
 - Work through the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee on all aspects of the accommodation programme. A particular priority for the Committee will be to see how Travellers can develop self-supporting approaches to meet their own needs.

Accommodation needs of older people

13. Demographic changes over the coming decades will lead to the aging of the population. While the majority of older people own their own homes, some may find that their accommodation is not entirely suitable to their needs. For example, 21% of single older households cited their housing as being “too big” in the last National Survey of Irish Housing Quality²⁸. Some older people also find that increasing frailty and illness can cause mobility problems requiring some adaptation to their homes to allow them to remain living there comfortably. A small percentage of people seek social housing in their later years*.
14. The availability of a mix of dwelling types of good design across all tenures will provide people with greater choice to change accommodation to suit their needs as they enter their later life. Specific State support for the accommodation needs of older people ranges from grant schemes which allow people to remain in their own homes to the provision of specific sheltered housing options.

* People over 65 years of age represent 4% of households on social housing waiting lists.

Graph 7:
Traveller Accommodation Expenditure



15. The review of the grants schemes for older people and people with a disability in private housing (see paragraph 25 below) will assist in better targeting of these schemes. In particular, some of the schemes will be amalgamated into a specific scheme of housing aid for older people.
16. The “Safe Home” Scheme assists older Irish emigrants to return home (allowing them access to social housing provided by voluntary and co-operative housing bodies). The greater involvement of the voluntary and co-operative sector in addressing special housing needs, and expansion of social housing provision should lead to an expansion of housing supports to older people. A cross-departmental team on sheltered housing is being established by the DoEHLG to oversee progress in this area. Provision is being made for consultation with social partners through the Housing Forum.
17. The RAS scheme will provide new options for older single people who may have spent most of their lives in the private rented sector and would like enhanced security of tenure in their old age.
18. A number of local authorities operate “financial contribution schemes” under which private housing is part-exchanged for social rented accommodation specifically designed for older people. The DoEHLG will encourage broader implementation of such schemes. These can be utilised to meet the needs of older people and ensuring a more efficient use of the housing stock, by making larger homes released under the scheme available to new families.

BOX 7.1: Dublin City Council Financial Contribution Scheme

The Financial Contribution Scheme caters for persons 55 years or over living in the city who find their existing dwellings too large for their needs and who wish to be considered for housing with Dublin City Council as tenants in Older Persons accommodation. Applicants must offer their house for sale to the City Council in the first instance and they must reside within the administrative area of Dublin City Council. There is a price limit set by the DoEHLG that Dublin City Council must adhere to. All applicants are required to pay a financial contribution on an age related basis.

19. The role which RAS might play in relation to these type of downsizing schemes, in allowing people to release their home for a period for use under the scheme, while they are accommodated in social housing, is being explored.
20. Reflecting the range of options available to meet the housing and accommodation needs of older people, future actions will involve:
 - Ensuring that local authorities, as part of their Housing Action Plans, include a specific strategy reflecting their response to the accommodation needs of older people in their areas, which would specifically outline the role of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector;

- Developing and implementing new protocols for inter-agency co-operation where there is a care dimension;
- Implementing revised grant schemes for older people in private housing which will improve equity and targeting; and
- Establishment of a cross-departmental team on sheltered housing to oversee progress in this area.

Accommodation needs of people with a disability

21. The DoEHLG has published a disability sectoral plan in line with commitments under the Disability Act, 2005, which reflects the commitment in *Towards 2016* to develop a national housing strategy for people with a disability which will give a broad framework to inform the development of the relevant components of Housing Action Plans.
22. The following specific commitments in relation to the development of inter-agency protocols are also outlined in the sectoral plan.



Box 7.2: Proposed Inter-Agency Protocols in relation to services for People with a Disability

- Assessment of housing needs - a protocol aiming to govern liaison between HSE and housing authorities on the assessment of individual accommodation needs of people with a disability who have been identified by HSE in line with relevant sections of Disability Act, 2005.
- Strategic Assessment of the nature and extent of housing needs of people with a disability in a locality - protocol aiming to govern liaison between HSE and housing authorities on exchange of information necessary which will input into Housing Action Plans.
- Support costs for social housing projects provided for people with a disability - this protocol will apply to projects where accommodation is to be provided by housing authorities (or voluntary and co-operative housing sector in line with Housing Action Plans) and will govern necessary liaison with HSE on ongoing care/support dimensions.

23. General improvements in housing quality, including Part M of the Building Regulations, expand the options available to people with a disability within the private sector*. Specific grants are also available to adapt private housing to better meet the accommodation needs of people with a disability.

* See Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005 DoEHLG, 2006 for further information on review of Part M regime and general actions proposed in relation to the built environment.

Grants schemes to assist older people and people with a disability in private housing

24. The Disabled Person's Grant (DPG) and Essential Repairs Grant (ERG), operated by local authorities, were designed to assist in the carrying out of works which, in the opinion of the local authority, are necessary to provide adequate accommodation for disabled and elderly persons. The Special Scheme of Housing Aid for the Elderly, was designed to undertake emergency repairs for elderly persons living in unsanitary or unfit conditions. Significant improvements were made to the terms and conditions of the both the DPG and ERG schemes in recent years including increases in grant levels, the percentage of approved costs payable and the level of recoupment to the local authorities, as well as the introduction of a Disabled Persons New House Grant.

25. In order to facilitate the continued independent occupancy of their own homes by older people or those with a disability, the DoEHLG has reviewed the schemes. Revised schemes will be introduced during 2007 under the framework of *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*. The revised schemes are designed to ensure that available funding is targeted at lower income households and those whose accommodation needs are greatest. The new schemes involve a more streamlined operation in order to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective outcomes from the funding available (Appendix 3).

CHAPTER 8

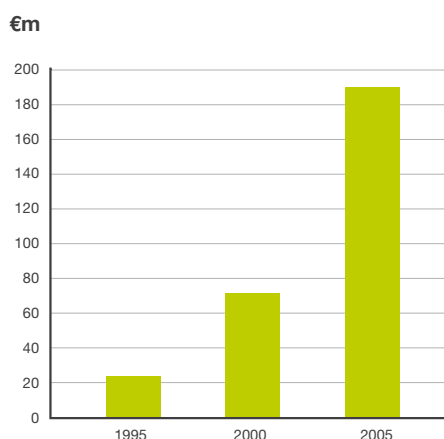
HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL

1. Social housing has made a very valuable contribution to the fabric of Irish society for almost a century. While a significant proportion of local authority dwellings are highly sought after by tenants, most local authorities have estates that are unpopular with potential and existing residents. Some indeed have been the locations of extreme disadvantage. A very small number have experienced serious crime and disorder issues. This could be due to a combination of factors such as poor quality of initial design, failures of management or inadequate responses by a number of State agencies. Whatever the cause, over the years poor housing conditions tend to be associated with a range of issues of poverty and disadvantage.
2. About €1 billion has been spent since 1997 on programmes to improve run-down local authority estates. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* provides for a planned and concerted increase in investment in social housing stock over the coming years. This provides an opportunity to tackle some long-standing problems in communities that have experienced multiple disadvantages.

Regeneration projects

3. Past attempts to tackle these problems can be criticised for an over-reliance on refurbishment of the buildings, rather than the development of a strong community. Successful projects are built upon a rigorous analysis to select the right solution; strategic planning to deal with the multi-faceted response required and concerted and focused action by a number of State agencies at local level to deliver on the ground and real community engagement²⁹.
4. The first clear step is analysing the causes of decline in the popularity or functioning of an estate. Problems may be due to poor design, housing management failures, social or economic factors or a combination of all of these. In some cases, and particularly in smaller estates, cyclical maintenance and better estate management may address the issues. Some capital investment may also be required to improve the quality of housing and funding will be available for this purpose (see paragraph 17).
5. In areas experiencing multiple deprivation, caused by a range of social and economic factors, and not merely the standard or design of housing alone, more concerted action is required. In the case of Gateways and Hubs set out in the National Spatial Strategy in particular, links should be made between this regeneration process and the wider development of the relevant cities and towns.

Graph 8:
Regeneration and Remedial
Works total expenditure



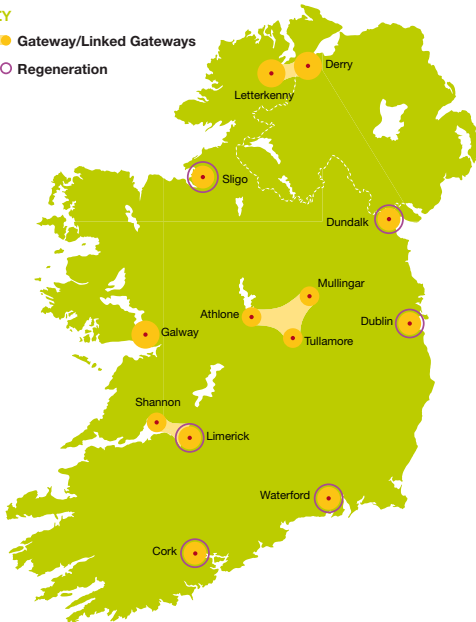
NATIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (NSS)

Gateways

KEY

● Gateway/Linked Gateways

○ Regeneration



Regeneration in Gateways

6. Dublin City has the largest local authority housing stock in the country. The City Council has made substantial progress in both regeneration and renewal of that stock. Flagship projects are underway in Ballymun and Fatima Mansions, with a range of other large projects using public private partnership arrangements in the pipeline. Earlier projects in the North East Inner City have transformed the living environment for those living there. In Cork City, the regeneration of Knocknaheeny under a masterplan is underway, and housing renewal is advancing in other locations.
7. The potential benefits of investing in social inclusion measures to enhance the image, confidence and dynamics of gateways are considerable³⁰. Social exclusion, housing or urban renewal issues have been particularly identified in a number of gateways and the starting point is frequently the regeneration of the social housing stock.
8. A specific initiative, through the appointment of a special representative, has been put into place to address social exclusion and crime and disorder in Moyross, Limerick. As part of his brief, the Government's special representative has been asked to bring forward suggestions about the regeneration of Moyross and other disadvantaged areas of Limerick in the context of the wider strategic development of the Limerick/Shannon Gateway.
9. More generally, to support the process of housing and neighbourhood renewal, a new nationwide approach will be undertaken under *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities*. The aim is to galvanise the agencies at local level and ensure that interventions are focused on a common aim. This will accelerate the development of an appropriate vision for the area and a detailed plan of action. It is designed to secure the commitment of all of the key stakeholders and maintain the momentum for delivery by providing an appropriate implementation vehicle. In all cases, it is essential that an effective dialogue is achieved with those living in the area.
10. All regeneration projects will require a **Master Plan**, developed in consultation with all key agencies through the County/City Development Board (CDB). This will be a strategic plan to support regeneration investment, recognising all of the necessary inputs. A collaborative approach will be a pre-requisite for funding in gateways involving a number of local authorities.
11. Generally for larger projects, it is proposed that a dedicated **Regeneration Agency** be established to drive the regeneration process, by involving all the relevant actors. It is proposed that priority will be given to proposals from gateways for the establishment of such structures.

BOX 8.1: Regeneration Agencies

The regeneration agency will have a board, comprising the main statutory agencies that can contribute to the social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. It will be a corporate body under Local Government legislation with a specific term of office. The board will be chaired by the relevant County/City Manager and the CDB will act as its advisory council. The agency will have a small staff, with sufficient expertise across a range of disciplines to deliver on the regeneration project. The DoEHLG will fund this agency for the defined period of the regeneration.

12. It will be open to other authorities to bid for funding and approval to establishment of such an agency. However, it is envisaged where the scale of regeneration is more medium scale, the implementation can be overseen by a dedicated multi-disciplinary team reporting to the CDB. Technical support in the planning and design of projects will be available to all project teams, from the new dedicated unit established in the National Building Agency.



BOX 8.2: National Building Agency

The National Building Agency provides consultancy services to local authorities in the provision of social and affordable housing. It established a new unit in 2006, flowing from the commitment in *Towards 2016* to provide dedicated technical assistance to local authorities as part of an accelerated programme of housing regeneration. The support will comprise planning and design expertise, as well as a range of project management skills.

13. The initial appraisal for regeneration, must include the potential role of public private partnerships in leveraging finance for the project and more importantly, bringing new tenure mix to an area. Proposals should be evaluated to see the impact of alternative approaches on the wider development of the city or town. They should consider the value of defining boundaries for regeneration in ways which create greater synergies with other urban renewal initiatives.
14. The DoEHLG will issue detailed guidance on regeneration projects, building on the good practice guidelines³¹ launched by the Centre for Housing Research in 2006.

Sustainable Communities Fund

15. The DoEHLG has generally only supported the capital investment in regeneration projects. Accelerating the programme and securing of optimum results is dependent on good support at local level. This must be maintained at all stages of development of the project. A **Sustainable Communities Fund** is being established to provide revenue funding for a defined period to local authorities, subject to conditions, which will support the various steps involved in housing renewal and in improving the housing stock. An element of the fund will be devoted to measures to address anti-social behaviour (which is dealt with more fully in Chapter Nine).

Improvement of housing stock

16. A major regeneration project is not always the appropriate response where an estate has problems of high rates of vacancies, poor reputation etc. Improving the quality of housing, providing appropriate estate management and ongoing maintenance may address the issues. The recently published good practice guidelines (see box 8.3) provide the framework for conducting analysis and defining the appropriate response. Effective dialogue and ownership of the change process by the community involved are prerequisites for long-term success.

BOX 8.3: Good practice in regeneration involves five key steps:

- Step 1** - Selection of estates for regeneration and identifying key problems.
- Step 2** - Strategic Planning.
- Step 3** - Implementation.
- Step 4** - Evaluation to measure performance of project and make any necessary changes.
- Step 5** - Sustaining achievements.

Source: Good Practice in Housing Management-Guidelines for Local Authorities - Regenerating estates, rebuilding vibrant communities - Centre for Housing Research (2006)

17. Under new funding arrangements applicable from January 2007, local authorities will be allowed to apply the revenue received from the sales of houses to programmes of regeneration, remedial works and planned maintenance*. This will encourage greater accountability and responsibility at local level. It will provide an important incentive to maintaining quality of housing, ensuring that authorities act proactively in this area. It will also provide a more integrated response and better value for money.
18. Through these new funding arrangements, local authorities will have resources to fund programmes of planned maintenance, to undertake improvement works to dwellings and estates and to support related environmental and community enhancement projects. The DoEHLG will continue to provide funding, some in the form of matching funds, to authorities for improvement schemes. Top-up funding will be available from the DoEHLG to fund national initiatives, along the lines of the existing central heating scheme. Programmes are being prepared to cover other areas such as energy performance, radon protection, and adaptation of housing for special needs, including making a portion of the existing stock "life-time adaptable".

*Previously the bulk of receipts were applied to the local authority housing construction programme, which will be fully Exchequer funded from 2007.

19. The DoEHLG will also encourage the implementation of programmes for the refurbishment of single local authority houses in rural areas, some of which have suffered serious deterioration.
20. In general, homes in the voluntary and co-operative housing sector are relatively new and in good condition. These have been provided through grant schemes with sinking funds to cover future refurbishment needs. However, there is a limited stock of older voluntary and co-operative housing where this does not apply. Local authorities will now be able to fund renewal projects in this sector, where this would improve the quality and energy efficiency of the stock, meet broader sustainable community objectives and provide additional social housing options to people on local authority waiting lists.

Maintaining quality

21. In encouraging an accelerated programme to improve the existing stock of social housing and focusing on quality in new build, the DoEHLG wishes to ensure that the quality improves and is sustained. Ten yearly audits of housing stock will be undertaken, with the benchmark audit being conducted in 2007/8. In the intervening period, qualitative progress, including tenant views will be analysed as part of the ten-year National Quality of Housing Survey*. This will allow for an accurate evaluation of the progression in quality and management performance of the relevant housing provider. While the audit will focus on the physical structure of the housing, this will be supplemented by tenant surveys to measure more qualitative aspects of housing management.

* The last survey was conducted in 2001/2002 and measured a range of factors across tenures. It is expected that the next survey will be undertaken in 2011/12 and will include some additional questions for tenants of social housing.

CHAPTER 9

MANAGING AND MAINTAINING SOCIAL HOUSING

1. Local authorities are landlords for about 110,000 dwellings, the voluntary and co-operative sector are landlords for about 19,000 dwellings. The management and maintenance of these homes is of critical importance. Maintenance issues arise on the physical fabric of the house and apartments, covering ongoing planned maintenance regimes to maintain standards, as well as appropriate response repairs. Rapid turn-around time of vacancies is required to make them available for new lettings and ensure that estates do not take on a run-down appearance.
2. Managing the housing stock well requires best practice to be adopted in terms of tenancy agreements. This must reflect an appropriate balance of tenant rights and responsibilities, good estate management and tenant participation and consultation.
3. Management and maintenance practices need to be conducted efficiently and effectively. They must be funded from rent revenue which is collected on a timely basis under a rent system that is fair and equitable across all social housing tenures.
4. At the outset, social housing providers must consider the long-term maintenance and management requirements when planning and designing estates. Programmes of planned maintenance and auditing of stock quality should assist in maintaining quality. The new funding arrangements for planned maintenance will release rental income for use on new more robust estate and area management arrangements.

Management reforms

5. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* introduces a series of reforms aimed at improving service and ensuring that social housing is delivered in a way that is fair and efficient. The changes will encourage greater community participation and more assumption of responsibility by households. In so doing, it is intended to expand the choices available to households, reflecting, as appropriate, community and life cycle perspectives. The general interaction between housing providers and tenants should seek to discourage dependency and promote individual choice and autonomy.
6. Achieving this will require management changes to focus on allocation policy, quality of service and maximising as far as possible individual choice and tenant responsibility across a number of inter-related areas.

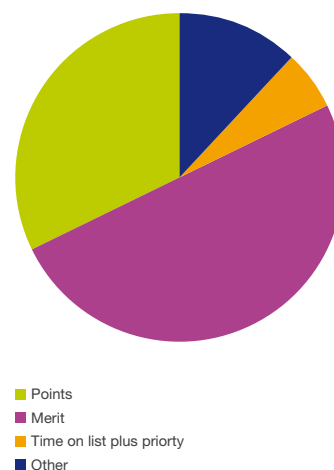
Allocation policy

7. The changes proposed to current housing needs assessment practices set out in Chapter Six and the introduction of ranked/prioritised assessment criteria process, will affect local authority allocation policies. The existence of a standardised priority ranking will mean that housing authorities will have to revise their schemes of letting priorities, and a new allocation system may be required.
8. At present, local authorities have complete autonomy with regard to the allocation of long-term housing. While, it is not envisaged that this would change, *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* foresees a more uniform system to ensure consistency with the changes in the needs assessment process. Currently there are a variety of allocation systems in use by local authorities, the most common being:
 - “merit” based systems, involving a qualitative assessment of individual need;
 - “points” based systems, where applicants are awarded points based on household type and nature of need; and
 - “time on the list” based on date of application but usually in combination with points/merit to determine prioritisation.
9. The use of a segregated waiting list (according to priority of need) may be inevitable. This will of necessity affect the nature of letting priorities. However, with a reorganised and segregated waiting list, it may be possible to introduce an element of choice into the system. Providing choice will, ideally, lead to the creation of a sense of ‘ownership’ and ‘pride’ in the home allocated, and assist in fulfilling commitments in relation to social inclusion and integration. The issue of allocation policy will be the subject of consultation with housing providers and the Housing Forum. It is important that local political perspectives are taken into account.

Rents

10. The widening of social housing options has brought choice but also greater complexity to some of the operational areas, including rents. Examination of the existing systems would suggest that improvements could be made which would enhance the horizontal and vertical equity of existing rent determination systems. It is envisaged that local authority systems could be developed in the context of a national framework that outlines parameters, but provides operational flexibility to all housing providers in order to reflect local conditions.

Graph 9:
Basis on which Local Authorities allocate Housing Units³²





11. This would lead to the rationalisation of rents policy across all social housing options (including units provided by the voluntary and co-operative housing sector and under the Rental Accommodation Scheme). This will not involve the centralised setting of rents, but rather the agreeing of a national framework of appropriate parameters.

Anti-social behaviour

12. Anti-social behaviour threatens the sustainability of communities and often leads to further disadvantages for vulnerable households. Good design and estate management can act as important preventative forces, but inevitably there will be situations that need to be tackled to ensure the good management of estates. Consequently, *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* provides for the strengthening of the supports available to local authorities. This includes increasing their statutory powers and actions to facilitate a targeted approach to combating anti-social behaviour in particular estates.

Legislation

13. Much of the reform programme as outlined can be introduced under existing legislation, either by administrative direction or through amendment to regulations. It will, however, be necessary to introduce new social housing legislation to address some aspects of reform. As well as provisions in relation to specific aspects of housing policy, the legislation will improve overall governance of the social housing sector. In part, this will involve the provision of Ministerial power to issue policy directives to housing authorities and provision for a system of internal local authority review of housing decisions in prescribed categories that relate to individual households.

CHAPTER 10

INSTITUTIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATION REFORMS

1. Local authorities are the key enablers of public housing provision, working in an increasingly complex and challenging environment. They will play a key role in translating the agenda set out in this document into reality. Local government, as in other areas of national development, has a proud record of achievement in the delivery of housing. These achievements have been made through the commitment and dedication of individual public representatives and officials through a spirit of strong public service.
2. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* provides for the continuation of this strong public service and local government tradition. It seeks to enhance this through the development of local government approaches and improved interplay between the different spheres of activity. These spheres relate to central and local government and the different State and other agencies that operate in the housing and linked social and economic areas. *Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities* extends a vision for the local government sector involving an approach of strong leadership at local level with local government institutions being central to the galvanisation of activity at local level to achieve the best outcomes.

Role of the DoEHLG

3. The DoEHLG has a key role in developing and implementing Government housing policy. It does this in partnership with other stakeholders, housing authorities and other supporting agencies. Integrated approaches are undertaken through a variety of fora. At Government level, Cabinet Committees on Social Inclusion and Housing, Infrastructure and PPPs, with their supporting cross-departmental teams provide overall strategic direction. The DoEHLG works jointly with local authorities and other State agencies across the full range of delivery mechanisms. The Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal chairs the Housing Forum which provides social partners with an input to policy development. Sharing of best practice on housing policy and implementation forms an important aspect of ongoing dialogue with Northern Ireland counterparts. Engagement with EU and UN structures also provides an opportunity to exchange knowledge and forms an important component of evidence based policy development.
4. Through the National Development Plan and social partnership monitoring arrangements, the DoEHLG will report on the progress made in both programme implementation and policy reform. The mid-term review of NDP/*Towards 2016* will provide an important assessment point, particularly from the perspective of informing housing action plans post 2009. The Housing Forum will play an important role in inputting to the development of the policy agenda.
5. The DoEHLG will continue to focus on supporting housing authorities to expand programmes as envisaged under the National Development Plan, providing both legislative and guidance frameworks. The DoEHLG and housing authorities will be supported in the implementation of programmes by the work of bodies operating under the aegis of the Department:

- The Private Residential Tenancies Board supporting the modernisation and development of the private rented sector.
- The Affordable Homes Partnership supporting the expanded affordable housing programme, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area.
- The National Building Agency assisting in the delivery of housing, including regeneration programmes.
- The Housing Finance Agency providing finance for local authorities and the voluntary and co-operative sector.
- The Dublin Docklands Development Authority has been given responsibility to progress development, including housing, working with Dublin City Council, in the Dublin docklands area.
- The Centre for Housing Research undertaking research to inform policy and the development of best practice guidance and delivery of training to support housing practitioners.

Housing authorities

6. Addressing individual accommodation needs in a community setting necessarily means that there is a critical local dimension to the delivery of housing services. 88 local authorities are assigned powers as housing authorities, albeit that the nature of these functions may vary. Some of these functions, particularly those with a public interface are inherently local, whereas others with a broader strategic perspective are best undertaken at a county/city level. This strategic perspective and linkages to other local services are likely to grow in importance.
7. Similarly, from a value for money perspective, there may be some gains in greater co-ordination of housing procurement and management services which could be achieved through co-operation between authorities. Legislation is envisaged to fully equip county/city councils to operate in this domain, by empowering them to take a lead role on certain housing issues. This will build on the approach taken in developing and implementing multi-annual Housing Action Plans.

Co-ordination

8. Delivery of the objectives contained in this statement will require a more intensive level of co-operation between Departments and bodies operating at national level as well as those operating at local level. Interaction with other agencies operating at local level plays an increasingly important role in the delivery of services, not least if housing is to be provided in a manner that builds sustainable communities. The County/City Development Boards (CDBs) provide an important framework for partnership and an integrated approach in terms of planning and service delivery in this regard.
9. The CDBs, established in 2000, are representative of a wide range of public agencies and the social partners operating at local level. Their core role, which is given statutory effect in the *Local Government Act 2001*, is to co-ordinate public and local development services at the local level, as well as facilitating local government and local development agencies moving closer together. In this context, a review is currently underway to develop and strengthen the role of the CDBs in line with the commitment in *Towards 2016*.

10. Each county/city development board has established a Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Working Group, representative of all the relevant local agencies (e.g. HSE, FAS, Gardaí, local authorities, Area Partnerships, Probation and Welfare Service, VEC, etc.). The role of the SIM Groups includes:
 - co-ordination of the delivery of social inclusion measures by publicly funded agencies at local level;
 - provision of more effective responses to the needs of those in the community who are socially excluded or who are experiencing barriers to their full participation in society;
 - avoidance of gaps in service provision and duplication of response;
 - a monitoring and supporting role in relation to the RAPID programme.
11. SIM groups could play a useful role in co-ordinating multi-agency actions in the housing area. They could be supported by local authority social inclusion units in this role. Pilot social inclusion units, funded by the DoEHLG, were established in seven local authorities for the period 2002-2005, in line with a commitment in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. The main role of the units is to support the local authorities' involvement in tackling social exclusion across the range of their activities in a cohesive and focused manner and in partnership with other relevant agencies. The pilot units were placed on a permanent footing in 2006. *Towards 2016* contains a commitment that the programme will be extended to half of all local authorities by the end of 2008.
12. Local government is playing an increasing role in the areas of promoting social capital, active citizenship and community development, in line with its general competence and responsibility to promote the interests of the community. This is being done, in partnership with sectoral, community and other relevant interests. Local authorities are inextricably linked to communities through both the representative and the new participative democratic processes (i.e. CDBs and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs).
13. This process will form an important backdrop to implementing the general policies set out in this document, and informing housing strategies and Housing Action Plans. Specifically in relation to housing:
 - County/city councils will be empowered to take a lead role where appropriate on matters such as needs assessment, procurement and co-ordination of housing services;
 - Consideration will be given to the use of regional approaches, to provide support services for social and affordable housing; and
 - Broad role of CDBs and SPCs will be factored into the process of building sustainable communities, taking into account the community needs and dynamics at local level.
14. Legislative powers will be given to city and county councils to deliver on this role. This will include the making of Housing Action Plans, the power either individually or jointly, to create companies or other entities to develop projects, provide shared housing services or procure and manage homes on behalf of the local authority.

Achieving housing and accommodation objectives

15. The framework for effective housing responses is in place: strategic planning through county/city development plans leading to housing strategies and housing action plans. Box 10.1 illustrates the overall framework.
16. The preparation of housing strategies in 2001 following the introduction of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and their incorporation into relevant Development Plans was a key element in devising an effective housing response. It is vital that the strategies are reviewed and updated, where necessary, but at least every two years, to ensure that they reflect the most up-to-date position in each housing authority area in relation to addressing the housing needs of all sectors of the existing and future population in the area of the development plan.
17. The housing strategy should be reviewed where there is a change in housing requirements or in the housing market that could fundamentally affect the existing strategy. In the light of the 2005 National Assessment of Housing Needs and new population figures arising from Census 2006, and other possible relevant changes to the housing landscape, all planning authorities will be encouraged to review their strategies.
18. This review should take cognisance generally of the type of accommodation available, including, for example, growth in the private rented sector that might influence the development of the Rental Accommodation Scheme. Looking at the demographic profile of the area and the stock of existing dwellings may point to particular gaps in forms of accommodation. This analysis may highlight the degree of social segregation and potential problems with large scale clustering of vulnerable households, through all forms of housing support from rent supplement through to longer-term support.



19. This review process will ensure that the next set of rolling Housing Action Plans will be based on the most up-to-date data. Housing strategies will be reviewed in light of Census 2006 data to ensure that they remain a key tool in informing development plans on housing requirements. The DoEHLG will re-examine guidance on housing strategies in light of early experience to ensure that strategies accurately reflect the community aspects of housing requirements, including quality and integration issues.

Housing action plans

20. Five-year action plans for social and affordable housing were introduced in 2004, to translate the objectives for social and affordable housing in the housing strategies into specific delivery plans and to provide a more integrated and holistic approach to planning and delivering these programmes.

21. It is proposed to place the making of Housing Action Plans on a statutory footing. The next round of five year Housing Action Plans should be informed by:-

- Housing strategies (as revised based on Census 2006).
- Demand for affordable housing (based on updated housing strategy).
- Assessment of need for social housing supports (based on new methodology).
- The audit of existing social housing and an assessment of accommodation availability to determine the role that the private rented sector may play for example.
- Strategies for special needs housing including Homeless Action Plans and Traveller Accommodation plans.
- Requirement for housing renewal and regeneration.

22. Inter-action with other agencies and the voluntary and co-operative housing sector should inform the general background to Housing Action Plans. Local authority managers will be obliged to prepare three year rolling implementation plans to deliver on the targets set out in the action plans. These will be reviewed annually with the DoEHLG and will provide a basis for greater delegation of responsibility for programme delivery to local authorities. The guidelines on developing action plans will be updated in the light of the experience of the first round of plans and the policy directions set out in this document.

Active land management strategies

23. Local authorities are now required to draw on their Housing Strategies and Housing Action Plans and engage in a process of *active land management*. The process, initiated in 2005, is based on the premise that it is essential that the land required for the level of delivery envisaged in Housing Action Plans is available in the quantities required, at the appropriate time and in the right locations. NESC highlighted the importance of active land management as one of the key elements of the policy framework required to respond to the challenges arising in the housing area, while indicating that a significant element of active land management already existed in practice³³.



24. Over the coming years, the combination of Housing Action Plans and the embedding of Active Land Management Strategies into these action plans, should form the critical planning instruments for ensuring the delivery of housing supports.
25. Preparing and implementing active land management strategies involves local authorities assessing:-
- The amount of land required for their social and affordable housing programmes and the social housing activity of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector (taking account of commitment in *Towards 2016* to release additional land and units to this sector);
 - The extent to which existing local authority housing land banks can meet this requirement;
 - The scope for other local authority lands to be brought into consideration for housing purposes (for example, under-utilised lands associated with current/former local authority service depots or similar facilities, open space which is currently under-utilised but, through partial use for housing purposes, may yield an improved amenity usage, etc);
 - The likely contribution of lands to become available through Part V agreements, through the State/local authority lands element of the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) or through PPPs or other development partnership arrangements; and
 - The resulting requirements for acquiring additional lands, with particular emphasis on brownfield lands, including derelict sites, and, in the context of more medium/long term planning, the acquisition of lands prior to their zoning for residential purposes.

Project Management

26. Some €18 billion will be available under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 for housing programmes. A strong emphasis will be placed on establishing good project management arrangements from the outset, to ensure accountability, value for money, adherence to programme targets and ultimately the development of quality housing environments.
27. Project management teams will be required for projects valued in excess of €20 million. Dedicated teams will also be appointed to manage groups of projects of lesser individual value, which taken together would be €20m.
28. The Affordable Homes Partnership will provide support to housing authorities in the Greater Dublin Area to deliver affordable homes as outlined in Chapter Five. The National Building Agency will also support the programme delivery, including through its new dedicated unit in the regeneration area.

Encouraging performance

29. The Housing Management Initiative (HMI) will involve the setting up of an incentivised system for housing authorities to encourage and promote best practice in the meeting of housing objectives. Best practice will be encouraged by giving housing authorities additional resources and increased responsibilities within a framework of achieving real and measurable improvement in performance. The HMI will complement existing work on developing service indicators across the range of local authority services.

Consultation

30. The DoEHLG will continue to work with the City and County Managers Association, particularly in promoting best practice approaches to implementation of programmes.

Housing Forum

31. The Housing Forum has been accredited with an important role in driving the agenda under the housing and accommodation special initiative under *Sustaining Progress*³⁴. *Towards 2016* recognises the role of the Housing Forum as the key arena for social partners input into housing policy development and implementation. Its success to date has been based on a joint problem solving approach and this will continue to underpin its work.

32. The Forum will take an overarching perspective on the work programme of other fora, the Working Group on Voluntary and Co-operative Housing and proposed Homelessness Consultative Council. Appropriate links will be made to the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, having due regard to its statutory role. It is also proposed, that sub-groups on particular issues could be formed, including perhaps a standing group on quality of housing issues in the broader housing market.

33. The Forum will act as an important link to the implementation of other Government strategies. The National Children's Strategy, for example, envisages that the Housing Forum might examine the impact of housing issues on children. The National Action Plan against Racism foresees particular linkages between the new Inter-Cultural Forum and the Housing Forum.

34. Furthermore, given the importance of the Forum in providing an opportunity for social partners to contribute to ongoing policy formulation, it is envisaged that one meeting of the Forum each year will be in the form of a policy symposium, involving wider social partnership involvement.

Centre for Housing Research

35. The successful implementation of this statement is dependent on good consultation at all levels, research into key issues and evaluation of outcomes, to enhance the evidence based approach to policy development. To aid the achievement of this objective, the Centre for Housing Research (formerly the Housing Unit) will have a clear focus on research and management policy alongside its traditional role in training housing practitioners and promoting best practice in housing management.

Conclusion

36. The institutional framework set out in this chapter will, through an inclusive approach involving all stakeholders, provide the means to ensure both effective delivery and policy formulation over the coming years. The emphasis is on achieving best outcomes and value for money from the substantial investment under the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013, and supporting the transformation of Irish housing services, to achieve better outcomes for those supported and Irish society in general.



APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1

ACTION ON PRIVATE RENTED STANDARDS

Foreword by Mr. Noel Ahern, T.D., Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal

Great progress has been made in developing the private rented sector in recent years. Major reform of landlord and tenant legislation was introduced in 2004 and the quality and choice of accommodation has generally improved in line with the huge investment in new accommodation. However, there is need for a concerted effort to tackle remaining deficiencies in standards.

The partnership agreement *Towards 2016* includes a commitment that minimum standards regulations in the private rented sector will be updated and effectively enforced. In order to provide a coherent framework for achieving these objectives and to get work underway as quickly as possible, an Action Programme is being undertaken, involving a range of measures to promote further improvement in private rented accommodation standards, including review of the regulations and more effective enforcement.

Action will be pursued in a strategic manner through a positive partnership approach in conjunction with local authorities and other relevant parties. This will entail a balanced programme of promotion, information, appropriate regulation and strategic enforcement. A key objective of the programme is to achieve a more effective approach to tackling sub-standard accommodation through a combination of improved resourcing, co-ordination, planning and prioritisation.

Continuation of policies to ensure an adequate level of new housing output and achieve supply/demand balance will also help to promote further improvement in standards both directly, through the addition of new stock to the sector and indirectly, by making it more difficult to let and retain tenants in sub-standard accommodation.

Details of the main measures that are being taken are summarised in this leaflet. I am confident that, through effective action on the part of the various agencies involved, remaining problems with standards of rented accommodation can be largely eliminated in a relatively short time.



Noel Ahern, T.D.,

Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal

ACTION ON PRIVATE RENTED STANDARDS: MAIN FEATURES

Regulation

- A general review of the content of the standards regulations with a view to updating them will start later in 2006. This will be carried out in consultation with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), local authorities and other relevant interests.
- The operation of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 will, increasingly, help in addressing problems relating to accommodation standards in a number of ways, including:
 - major increase in tenancy registration (currently around 115,000) which identifies rented premises for enforcement;
 - increased penalties for breach of the regulations (up to €3,000 or 6 months imprisonment, or both, and €250 per day for continuing offences);
 - clarification of legal responsibilities of landlords (repairs to the structure and maintenance of the interior of the dwelling) and tenants (to avoid causing or make good any damage beyond normal wear and tear); disputes relating to landlord or tenant obligations can be referred to the PRTB;
 - landlords prohibited from penalising tenants making complaints and greater security of tenure under the Act also makes tenants less vulnerable regarding complaints.

Resources and Enforcement

- Increased funding is being provided to local authorities from the proceeds of tenancy registration fees for enforcement of the regulations. €1.6m was allocated in 2005 for this purpose in accordance with the number of registered tenancies in each area and it is intended to provide increased funding in 2006 and 2007. Interim payments totalling €1m will be made shortly.
- Housing authorities are being asked to prioritise action to improve enforcement of the regulations through a planned and strategic approach, focusing particularly on the accommodation most likely to be deficient, while avoiding, as far as possible, adverse impact on tenants in enforcement of the regulations. As a first step in a more planned approach, housing authorities will set targets for inspection of accommodation over the period to the end of 2007. Returns on inspection activity will, in future, be made on a quarterly basis. Future funding will be related to these returns.
- The inclusion of inspection of private rented dwellings among local authority service indicators is being considered.
- A scheme of tax relief for refurbishment of private rented accommodation, which has been in operation since 2001, will continue in full throughout 2006 and on a reducing basis up to the end of July 2008. The cost of repairs to private rented accommodation will continue to be fully tax-deductible on an ongoing basis. Local authorities and the PRTB are being asked to promote awareness of these reliefs.

Research, Information and Promotion

- The Centre for Housing Research will undertake a study of measures to promote improvement in private rented accommodation standards and develop good practice guidelines to assist housing authorities in their functions relating to the private rented sector with a view to achieving increased effectiveness, including more strategic and proactive approaches to enforcement.
- PRTB registration data will continue to be provided to local authorities to help in enforcing the standards regulations. Local authorities are encouraged to use proactively the additional data that are now available as a result of the large increase in tenancy registration with the PRTB.
- The PRTB, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, will provide increased public information on legal and other relevant aspects of private rented accommodation standards.

Co-ordination

- Opportunities to promote improvement in the quality and standards of private rented accommodation will continue to be pursued in the course of implementing the new Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).
- Regard will be had to compliance with the private rented accommodation standards regulations in the context of new applications for rent supplement under the Department of Social and Family Affairs Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) Scheme. Local authorities are being asked to notify the community welfare service where they encounter seriously sub-standard accommodation. Similarly, local authorities will be notified where it is considered, in the context of procedures relating to the DSFA rent supplement scheme, that accommodation may not be suitable in terms of standards.
- In addition to co-operation with relevant agencies such as the PRTB and the community welfare service, local authorities will co-ordinate, as appropriate, enforcement of the standards regulations and other local authority functions that may have a bearing on the standard or condition of accommodation or involve inspection of properties, either in the context of housing functions such as needs assessment and RAS, or other services.
- Any information regarding sub-standard accommodation obtained by the PRTB will be conveyed to the relevant housing authority.

APPENDIX 2

INCREMENTAL PURCHASE SCHEME

Background

The proposed 'incremental purchase' scheme for social housing tenants and prospective tenants is based on the development of the 'shared equity' concept whereby tenants would be allowed to use their rental payments to build up an equity stake in a local authority house in an incremental fashion in return for paying a premium on the rent and taking over responsibility for the maintenance of the dwelling. The objective is to make it possible for households with incomes substantially lower than for affordable housing to start on the path to home ownership.

Scope of Scheme

The new scheme will be made available to existing and prospective local authority tenants to purchase new local authority housing. New local authority tenants would be given the opportunity, subject to meeting certain conditions, to become incremental purchasers rather than tenants. This offer would be kept open for up to five years. Local authorities could set aside a certain number of new properties for existing tenants to avail of the scheme*.

Under the scheme participants would take out a mortgage for a stake in the property and would buy out the remaining equity stake, at a subsidised rate, over a period up to 40 years. Flexibility is built in to allow for different mixes of repayment amounts and repayment periods.

The scheme would typically be applied to households due to be allocated local authority housing with incomes in the range €20,000 - €30,000. The typical repayment will be pitched at a point midway between what an individual would have to pay as a tenant under a differential rent and the cost of the house under an affordable scheme. The precise amount will depend on the particular mix of mortgage and repayment periods.

Objectives

The purpose of the scheme is to support existing low-income tenants and assist prospective local authority tenants make a start on the route to home ownership. The scheme is targeted at people that cannot afford to purchase a house but that have reasonable expectations for and the desire for home ownership in the future.

* Tenant purchase would remain an option for existing tenants in respect of their current properties .

Benefits of scheme

The potential benefits to this approach are that it:

- provides a means for low income households with aspirations for home ownership to take the initial step towards ownership and instead of renting from the housing authority use the payments as part contribution towards purchasing an equity stake,
- encourages long term commitment of the purchasers to the community without removing the option of selling if the purchaser so wishes,
- establishes from the outset an element of mixed tenure in a new estate and reduces the number of single tenure local authority estates,
- builds up a sense of ownership and responsibility for the management and maintenance of property from those participating in the scheme,
- removes responsibility from the housing authority for maintenance of the dwelling,
- provides a greater volume of social housing output for a defined level of investment, and
- provides an effective means of savings for low income families.

From the applicant's perspective the attraction over the existing tenant purchase scheme is that s/he can start on the road to home ownership much earlier thus helping to protect against house prices rising faster than incomes. At the same time the purchaser is able to convert her/his rent into payments for equity share, an effective way to increase savings. The tenant can generally undertake repairs and improvements works more effectively and cheaply than the housing authority. And finally, the purchaser can have a greater say in the initial fit out of the dwelling that is being purchased.

APPENDIX 3

GRANTS TO ADAPT HOUSING FOR THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Mobility Aids Grant Scheme

This new scheme will provide grants to cover a basic suite of works to address mobility problems, primarily but not exclusively, associated with ageing. It will fast track limited grant aid to people on lower incomes (maximum annual household income threshold €30,000). The maximum grant available will be €6,000 and may cover 100% of the cost of works.

Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability;

This scheme will assist in the provision/adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability who are not covered by the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme.

The current grant for people with a disability will be increased from the current effective maximum of €20,320 to a maximum of €30,000 and may cover up to 95% of the cost of works. Prioritisation of eligibility for the Housing Grant for People with a Disability will be on the basis of medical and financial need with 95% of the approved cost of work available to those with annual household incomes of less than €30,000, tapering to 30% for those with annual household incomes of €54,001 to €65,000.

It is intended that in due course a graduated claw-back provision will apply where grant aid is in respect of the provision of an extension and the house is sold within a period of 5 years with 85% of the grant to be repayable if sold after one year to 20% in year 5.

The Housing Adaptation Grant for New Houses for People with a Disability* will be increased from the current effective maximum of €12,700 in each individual case to a maximum of €14,500.

* This grant is available to adapt a house to meet the accommodation needs of a Person with a Disability within the first year of the house's completion.

Housing Aid for Older People

This new scheme will amalgamate the existing Essential Repairs and Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Schemes. The aim of the scheme is to make habitable the homes of older people. The maximum grant available will be €10,500 and may cover 100% of the cost of works for applicants with an annual household income of less than €30,000, tapering to 30% for those with annual household incomes of €54,001 to €65,000.

Administration of the revised schemes

All applications for support will be made to local authorities. The recoupment level to local authorities in respect of these grants will be increased from the current two-thirds to 80%. The maximum grant levels will increase in line with the building cost index on an annual basis.

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure maximum co-operation between local authorities and the HSE in dealing with cases requiring medical / occupational therapy input.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AHP	The Affordable Homes Partnership was established to co-ordinate and promote the delivery of affordable homes in the Greater Dublin Area. It provides services on behalf of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Local Authorities in the Greater Dublin Area - Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. www.affordablehomes.ie .
CDBs	County/City Development Boards: established in 2000 in each of the 34 county and city areas to co-ordinate and support a more integrated approach to service delivery at local level.
CHR	The Centre for Housing Research is a joint initiative between the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, local authorities and the voluntary and co-operative housing sector. The overall purpose of the Centre is to facilitate the improved management of the public and social housing sector. www.chr.ie .
CSO	Central Statistics Office. www.cso.ie .
DoEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
Housing Action Plans	Multi-annual plans for social and affordable housing introduced in 2004, and developed at county/city level. The current five year plans run to end 2008.
Housing Authorities	Local authorities assigned housing functions under the Housing Acts.
Housing Finance Agency	The Housing Finance Agency provides loan finance to support local authorities and the voluntary and co-operative housing sector in the delivery of social and affordable housing. www.hfa.ie .
Housing Forum	Forum chaired by Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, with membership drawn from government departments, housing providers and social partners. Provides a means for social partners to input to housing policy development.

Housing Providers	Housing authorities (local authorities) and Voluntary and Co-operative Housing Sector.
Housing Strategies	Under the terms of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006, each local authority is required to include within their development plan a housing strategy. Each strategy must contain measures that address the housing needs of the existing and future population in the area of the development plan.
NBA	National Building Agency. This agency provides consultancy services to local authorities in the provision of social and affordable housing. www.nba.ie
NESC	National Economic and Social Council.
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum.
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NTACC	National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee: The Committee was established, on a statutory basis, in April, 1999 under the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 to advise the Minister in relation to any general matter concerning accommodation for Travellers and any matter referred to it by the Minister.
PART V	Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006.
PRTB	Private Rented Tenancies Board. The PRTB was established in September 2004 to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants, operate a national tenancy registration system and provide information and policy advice on the private rented sector. The PRTB dispute resolution service replaces the courts in relation to the majority of landlord and tenant disputes. www.prtb.ie .
RAPID	The Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) Programme was launched in February 2001 in order to direct State assistance towards improving quality of life and access to opportunities for communities in 25 designated disadvantaged urban areas throughout Ireland. A year later, the second strand of the programme extended its coverage to a further 20 provincial towns. The RAPID programme targets Exchequer funding

as a priority to the designated areas. The areas were designated on the basis of disadvantaged using the Trutz Haase Deprivation Index, supported by data relating to location of significant rented local authority housing, and schools designated as disadvantaged by the Department of Education and Science. The Programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to the areas designated by focusing State resources available under the National Development Plan. The Programme also requires the Government Departments and State Agencies to bring about better co-ordination and closer integration in the delivery of services.

RAS

Rental Accommodation Scheme: This scheme which commenced in 2005, requires local authorities to source accommodation in the private rented sector to meet the long-term housing needs of households dependent on rent supplement.

**Working Group on
Voluntary and Co-
Operative Sector**

The Working Group was established with a view to facilitating the development of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector. It comprises representatives of the sector, local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Statement of Strategy 2005-2008, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- ² EU Ministerial Informal on Sustainable Communities, UK Presidency, Policy Papers, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, March 2006.
- ³ Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 (2006).
- ⁴ Irish National Survey of Housing Quality 2001-2002 (ESRI) and European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - European Quality of Life Survey, 2003.
- ⁵ National Economic and Social Council Report no 112: Housing in Ireland, Policy and Performance (2004).
- ⁶ Towards 2016: Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015 (2006).
- ⁷ National Economic and Social Council Report no 112: Housing in Ireland, Policy and Performance (2004).
- ⁸ CSO Census 2002.
- ⁹ National Economic and Social Council, Report No. 113: Developmental Welfare Estate (2005).
- ¹⁰ National Economic and Social Forum, Improving the delivery of quality public services (2006).
- ¹¹ Irish National Survey of Housing Quality 2001-2002 (ESRI) and European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - European Quality of Life Survey, 2003.
- ¹² CSO Census 2002.
- ¹³ CSO data on private households by size.
- ¹⁴ Ex Ante Evaluation of the Investment Priorities for the National Development Plan 2007-2013 (ESRI 2006), Central forecast of housing demand in 2020 Vision: Ireland's Demographic Dividend (NCB 2006).
- ¹⁵ National Economic and Social Council Report No. 112: Housing in Ireland, Policy and Performance (2004).
- ¹⁶ National Economic and Social Council, Report No. 113: Developmental Welfare Estate (2005).
- ¹⁷ National Economic and Social Council Report no 114: NESC Strategy 2007- People, productivity and purpose (2005).
- ¹⁸ Housing Act, 1988.

- ¹⁹Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin for 2005, DoEHLG 2006 (www.environ.ie).
- ²⁰EU Ministerial Informal on Sustainable Communities, UK Presidency, Policy Papers, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, March 2006.
- ²¹National Economic and Social Council Report No. 112: Housing in Ireland, Policy and Performance (2004).
- ²²Transport 21 (2005). See www.transport.ie
- ²³National Economic and Social Council Report No. 115: Migration Policy (2006).
- ²⁴Consultation Paper: Multi-Unit Developments. Law Reform Commission (2006).
- ²⁵Design Review. How CABE evaluates quality in architecture and urban design (2006).
- ²⁶Social Housing in Ireland, A Study of Success, Failure and Lessons learnt - T. Fahey 1999.
- ²⁷A Plan for Social Housing (1991); Social Housing - the way ahead (1995).
- ²⁸Irish National Survey of Housing Quality 2001-2002 (ESRI)
- ²⁹Housing Policy Discussion Series no 1 - Regenerating local authority housing estates- review of policy and practice - Centre for Housing Research (2006).
- ³⁰Forfas - Implementing the NSS: Gateway Investment Priorities Study (2006).
- ³¹Good Practice in Housing Management Guidelines for local authorities: Regenerating Estates, Rebuilding Vibrant Communities: Centre for Housing Research, (2006).
- ³²Local authority housing - review of assessment and allocation system, R. Dunn (2005).
- ³³National Economic and Social Council Report no. 112: Housing in Ireland, Policy and Performance (2004).
- ³⁴Fitzpatrick's Associates for Department of the Taoiseach (2006).

We wish to acknowledge our thanks to Cork County Council, Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Offaly County Council, Galway City Council, Waterford City Council, Wicklow County Council, South Dublin County Council, RIAI (The New Housing and Architecture Ireland), The Dublin Docklands Development Authority, The Affordable Home Partnership and the Irish Council for Social Housing for the use of images in this publication.



AN ROINN COMHSHAOIL, ODHREACHTA AGUS RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT,
HERITAGE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

GENERAL CONTACTS:

Main Department Numbers:

LoCall 1890 20 20 21 or 01 888 2000

General Queries:

Tel: 01- 8882638

Website: www.environ.ie

Design: www.principle.ie

