

Housing Matters

A twice yearly update on the work we do

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What do Housing Co-ordinators do?

- We gather and analyse information on the housing and support needs of people connecting with Mental Health Services.
- We work with the Housing Departments in the Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to improve access to social housing for people connecting with Mental Health Services.

- We raise awareness about housing and independent living within the Mental Health Services.
- We develop supportive housing programmes with other agencies based on local need. Examples around the country include START (CHO 5), MyHome (CHO 2) & Creating Foundations (CHO 7).
- We support Community Mental Health Teams in the Mental Health Services in addressing housing issues.
- We support and engage in training and research on housing matters and mental health.
- We promote the voice of people with lived experience of the mental health services in the areas of housing and independent living.

Why are Housing Co-ordinators needed?

Almost 40 years ago, in 1984 the mental health national policy document '*Planning for the Future*' recommended a dedicated role to focus on "rehousing" for people residing in psychiatric hospitals.

Unfortunately, this was not implemented nationally. With the launch of the 'National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016', those involved from the Dept. of Environment, Dept of Health, the HSE and local authorities agreed that the role of Housing Co-ordinator was necessary.

Dedicated funding became available to improve mental health services via the Service Reform Fund. So, in 2018 Housing Co-ordinator posts were created in each of the nine healthcare areas and one for the Central Mental Hospital. The four posts currently filled are now funded by the HSE. It is a strategic role, with each Housing Coordinator working within their local area to implement these national policies:

- **National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-27**
- **Sharing the Vision (Housing Related Recommendations)**

These policies and their implementation plans identify the role of the Housing Co-ordinator and give us a road map for the work we do.





Looking a little closer at the roadmap...

National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-26

- This very important document is signed by four government departments. It explains how the housing needs for people connecting with mental health services should be met.
- It shows how Ireland can keep its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: **Article 19** - People with disabilities have the right to live in the community with people of their choice & **Article 28(d)** - To ensure access by persons with disabilities to public housing programs.
- It expects the mental health services and the local authorities to work together to provide housing and support.
- It calls for the development of a Housing Disability Steering Group in each local authority area. This interagency group works together to create a Local Disability Housing Strategy:
 - To identify the current and projected housing and support needs for disabled people, including mental health.
 - To work towards securing an agreed number of permanent homes for disabled people
- This work is monitored by The Housing Agency, a national body. Each Housing Disability Steering Group should submit a progress report every three months.

Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone

Click pics for more info!



Sharing the Vision, Ireland’s national mental health policy, has **seven recommendations** that relate to housing:

- **Recommendation 58:** In order to address service gaps and access issues, a stepped model of integrated support that provides mental health promotion, prevention and primary intervention supports should be available for people experiencing homelessness.
- **Recommendation 59:** Assertive outreach teams should be expanded so that specialist mental healthcare is accessible to people experiencing homelessness.
- **Recommendation 66:** Tailored measures should be in place in relevant government departments to ensure that individuals with mental health difficulties can avail, without discrimination, of employment, housing and education opportunities and have an adequate income.
- **Recommendation 67:** Local authorities should liaise with statutory mental health services to include the housing needs of people with complex mental health difficulties as part of their local housing plans.
- **Recommendation 68:** The Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, should develop a joint protocol to guide the effective transition of individuals from HSE-supported accommodation to community living.
- **Recommendation 69:** In conjunction with supports provided by the HSE including Intensive Recovery Support teams, sustainable resourcing should be in place for tenancy-related/independent living supports for service users with complex mental health difficulties.
- **Recommendation 70:** The housing design guidelines published by the HSE and the Housing Agency in 2016 to promote independent living and mental health recovery should be a reference point for all housing-related actions in Sharing the Vision.

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