

SOUTH WESTERN AREA HEALTH BOARD

Report No. 6/2002

Board Meeting – 9th April 2002

Services For Adult Homeless People In The South Western Area Health Board

DRAFT STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

1. Homelessness - An Integrated Strategy

The Government's policy document on adult homelessness – *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy* – was published in May 2000. This sets out an inter-agency approach to tackling the problems of adult homelessness in a co-ordinated manner. The strategy recognises that a solution to homelessness is not just about the provision of housing or shelter and that there is a need for a comprehensive approach involving health, care and welfare, education, training and support, as well as accommodation, to enable homeless people to re-integrate into society and to prevent others from becoming homeless.

The strategy also clarifies the responsibilities of health boards and local authorities. Local authorities have responsibility for the provision of accommodation for homeless adults and health boards are responsible for the health and care needs of homeless adults.

The Strategy incorporates the report on homelessness of the former Eastern Health Board in 1999 that, inter alia, recommended the establishment of multi-disciplinary outreach primary health care teams.

2. Shaping the Future - An Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2001-2003

This plan was jointly prepared by the local authorities, the health boards and the voluntary sector in the Eastern region in response to the Government Strategy. It highlights the need for an integrated and comprehensive approach to the problems of adult homelessness in the region. There is a section on health services that sets out specific actions to address the problems homeless people have in effectively accessing the health services. There are also specific actions in relation to the prevention of homelessness and the development of a health promotion strategy.

3. *Homeless Preventative Strategy - February 2002*

This document outlines strategies to prevent homelessness among patients leaving hospital and mental health care; young people leaving care; adult prisoners and young offenders leaving custody, and people leaving the educational system at an early age. Specifically it places a requirement on acute hospitals and psychiatric hospitals/units to have a formal and written admission and discharge policy and to liaise closely with homeless service providers and the multi-disciplinary teams.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM FOR SOUTH WESTERN AREA HEALTH BOARD

Currently there is one multi-disciplinary primary care team covering all of the city. By mid-2002 there will be separate teams, one of which will cover the city south of the Liffey. This will provide a health service for rough sleepers and for those in emergency accommodation, with a particular emphasis on linking those with multiple needs into the appropriate health services.

In conjunction with these teams, health clinics are being developed in centres that provide homeless services – both night shelters and day services. These will provide G.P. services, nursing, chiropody, counselling and other health and welfare services. A dedicated dental service for homeless people will be based in Fáiltiú, a day service for homeless people, located in Merchants Quay.

LOCAL RESPONSES

Contact has been made with Kildare Co. Council, Wicklow Co. Council and South Dublin County Council. Multi-agency teams will be established in each local authority area with representatives from the local authority, the health board and the voluntary sector. The immediate aim will be to establish drop-in centres in locations like Tallaght, Clondalkin and Kildare/West Wicklow to offer information, advice and placement in emergency accommodation to homeless people from these areas. At the same time it will be necessary to identify emergency accommodation at local level to ensure local homeless people are not placed in accommodation in the city centre. Meetings will take place with local health board personnel and training will be provided where necessary to ensure that local services provide the necessary health and welfare services to homeless people in their area.

HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

The South Western Area Health Board intends to deploy a Multi-disciplinary Psychiatric Team for homeless individuals during 2002. The outreach psychiatric team will consist of a Consultant Psychiatrist, a Non-Consultant Hospital Doctor, two Community Mental Health Nurses, one Senior Social Worker and one Grade III Administrative Support. The South Western Area Health Board are committed to

developing this service as a matter of priority given the particular needs of this vulnerable client group.

HOMELESS PEOPLE WITH AN ADDICTION PROBLEM

Discussions will take place between homeless services and addiction services to identify new and creative ways of delivering addiction services to people who are homeless. The aim will be to deliver this service in line with our policy of bringing health services to where the homeless go to avail of homeless services.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGY

In response to the recently published Homeless Preventative Strategy, discussions will take place over the coming months with hospitals, acute and psychiatric, and prisons, to ensure workable admission and discharge policies are in place and operational. There will also be close co-operation between the services for youth homeless and adult homeless to ensure young people leaving care do not fall through the net.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Training will be provided for staff in services for homeless people to better promote the health of homeless people. In addition, specific health promotion materials will be developed, in conjunction with the health promotion department, service users and service providers.

Hugh Kane
Assistant Chief Executive

9th April 2002

APPENDIX

ISSUES ARISING FROM BOARD MEETING OF 5TH FEBRUARY 2002

1. *Dublin City Council Night Bus*

Dublin City Council operates a night bus from 9.00 p.m. to 1.00 a.m. each night. The bus operates in the catchment area of the City Council. The purpose is to identify rough sleepers, to offer them any available emergency accommodation and where necessary to transport them to the accommodation. Each night the bus systematically visits the known places in the city centre where rough sleepers are likely to be. In addition, on request from the health board's Homeless Persons Unit or the various outreach teams, it will also visit other parts of the City Council area.

2. *Experience in Finland*

In 1987 Finland drew up a ten-year plan to eliminate homelessness. At the end of the ten-year period they had succeeded in halving the number of homeless people. A downturn in the economy contributed to the failure to reach the target. The methods used included a significant increase in the level of new housing provision for homeless people, improved housing allowances and a rent guarantee scheme. In the winter months, because of the very cold weather, all homeless people are collected from the streets each night and brought to shelters. As there are a number of similarities between the two countries – population, economy, levels of home ownership, etc. – a more detailed study of the methods used to tackle homelessness in Finland is warranted.

3. *Place of Origin of Newly Homeless People*

The previous address of people who presented as newly homeless to the Homeless Persons Unit during 2001 was noted. The following table gives a summary of the previous addresses:-

ADDRESS	NUMBER
Dublin City (By post code)	
Dublin 1	141
Dublin 2	29
Dublin 3	51
Dublin 4	30
Dublin 5	75
Dublin 6	57
Dublin 7	123
Dublin 8	148
Dublin 9	65

contd. /

ADDRESS	NUMBER
Dublin 10	70
Dublin 11	133
Dublin 12	86
Dublin 13	17
Dublin 14	13
Dublin 15	71
Dublin 16	11
Dublin 17	35
Dublin 18	11
Dublin 19	2
Dublin 20	10
Dublin 22	120
Dublin 24	126
Total Dublin City	1424
Dublin County (by H.B. area)	
E.C.A.H.B.	79
N.A.H.B.	31
S.W.A.H.B.	21
Dublin County unspecified	22
Total Dublin County	153
Kildare	31
Wicklow	18
Other Irish counties	132
Northern Ireland	30
U.K. (Exc. N.I.)	304
Other E.U. countries	16
Non-E.U. countries	13
Previous address unknown	290
Total Households	2411