



To: Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Kilkenny County Council

**Re: Homeless Services Policy Document
Own Front Door Procedure**

Date: 8th November 2021

A Chara

Kilkenny County Council and other statutory agencies work together to provide appropriate accommodation and supports for homeless persons.

The purpose of this Homeless Services Policy Document and Own Front Door Procedure is to provide persons who find themselves homeless with a clear understanding of the services provided by the Council in terms of Emergency Accommodation and the support they will receive in terms of exiting homelessness.

These policies were prepared in collaboration with Kilkenny Homeless Action Team and were presented to SPC 3 Housing on 21st October 2021.

I recommend adoption of the Homeless Services Policy and Own Front Door Procedure.



Michael Leahy
Senior Executive Officer
Housing Dept.



KILKENNY HOMELESS SERVICES POLICY

INTRODUCTION:

Homeless Services in Kilkenny are co-ordinated by Kilkenny Homeless Action Team (KHAT). This **Homeless Services Policy Document** is part of their ongoing commitment to providing a quality homeless service to those in need with the purpose to ensure that responses to needs of households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are comprehensive, coherent and effective.

Kilkenny County Council, together with AMBER Women's Refuge CLG, An Garda Síochána, Department of Social Protection, Focus Ireland, Good Shepherd Centre Kilkenny, HSE Adult Mental Health Services, HSE Community Addiction Services (Ardú), St. Vincent de Paul and TUSLA Aftercare Services constitute the membership of KHAT. Formed in 2007, this interagency team is managed by Kilkenny County Council.

KHAT is committed to working together to provide a range of services to address homelessness across Kilkenny. The principle aim of KHAT is to work in partnership to *'develop and enhance the delivery of Homeless Services, in an integrated, efficient and effective way'*, with a key objective to assist homeless persons to secure their own homes as quickly as possible. KHAT meet weekly to co-ordinate an inter-agency response to the support needs and case management of homeless people and individuals at risk of becoming homeless.

WHAT IS HOMELESSNESS:

The legal definition of homeless in Ireland is set out in the Housing Act 1988. This states that you are considered homeless if:

- There is no accommodation available that, in the opinion of the local authority, you and any other person who normally lives with you or who might reasonably be expected to live with you, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
- You are living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and you are living there because you have no suitable accommodation or
- You are, in the opinion of the local authority, unable to provide accommodation from your own resources

Homelessness can be categorised under the following four categories:

1. Roofless - without shelter, sleeping rough
2. Houseless - living in emergency accommodation
3. Insecure accommodation - threatened with eviction due to insecurity e.g. Notice to Quit
4. Inadequate accommodation - extreme overcrowding, unfit housing

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK & NATIONAL POLICY:

Homeless services are guided by legislation and government policy as follows:

- Housing Acts 1966 – 2014 and as amended
- Health Act 1953
- Child Care Act 1991
- Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019
- Housing for All [July 2021]
- Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness [July 2016]
- Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to assisting victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency & Long-Term Accommodation Needs [2017]
- Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care: Circular Housing 46/2014
- Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021
- National Drugs Strategy: Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025
- Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone [2020]
- The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness in Ireland 2008-2013

REGIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

At regional and local level, the following guide Homeless Services delivery

- South East Regional Homeless Plan
- Kilkenny Homeless Action Team Memorandum of Understanding
- Kilkenny County Council Safeguarding Children Policy
- Kilkenny County Council Scheme of Letting Priorities
- Kilkenny County Council Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2020 -2025

KILKENNY HOMELESS SERVICES:

Kilkenny Homeless Services drives a person-centred housing led approach to homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness, in line with national and regional policy. A key focus is on early and effective interventions where homelessness occurs or where there is substantial risk of homelessness occurring.

It is recognised that services for homeless people must be well organised, coordinated and integrated. This work is carried out through four main areas of operation

- i) Prevention - providing early intervention to people at risk of homelessness.
- ii) Protection - protecting people experiencing homelessness through emergency accommodation provision and targeted support
- iii) Progression - identifying and enabling pathways to long term housing solutions
- iv) Proper Governance and Financial Oversight - ensuring that appropriate governance and accountable structures are in place for all service providers

Kilkenny Homeless Service work to prevent people becoming homeless where possible. For those experiencing homelessness, supports are put in place to move people through emergency accommodation with the necessary health and support services towards a sustained exit from homelessness.

As part of the ongoing commitment to improving service provision to those homeless or at-risk of homelessness, greater emphasis is now being placed on homeless prevention and intervention by providing dedicated resources to achieving same.

Homeless Prevention and Support work allows a dedicated resource to be made available to support those at risk of homelessness in addressing the root of the risk and linking in with necessary supports to provide the intervention necessary to address the issues and avoid becoming homeless.

The HAP Place Finder Service will provide a range of supports for those linked in with Kilkenny Homeless Services and qualified for social housing supports with Kilkenny County Council

- 1) Help with sourcing a tenancy under the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme,
- 2) Provision of Homeless HAP scheme. This is a specific scheme available to homeless households. This Homeless HAP scheme provides additional financial and related supports to tenants and landlords, along with all of the benefits of the national HAP scheme.
- 3) The HAP Place Finder Service in addition liaises on an ongoing basis with Kilkenny County Council Allocations and Rental Accommodation Scheme teams in terms of linking social housing applicants at risk of homelessness with potential allocations.

EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT SERVICES IN KILKENNY:

Homeless Services Provision is categorised under 5 headings

1. Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA)
2. Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA)
3. Long Term Supported Accommodation (LTA)
4. Visiting Tenancy Support & Sustainment Services (TSS)
5. Housing First Services (HF)

The following services are provided in Kilkenny:

Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) [40 emergency beds¹]

Men:

- Emergency Accommodation for men is provided at the Good Shepherd Centre. Currently 20 emergency hostel beds are provided. If no vacancy exists at the time of presentation efforts will be made to source emergency accommodation outside of the County. A waiting list will apply if no immediate vacancy exists.
- Transitional units are provided for men in Paddy Kelly Apartments, Good Shepherd Centre. Currently there are 8 apartments (one of which is a double) for men.

Women:

Emergency Accommodation is provided for single women / families as follows:

- Emergency beds are provided in a designated hotel in Kilkenny. Currently 3 emergency rooms are provided.
- Transitional units are provided for women / couples in Paddy Kelly Apartments, Good Shepherd Centre. There are 4 dedicated apartments provided for this cohort.

Domestic Violence Emergency Accommodation:

Amber Women's Refuge provide safe, short-term emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence. The refuge has seven units and can cater for seven women and up to twenty-three children at any time.

Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA) / Own Front Door (OFD) Units:

Temporary Emergency accommodation for single women will be provided at 5 self-contained transitional units of accommodation at Greensbridge, Kilkenny.

Kilkenny County Council in conjunction with Kilkenny Voluntary Housing Association under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), has provided alternative Own Front Door accommodation for persons presenting as homeless. Currently there are 7 properties

¹ Ambers Women's Refuge accommodation not included in this figure.

available throughout the city catering for up to 10 people. One of these properties is a family unit.

Families: A minimum of 2 self-contained family units are required within the city environs. It is hoped to continue to increase the number of Own Front Door properties which will assist in reducing current reliance on Hotel Emergency Accommodation for women and families presenting as homeless.

Long Term Supported Accommodation (LTA):

Kilkenny County Council is actively engaged with The Good Shepherd Centre under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), to provide accommodation for persons in Homeless Services. Currently 8 units are provided in Brother Thomas Place, Good Shepherd Centre for single men. A further 12 units are under construction.

Kilkenny County Council is also actively engaged with Approved Housing Bodies under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), to provide accommodation for persons in priority groups including Homeless Persons.

Visiting Tenancy Support & Sustainment Services (TSS)

Tenancy Support and Sustainment Services consist of a range of supports using a case management model to help the household maintain their tenancy and prevent homelessness. Supports include practical home management, addressing anti-social behaviour, assisting with behavioural issues, mental health/healthcare needs and building links with community and social networks in the local area.

Housing First Services (HF)

The Housing First Programme offers the provision of immediate, permanent and affordable housing to tackle homelessness, and then provides the appropriate wraparound housing, health supports and connections to community-based supports, to ensure people maintain their housing and improve their overall health and well-being. It is aimed at people who have been rough sleeping, and long-term users of emergency hostels and shelters, with high needs around mental health and addiction.

Homeless individuals are provided with a stable secure home of their own as quickly as possible in order to effectively provide them with personalised housing and health supports. The wrap-around services, which are provided for as long as needed, help people stay housed and support them in their recovery. In the current programme in Kilkenny twelve tenants are being supported.

HOMELESS PRESENTATION:

Homeless Services Clinic (for presentations): Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm daily
[by appointment during COVID 19 Restrictions]

Tel: 056 7794900 Email address: homelesservices@kilkennycoco.ie

Kilkenny County Council Homeless Services
Johns Green House
Johns Green
Kilkenny.

Out of Hours Homeless Services by contacting:

Tel: 056 7722566 Email address: info@thegoodshepherdcentrekilkenny.ie

Good Shepherd Centre
Church Lane
Kilkenny.

Persons presenting as homeless / at risk of homelessness will undergo a comprehensive homeless services eligibility assessment where;

- a) They can demonstrate that their permanent place of residence is Kilkenny City/County and any of the following
- b) They are approved social housing applicants with Kilkenny County Council
- c) They have been in receipt of social housing supports including Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) /Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) in Kilkenny
- d) They are in receipt of a payment in Kilkenny from Department of Social Protection
- e) They are in possession of a valid Notice of Termination
- f) They are in possession of a valid repossession order from their bank

Having met the above eligibility criteria, persons will only be considered for emergency accommodation if they

- can demonstrate that they have exhausted all other accommodation options without success
- have not made themselves intentionally homeless
- have no rent arrears in their previous accommodation (except where payment plan is in place and is being adhered to for a 12-month period)
- have not been evicted from their previous accommodation due to anti-social behaviour (ASB). Where eviction for ASB applies access to Social Housing Support is removed for a two-year period as per Kilkenny County Council Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

- have not been evicted from their previous accommodation due to non-payment of rent. Where eviction for non-payment of rent applies, access to Social Housing Support is suspended for a two-year period.
- have not surrendered a social housing tenancy. Voluntary surrender of a social housing tenancy suspends access to Social Housing Support for a one-year period as per Kilkenny County Council Scheme of Letting Policy.
- have not abandoned a social housing tenancy. Abandoning a Social Housing Tenancy suspends access to Social Housing Support for a five-year period as per Kilkenny County Council Scheme of Letting Policy.
- can prove that there is inadequate room in the family home.
- as a family unit, can provide evidence that they have resided together for a minimum period of six months prior to date of presentation.
- as a young person (18-21 years old) presenting to Homeless Services from the family home, are accompanied by a parent to discuss the reasons why they cannot remain at home, and are willing to engage with supports offered to resolve presenting difficulties.

NOTE:

1. Anyone presenting to homeless services from a family home must be accompanied by one of the main householders to discuss the reasons why they cannot remain in the family home. All efforts will be made to support the person to remain in the family home. This may not be appropriate in cases of domestic violence.
2. In instances where women and children are presenting as homeless / at risk of homelessness for reasons of domestic violence in the home environment, presentation must be to AMBER Women's Refuge who will assess the presenter accordingly.
3. In instances where men are presenting as homeless / at risk of homelessness for reasons of domestic violence in the home environment they as a first point of contact will be directed to the following for advice and support:
 - AnyMan (For men experiencing Domestic Violence) - 01 5543811
 - Male Advice Line (For men experiencing Domestic Violence) - 1800 816 588

Where a person is deemed not eligible for a Homeless Service in Kilkenny every effort will be made to refer the person to the appropriate support and services to meet their need.

CONDITIONS OF STAY IN SUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (STA) & TEMPORARY EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION (TEA):

Where a person is provided with STA or TEA Emergency Accommodation the following conditions will apply:

- Persons will agree to terms and conditions of contract /licence /tenancy agreement.
- All Emergency Accommodation Service Users in Supported Accommodation (STA) are appointed a Key Worker who provide care and case management and supports the Service User towards a sustainable exit plan out of homelessness.
- Those Service Users in Unsupported Emergency Accommodation will be supported by the Kilkenny County Council Homeless and Prevention Support Worker / Kilkenny Voluntary Housing Association Tenancy Support Team who will provide care and case management to the service user and support them in their plans to exit homelessness.
- Service Users will agree to engage with their key/support worker and the appropriate support services as identified as part of their care and case management. They must provide evidence of same.
- STA / TEA Emergency Accommodation will cease if a valid offer of accommodation is refused². (In making an offer, all reasonable efforts will be made by Kilkenny County Council to ensure that the accommodation meets the needs of the individual/family)
- Service Users will demonstrate that they are actively seeking alternative accommodation.
- STA / TEA Emergency accommodation will be withdrawn if engagement is not demonstrated.
- If STA / TEA Emergency Accommodation is withdrawn due to non-compliance with terms and conditions, no alternative accommodation will be provided. Outreach community support services will continue to be made available.

² A reasonable offer is one that is made to Homeless clients in emergency accommodation and, where possible, is in accordance with the applicants chosen area of preference (up to 3 areas) or within close proximity to same. A reasonable offer may include an offer of any of the social housing supports, for example, TEA, LTA, RAS, HAP, Leasing, LA, AHB Accommodation.

There are occasions where Kilkenny County Council will make a reasonable offer of accommodation to relieve the reliance on emergency accommodation outside of the client's area of preference. In this case, the Grounds for Refusal may include the following: a) No available private or public transport; b) Where transport is available however, the cost, frequency etc is prohibitive; c) Is not within a reasonable distance to children's schools; d) Special case for family support (on compassionate grounds); e) Special documented medical grounds

INTER-AGENCY PROTOCOLS IN PLACE: (attached)

The following protocols / procedures are currently in place to support a more coordinated and integrated delivery of service to the service user.

- Discharge Hospital Protocol for Acute and Mental Health Services for Homeless Persons.
- Inter-Agency Arrangements regarding the release and accommodation of Prisoners into Homeless Services
- Inter-Agency Arrangements regarding the release and accommodation of sex offenders
- Protocol to Prevent Homelessness for those leaving Mental Health Hospitals / Residential Facilities
- Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to assisting victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency & Long-Term Accommodation Needs
- Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care: Circular Housing 46/2014
- Kilkenny Homeless Services Referral Process
- Own Front Door Temporary Transitional Accommodation Procedure
- Extreme Weather Protocol

SUPPORT SERVICES TO EXIT HOMELESSNESS, TO INCLUDE:

- Tenancy Advice and Information Support from Focus Ireland
- Referral to appropriate Support Services.
- Access to private rented accommodation via HAP scheme
- Social Housing Options - Local Authority / RAS / HAP / AHB Social Housing
- HAP Place Finders Service
- Housing First when applicable