

Action for Inclusion in Europe City Working Groups :

Homelessness and Destitution Amongst Excluded Migrants

Audit, Awareness and
Activation of Multiple
Exclusion Homeless (MEH)
Migrants in Dublin

Dáithí Downey
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Contextual Information

Since the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008 and subsequent to Ireland's economic bailout in 2010 by the EC/ECB/IMF 'troika' and accompanying economic management programme of fiscal adjustment (otherwise referred to as 'austerity measures'), Dublin in 2016 is the epicentre of a broadening and strengthening demand for homeless services and for access to emergency accommodation. While indicators of economic recovery in Ireland were nascent since 2014, the structural deficiencies in the Irish housing system related to housing supply, affordability and tenure are as yet unresolved and remain central to the dynamic of increasing homelessness in Irish society.

From 2010, the composition of the homeless population in Dublin began to change notably and became more stratified across different cohorts of service users including single adults with complex needs and families with child dependents. Among this population was a small but significant cohort of destitute migrants who were somewhat at 'arms' length' from Dublin's *Pathway to Home* model of service and experiencing 'multiple exclusion'.¹ Some had become established among the rough sleeping population, while others evidenced episodic patterns of use of emergency accommodation. All have challenges accessing Ireland's housing system since 2012 due to newly established criteria determining eligibility for social housing support in Ireland. This intersection between low income and precarious unemployment, insecure housing options and the limits to the forms of social protection available to immigrants in Ireland was the basis for a research publication by the DRHE in 2015.²

The research, together with evidence and advice from statutory and NGO service providers, helped inform a subsequent configuration of *Pathway to Home* services in the annual business plans adopted for homeless services in the Dublin region from 2013 onwards.³ A voluntary migrant reconnection programme for destitute Central and Eastern European (CEE) migrants was established and other resources were established *via* a dedicated homeless action team (HAT) for migrants.⁴ This helped improve the situation locally, as too did newly agreed national actions on access to health care and formal engagement with Ireland's Department of Justice and Equality on residency issues among rough

¹ Multiple exclusion homelessness (MEH) is a term used to describe the incidence of homelessness for people experiencing 'deep social exclusion' with distinct routes into homelessness and requiring special considerations regarding solutions to their problems. Deep social exclusion may arise as a result of having experienced institutional care (prison, social care, acute hospital settings, mental health care), substance misuse and street culture activities (begging, street drinking, sex work, shoplifting). See: Fitzpatrick, S, Johnsen, S and Bramley, G (2012) 'Multiple exclusion homelessness amongst migrants in the UK', *European Journal of Homelessness* 6 (1); Price, J (2015) *Homelessness and Destitution among Excluded Migrants: review of the evidence*, Information resource for *Action for Inclusion in Europe – Homelessness and Destitution amongst Excluded Migrants*, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford, 58 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX26QS, England.

² See here for copy: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/publications?sort=year,DESC&page=2>.

³ See here for details: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/dublin-homeless-action-plan> Dublin has a statutory triennial homeless action plan adopted by each of the four local authorities under the provisions of Chapter 6 of the Housing Act, 2009. Furthermore, the Dublin region has a Joint Dublin Homeless Consultative Forum comprising members of statutory and NGO/ Voluntary sector service providers. It advises the Statutory Management Group on implementation of the annual business plans adopted under the statutory homeless action plan.

⁴ See here for details: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/new-communities-risk-becoming-homeless>.

sleepers that were proposed and adopted in the *Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness* (May 2014 to December 2016).⁵

Additionally, Dublin's local authorities ensured greater access to emergency accommodation for destitute migrants within Dublin's policy-bounded model of service where the key objective is to eliminate long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.⁶ A decrease in the number of migrants engaged in persistent rough sleeping occurred over the period to 2016.⁷ However, notwithstanding that the extent of migrant homelessness has declined somewhat, the challenge of meeting the needs of migrants experiencing 'multiple exclusion homelessness' (MEH) in Dublin remains outstanding. This is particularly so given the changing nature of the extent and experience of homelessness where the priority focus of policy is shifting again, this time in response to the growing crisis of family homelessness in Dublin.

Crisis homelessness is growing among greater numbers of precariously employed and low-income renter family households experiencing increased housing stress and housing insecurity in Dublin. Housing stress increased due to high rates of unregulated rent inflation over the period since 2010, particularly in the Dublin region where the cost of renting a home is now marginally higher than the previous peak recorded prior to the GFC in 2007.⁸ Rent inflation is impacting most severely on lower income and welfare-dependent households in receipt of a formal state subvention to their income to support the costs of their rent⁹. DRHE monitoring confirms a significant proportion of family households identify tenure insecurity as the reason for their homelessness (see Table 1).¹⁰

⁵ See here for details: <http://www.environ.ie/housing/homelessness/implementation-plan-states-response-homelessness-may-2014-december-2016> Dublin City Council and the DRHE are members of the National Homeless Policy Implementation Team since 2014.

⁶ Under a protocol agreement with central government that sets out the primary policy objective of eliminating long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough, Dublin City Council is the lead statutory authority for homelessness in the Dublin region. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) is a specialist unit established under the provisions of Chapter 6, 2009 Housing Act and is provided by Dublin City Council (DCC) as the lead statutory authority on homelessness and housing services for Dublin. DRHE operates a shared-service and support unit for local government and the Health Service Executive (HSE) in Dublin and is responsible for the development, management and co-ordination of homeless and housing support services in the region. DRHE supports the work of the Dublin Joint Homeless Consultative Forum and the Dublin Statutory Management Group on Homelessness (comprised of the Dublin local authorities, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and is responsible for the preparation of a statutory Homeless Action Plan for Dublin for adoption by Dublin's local authorities. Under the established *Pathway to Home* service model for Dublin, the DRHE allocates Section 10 funding for the provision of emergency accommodation and services to homeless households in Dublin⁶. Funding is from three primary sources, namely the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG), the four Dublin local authorities and the Health Service Executive (HSE). Quarterly Financial Reports on Section 10 related expenditure across Dublin's *Pathway to Home* model of services is published here: <http://www.environ.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

⁷ See here for details: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/rough-sleeping-count> and <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/number-of-rough-sleepers-in-dublin-up-12-since-november-1.2633628>.

⁸ Regular market data trends for the Irish private rented sector are produced by a leading estate agency and are available here <http://www.daft.ie/report>; a rent index based on the legal register of tenancies is produced by the statutory residential tenancies board and is available here: <http://www.prtb.ie/landlords/rent-index-dec-2014>.

⁹ The payment rates for this subvention – known as Rent Supplement (RS) – have previously been cut and remain frozen since 2013 under the last period of austerity budgets in Ireland. New eligibility criteria have also been introduced that restrict access to the subvention.

¹⁰ Over 80% of persons report one of these three categories as their primary reason for homelessness. The majority have left private rented accommodation prior to presentation to homeless services, but a significant number moved back in with family/friends in an attempt to manage their situation before presenting to homeless services.

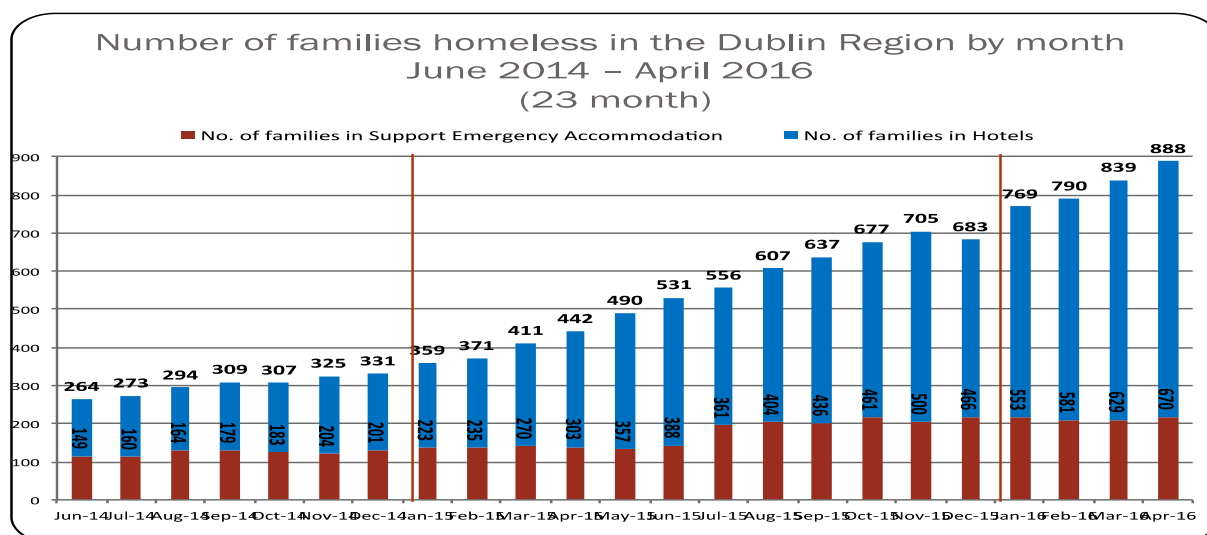
Table 1: Reasons for family homelessness: 3 Month Comparison

	Aug 2015	Sept 2015	Jan 2016
Notice to Quit	41% *	54%	35%
Overcrowding	12%	9%	11%
Relationship Breakdown	28%	27%	37%

Source: DRHE

In April 2015, the total population living in some form of homeless emergency accommodation in Dublin was 3,077 persons (comprising 2,107 adults and 970 child dependents). By April 2016, this total population in emergency accommodation in Dublin was 4,592 persons (comprising 2,806 adults and 1,786 child dependents). This increase would have been even greater had Dublin not secured 1,059 new tenancies in 2015 for households exiting homelessness. Such is the demand for emergency accommodation that Dublin has had no choice but to rely on commercial hotel provision *in lieu* of access to commissioned emergency accommodation services. Figure 1 below gives more details.

Figure 1



Notably, since monitoring began the number of homeless families in emergency accommodation identified as migrant nationals has grown. Current estimates suggest between 30 and 40 percent of the 888 homeless families in emergency accommodation (May, 2016) are identified as migrants. Detailed research will be required to further investigate and confirm this estimate and the characteristics of this cohort of service users.

Post the Irish general election of April 2016, the national coalition minority government has begun to recognise the cumulative effect of unresolved structural deficiencies in Irish housing. A new Ministry for Housing, Planning and Local Government has been formed with Mr Simon Coveney, TD appointed as a dedicated cabinet Minister for Housing. The new Minister for Housing is preparing a national *Action Plan on Housing* due for publication by end of July 2016 that will recognise how Irish housing is now considered a ‘national emergency’ due to chronic supply-side deficits, inter-tenurial affordability problems and growing insecurity of tenure in both rental and owner occupied tenures.

Since the initiation of Dublin's *Action Plan for Inclusion of Multiple Exclusion Homeless (MEH) Migrants* - when the majority of MEH migrants experiencing homelessness were understood to be mostly using emergency accommodation in an episodic manner and also engaging in periodic episodes of rough sleeping - there has been a substantial and qualitative change in context as more migrant families have entered homelessness. The policy responses to the demands of family homelessness are different again and are increasingly politicised and subject to increased public attention in the post-election 2016 period. It is reasonable to note how a competition of 'homeless priorities' is now underway among homeless advocate groups and NGO service providers. This is reflected in the evidence and submissions made to the recently established all-party Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness.¹¹ This may likely lead to central government policy decision makers to prioritise family homelessness issues over the experiences of single, adult MEH migrants.

Brief Description of Action Plan

Finding routes into employment for the 'multiple-excluded homeless' is the basis of Dublin's action plan. The basic idea is for a change of focus from 'multiple exclusion' to inclusion of migrants experiencing homelessness *via* greater participation, training and awareness and labour market activation and thereby establishing a broader understanding of policy challenges at play.

The plan includes an audit of data available to Dublin City Council to build evidence on multiple-excluded homeless (MEH) migrants in the city, including the extent and experiences of MEH amongst Dublin's migrant population. This has required a primary research project to enumerate the extent of homelessness among migrants in Dublin.

Secondly, the action plan involves the establishment of a coordination group for MEH migrants in the Dublin region to generate proposals for a new, dedicated training programme, which will be for homeless service providers to support MEH migrants into the labour market. This programme will be informed by evidence collated during the project around interventions that can help improve labour market activation and participation among MEH migrants and will aim to improve understanding of MEH and diversity awareness among homeless service providers. The central government Department of Social Protection are to be represented on the group as well as other relevant statutory stakeholders represented on Dublin's Joint Homelessness Consultative Forum.

Thirdly, all these objectives will be included in the newly developed and adopted *Dublin Integration Action Plan 2016-2020*¹² and will allow for future planning for actions for inclusion of migrants experiencing homelessness in the forthcoming statutory homeless action plan for the Dublin region for 2017 to 2020.

How was this initiative different from what was done previously?

The primary difference with what was done previously has been the engagement with a broader range of stakeholders outside the homelessness sector in general and including other functions of local

¹¹ http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/oireachtasbusiness/committees_list/housing-homelessness/.

¹² Details to follow.

government. This has allowed the issues of homelessness to also be understood as challenges for the city's Integration Strategy.

Objectives

1. To conduct an audit of all relevant local authority administrative datasets to test for data that will profile the known extent of MEH migrants in Dublin and to confirm its reliability. Secondly, to prepare and pilot a survey instrument to enumerate all migrants using Dublin's homeless services and then conduct primary survey research using a snowballing sampling methodology that seeks to include migrants experiencing and at risk of homelessness for a defined reference period in 2016.
2. To establish a joint statutory-voluntary agency service development and coordination group for MEH migrants in the Dublin region to generate proposals for diversity awareness and migrant's rights training workshops in 2016.
3. To develop and ensure delivery of diversity awareness workshops and training on rights and entitlements for migrants to Ireland.
4. To develop new support services to MEH migrants that can help improve their labour market activation and participation, targeting their delivery via the work programme of the Migrant Homeless Action Team (HAT) and other relevant employment and training-related service providers.
5. To ensure the adoption of actions on MEH migrants by Dublin Region Joint Homeless Consultative Forum and Dublin Region Statutory Management Group for inclusion in 2016 Business Plan of the statutory *Homeless Action Plan 2104-2016*. In parallel ensure adoption of actions in the *Dublin Integration Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020*.
6. To support the implementation across the Dublin region of Standards 1.1 and 1.2 (related to rights, diversity and cultural awareness) from DRHE's *National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services* in Ireland among all *Pathway to Home* services in 2016.¹³
7. To reduce the extent of MEH migrants with no recourse to social protection using Dublin's *Pathway to Home* services and an improvement in their respective labour market participation rates.

Consultation

Dublin City Council benefits from an evolved and reasonably well-resourced consultation infrastructure, especially so in the homelessness sector where a Joint Dublin Homeless Consultative Forum is

¹³ The development and adoption of a national model of service is a high level action set down in the *Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness* (May 2014 to December 2016) and has been articulated as a requirement in preceding national policy frameworks. To support this, the DRHE is leading on the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) project. This project comprises a National Advisory Group that is overseeing implementation of the range of quality standards developed by DRHE and proposed for use in any forthcoming national model of homeless services. Phase 1 of the implementation of the NQSF will support the monitoring and reporting of progress in the adoption and use of quality standards in 4 (of 9) regions comprising all Ireland's local authorities and will include 13 different statutory and NGO/ Voluntary sector organisations and 20 participating projects. More information will be made available on www.homelessdublin.ie as the project progresses. A background document to the original consultation process undertaken as part of the project start-up is available here: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/sites/default/files/publications/National%20Quality%20Standards%20Framework%20Consultation%20Session%20Invite%20and%20Introduction.pdf>.

established to advise on service delivery and meeting the objectives of the Dublin statutory action plan on homelessness.¹⁴

In addition to the members of this Forum, a number of other actors – including civil society organisations with experience and expertise on matters of migration and employment rights within the EU and for non-EU or EEA nationals – were consulted ahead of the preparation of the objectives included in the action plan. This allowed the fuller specification of proposed actions and helped ensure their relevance to the target user group i.e. MEH migrants.

As Dublin hosted the inaugural meeting of the *Action for Inclusion in Europe* working group meeting in October 2015, a further opportunity for engagement with NGO organisations was availed off ahead of the meeting and this also allowed for presentations by civil society organisations at the meeting. The final details of the Dublin action plan as reported in the 2nd Working Group meeting in Islington (London) in February 2016 had also been discussed and agreed by the Statutory Management Group for Dublin’s homelessness services.

Lastly, opportunities for consultation, feedback and information sharing are maintained via the membership of the Coordination Group for MEH Migrants established under the Dublin action plan and included as part of the implementation infrastructure supported by the Dublin City Council Integration Strategy, 2016-2020.

Achievements and Experiences

Achievement 1: Audit and enumeration of MEH migrants in Dublin in 2016

The audit of all relevant local authority administrative datasets to test for data that profiles the known extent of MEH migrants in Dublin was conducted by end of 2015 and found significant data lacunae. This is primarily because no single administrative dataset contains the scope of information and data variables required to produce a complete picture of the extent of MEH migrants, their experience and needs. In early 2016, and with the cooperation of NGO groups working with MEH migrants, the DRHE began preparing a survey instrument to enumerate all migrants using Dublin’s homeless services. This required matters of relevance, language translation and the meaning of terminology to be considered and addressed in the design of the research instrument. The Coordination Group for MEH Migrants was involved in helping pilot the survey instrument. Subsequently, NGO member organisations also acted as sponsors of the survey and gatekeepers to ‘hard to reach’ MEH migrants. This supported snowballing sampling methodology that seeks to include migrants experiencing and at risk of homelessness for a defined reference period in 2016. The survey enumeration period concluded on 10th June 2016 with by 252 respondents. Nearly one third of responses have been facilitated by NGO service providers.

Preliminary findings have been produced by the DRHE research team for 127 respondents. By gender, respondents are 68% male and 32% female. The age profile suggests respondents are all of working age 18-65 with the largest proportion aged between 18 and 40 years old. Significantly, nearly half of these 127 respondents are migrant EU citizens, but the majority are nationals of African countries with a small number of respondents holding dual nationality and citizenship between Ireland and Romania, Nigeria and Afghanistan respectively. A majority of respondents thus far have an active PASS record (Dublin’s

¹⁴ For more details see here: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/dublin-joint-homelessness-consultative-forum>.

client database for all service users) of homeless service use (n=88) while a small majority (n=65) have been accepted onto a social housing waiting list for a Dublin local authority. Of these only 26 respondents have a homeless priority registration on the local authority waiting list for social housing. Significantly, the majority of respondents thus far (85%) are unemployed while 3% are in full-time and 11% are in part-time employment. However, perhaps the most significant finding thus far is that over 70% of respondents indicated that they receive a social welfare payment. These payments include Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Carers Allowance, Job Seekers Allowance, Child Benefit, Direct Provision Payment, and Disability Allowance.

This is an early indication that the extent of 'multiple exclusion' among certain homeless migrants may not be as severe as initially feared. Certainly some survey respondents with an active social protection payment claim may be better placed to overcome certain eligibility criteria related to their fuller participation in the Irish labour market. This and other related questions will be more fully explored in the final research report scheduled for completion in quarter 3, 2016.

Achievement 2: Staff training on diversity and intercultural awareness

Working with DCC Human Resources and DCC Social Inclusion Unit, the DRHE has ensured key 'frontline' statutory homeless services staff participated in dedicated training on diversity and intercultural awareness in March 2016. This training module will be rolled-out and made available on a demand-led basis in 2016 and is also expected to feature in the future annual staff training and development programme delivered by the DRHE Training and Performance Team. Applications for additional funding from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to support the further development and roll-out of this training are being supported by DRHE and DCC Social Inclusion Unit.¹⁵

Achievement 3: Establishment of a multi-agency coordination group for MEH migrants

This group is chaired by the DRHE and is currently comprised of homeless NGO service providers to migrants and representatives of local statutory services. It is developing a work plan based on the actions established in the *Dublin Integration Strategy 2016-2020* and has been instrumental in the early success of the enumeration of the migrant homeless population. It has met twice and is in the process of being formally constituted. It will meet again (at minimum) once a quarter from quarter 3, 2016 and will report on its activities to the *Dublin Joint Homeless Consultative Forum* and *Statutory Management Group* as well as into the new structures being established under the *Dublin Integration Strategy, 2016-2020*. These include (a) an internal DCC cross-departmental steering group to advise and monitor the Integration Strategy, new initiatives and priorities within DCC, and (b) an external stakeholder's forum (linkage group) for migrant communities.

Achievement 4: Dublin Integration Strategy, 2016-2020: actions on MEH migrants

The integration of migrants has become established on the European Union (EU) policy agenda. The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU (CBPs) were adopted in 2004 by the Justice and Home Affairs Council and reaffirmed by the European Council Conclusions of 2014. They offer a framework for the development of policy to promote the integration of third-country nationals. Ireland's first Minister with responsibility for Integration was appointed in 2007. The key national government policy on integration "*Migration Nation – Statement on integration strategy and diversity*

¹⁵ For more details see here <http://www.ihrec.ie/news/latest/2016/06/01/human-rights-and-equality-grant-scheme-2016/>.

management” followed in 2008. It emphasised a whole-of-government and localised community-level approaches to developing integration policy, which encourages partnership approaches, an inclusive service delivery and avoidance of segregated community identities. Integration was described as ‘one of the most important challenges being faced by Irish society over the coming years’ in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016).

In 2011, Dublin City was formally inaugurated as an Intercultural City by the Council of Europe, and since then Dublin City Council has undertaken a range of activities to foster community inclusion and integration. Cities that participate in the programme review their governance, policies, discourse and practices from an intercultural point of view and are placed on an index. The Intercultural Cities Index is a complementary tool, capable of illustrating visually the level of achievement of each city, its progress over time, and enables comparison with other cities. According to the Index, in 2011 Dublin was fourth among 29 participating cities. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is another tool which measures policies to integrate migrants in all EU Member States and ten other countries. Some 167 policy indicators have been developed to create a rich, multi-dimensional picture of migrants’ opportunities to participate in society. The Index, while limited to analysing integration policy, is a useful tool to evaluate and compare what other countries are doing to promote the integration of migrants. The MIPEX results in 2014 gave an overall score of 52/100 (19th out of 38 countries). Over the lifetime of this strategy these indices will be useful monitoring and evaluation tools.

As part of the development and adoption of Dublin’s new Integration Strategy internal consultation workshops, with representatives from a cross-section of Dublin City Council departments and services, were convened. These workshops identified areas of common need and challenges that may arise over the lifetime of the Strategy, including:

- The extent of services provided which are accessed by migrants;
- Areas of notable success or achievement in promoting or implementing integration;
- Sections of migrant communities or integration activities that the organisation would like to support better;
- Staff training needs in intercultural competency, diversity and inclusion;
- Collaborative or partnership working with other agencies on integration initiatives; and,
- Views of priority areas for integration focus and support in future integration.

Consequently, a number of key actions related to the integration of vulnerable migrant communities, specifically on MEH migrants, have been agreed between DRHE and DCC Social Inclusion Unit for inclusion in the Integration Strategy. They are as follows:

Theme	Action	Details	Lead	DCC/ Agency Partner
1 Developing Information and Training	1.1	Establish an internal cross departmental steering group to advise and monitor the integration strategy, new initiatives and priorities within Dublin City Council	DCC Social Inclusion	
	1.4	Develop and implement staff training on diversity and intercultural awareness, in partnership with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive	DCC Social Inclusion	DCC Human Resources Dublin Region Homeless Executive
	1.5	Support achievement of integration objectives in housing services	DCC Housing services	DCC Social Inclusion
	1.7	Establish a multi-agency coordination group for Multiple Exclusion Homeless migrants to generate proposals for diversity awareness and migrant rights training	Dublin Region Homeless Executive	
2 Supporting Inclusive Communities	2.2	Establish an external stakeholders forum (linkage group) for migrant communities	Dublin City Public Participation Network	Community organisations
3 Facilitating Language and Education	3.4	Pilot an English Language Intercultural Drop-in project, which complements existing resources	DCC Social Inclusion	
4 Supporting Employment and Business	4.5	Develop new supports to Multiple Exclusion Homeless migrants to improve their labour market activation and participation	Dublin Region Homeless Executive	DCC Social Inclusion

Achievement 5: Dublin Region Statutory Homeless Action Plan 2017-2020

The DRHE will undertake preparations in quarter 3, 2016 for the development of a successor statutory Homeless Action Plan for Dublin from 2017 and will work towards its adoption in early 2017. This action plan will be required to align with forthcoming national policy initiatives being prioritised by the Irish Minister of Housing in the *Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness* (forthcoming, July 2016) and will be a key delivery mechanism for same. The Dublin statutory Homeless Action Plan from 2017 will also have to take regard of a range of other statutory strategies and plans including the Housing Strategies of the respective Dublin local authorities where relevant actions and targets are set. Submissions on the content of the successor Homeless Action Plan will be requested from all members of the Dublin Joint Consultative Forum in quarter 3, 2016. Learning arising from the DCC Integration Strategy and its implementation programme will be included in this process and follow-on actions that ensure continued 'joined-up' working specifically on matters of training, awareness and labour market participation for MEH migrants will be included in the successor Homeless Action Plan.

Measurement

The measurement and monitoring of actions across different strategies and actions plans related to homelessness – most notably the overall Homeless Action Plan, 2013-2016, the respective Housing Strategies of Dublin's local authorities, the annual Dublin Homeless Services Business Plans and the new Dublin Integration Strategy - is the responsibility of the DRHE and detailed monitoring and performance measurement system is in place to support this. This includes the use of the PASS system (Dublin's client database for all service users) and other measures of service provider performance that target the achievement of outcomes required for MEH migrants.¹⁶ The DRHE Monitoring and Inspection team is also responsible for this work by supporting service providers to meet their performance targets set annually in their respective Service Level Agreements (SLAs). Additionally, the annual Service Level

¹⁶ For more details on PASS see here: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/pass>.

Agreement (SLA) with service providers in 2016 is used to include specified actions for dedicated services i.e. the Homeless Action Team for Migrants and will enable monitoring and measurement. The DRHE maintains regular dissemination of information on the measurement and monitoring of actions via its website and newsletter.¹⁷ Also key performance data on Dublin's homeless services is reported quarterly and is publicly disseminated via central government.¹⁸

Experience

The most significant lessons from the *Action for Inclusion in Europe* project arise from recognition of the challenges facing local service providers and programme managers when seeking to establish and maintain communication with external stakeholders and policy decision-making in central government whose decision-making impacts on MEH migrants in Dublin.

There is a complexity of policy networks across different Irish central government departments – most notably in Justice and Equality, Health and Children, Social Protection and Housing, Planning and Local Government – that can produce an onerous demand on the limited resources available at local level to establish and maintain policy coherence across different strategies and action plans. Without a commitment to an active network management of information dissemination and liaison with key decision-makers across these policy networks the cumulative impact of multiple actions can become less than the sum of its parts. This risk is mitigated by identifying and supporting 'champions' for policy perspective that are mutually reinforcing and that support a greater horizontal integration across and within local actors and secondly among actors at national level.

Current national consultative structures on homelessness in Ireland are reasonably well evolved. They include NGO and statutory representative actors and agencies on the National Homelessness Consultative Committee (NHCC). This meets jointly with the Cross-Departmental Team (CDT) comprised of representatives of central government.¹⁹ An additional platform for maintaining policy coherence and a focus on delivery is maintained by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy chaired by An Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister).²⁰

Challenges and Modifications

The requirement to meet and provide for the significant and on-going upward inflection in demand for homeless services in Dublin, and particularly for access to emergency accommodation among homeless families, remains the greatest challenge to the overall capacity of Dublin's *Pathway to Home* service model. The speed of this increase in demand over the period since the early formation of the *Action Plan for Inclusion of MEH Migrants* has challenged the DRHE's ability to ensure the resources required to implement the plan's objectives are maintained and the timelines set for same are maintained.

¹⁷ For more details see here: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/pathway-newsletter>.

¹⁸ For more details see here: <http://www.viron.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

¹⁹ The agenda and minutes of the NHCC and CDT meetings are publicly available. See here for more: http://www.viron.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/minutes_of_cdt-nhcc_21st_october_2015.pdf.

²⁰ See here for more: http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Taoiseach_and_Government/Cabinet_Committees/Social_Policy_and_Public_Service_Reform.html.

This is especially so as the impact of the GFC and the 'troika' economic programme of fiscal adjustment on Irish public services and more generally in terms of housing stress and insecurity is prolonged. Dublin has not yet reached 'peak' homelessness. For example, in addition to the large number of current emergency accommodation users in Dublin in 2016, there are others in housing insecurity who have been prevented from entering emergency accommodation. Due to the upward inflection in rental inflation over the period since 2013, a significant proportion of state supported private renter households in receipt of rent supplement (RS) have been required to produce 'top-up payments' to the actual subvention rate received. This is required in order to bridge the affordability gap between their disposable income and higher rents.

In an attempt to prevent homelessness arising in such scenarios the DRHE established a scheme in June 2014 (with the Department of Social Protection) – called the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) - to review RS households' ability to afford higher rents on a 'case-by-case' basis and to pay an uplift in order to prevent the loss of a tenancy and presentation to homeless services. The scheme is delivered via a freephone service by a national NGO (Threshold Ltd) with expertise in the private rental sector and is funded directly by the statutory sector under Dublin's *Pathway to Home* model of service.²¹ Without this emphasis on homeless prevention the scale of emergency accommodation required is likely to become overwhelming on the current capacity of the *Pathway to Home* services to effectively respond.²²

Notwithstanding the growing reliance on Dublin's homeless services as some kind of shadow housing sector, there are priority national policy initiatives underway in 2016 and others under development that will be brought forward to begin to fully address Dublin's housing and homeless crisis. These include the start-up of a major social housing development programme nationally, with a specific focus on provision in Dublin. Prime additional initiatives are likely to aim to tackle vacancy in the established housing stock and also to bring forward conversion options to change unused and unoccupied retail and commercial space into residential use where this is feasible. Dublin's effort to increase emergency accommodation capacity of sufficient scale and to standard and to substitute for the current unsustainable reliance on commercial hotels remains a priority. It is bolstered by the provision of 500 units of rapid-build housing units that will be used temporarily to accommodate homeless families while longer term social tenancy options are being constructed under the national capital investment programme.²³

Within this context, the commitment to maintain the resources required to achieve the outcomes sought for MEH migrants and to continue to embed the provision of public services to MEH migrants into wider strategies on integration and inclusion remains established and will be actively managed and monitored.

²¹ For more details see here: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/renting-and-worried-about-losing-your-home> and here: <http://www.threshold.ie/publications/dublin-tenancy-protection-service>.

²² Since June 2014, the number of households in receipt of RS in the region contacting the TPS has risen to 8,079 (approximately 1 in 3 of all recipients in the region) with 50% plus being assessed as being at risk of homelessness. To date the service has ensured that 2,234 tenancies are sustained and prevented from entering homelessness. A total of 1,914 households received the rent uplift payment from DSP. Advocacy was required for 240 households and 80 households were rehoused in new tenancies. Thus far only 29 households have been referred by TPS as entering homeless services.

²³ For more details see here: <http://www.dublincity.ie/update-rapid-build-housing-poppintree-ballymun-dublin-11-0>.

