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The comments in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Homeless Initiative, the Management Group or Consultative Board.

## Preface

"Under One Roof?" is the report of research commissioned by the Homeless Initiative. The Initiative was set up in late 1996 and operates under the joint direction of the Eastern Health Board and Dublin Corporation and applies to the counties, Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. The aim of the Initiative is to ensure that services for homeless people in this area become more effective, particularly by improving their planning, co-ordination and delivery. This is to be achieved through analysis, planning and the development of a strong partnership between the agencies involved in service provision to homeless people in the area, including the health board, local authorities and voluntary bodies.

This report reviews the future strategic options for the organisation of services to homeless people in the Eastern Health Board area. It was the proposed relocation of the Homeless Persons Unit which prompted this review, providing an opportune time for the health board and the Corporation to consider options for improving the coordination and delivery of their own services, and of homeless services generally.

Possible options for the future management of services to homeless people are examined in the report. A model of a 'one stop centre', which would play a key role in developing a coordinated response to homelessness, is proposed. The report is based on consultation with providers of services to homeless people in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow and will inform decisions on the future organisation of those services.

## Executive Summary

This report does not say anything that people do not already know. What it has attempted to do is to present the issues that face the homeless services sector as seen by those people working in it and affected by it. It also presents the critical principles and practices, identified by those people, that will underpin any future development of services to and for homeless people. The report teases out the options regarding the future management of services and makes a recommendation regarding the future responsibilities of the local authorities and Eastern Health Board. Finally, it presents a model for a 'One Stop Centre' that would play a key part in providing a co-ordinated response to homelessness.

The information for this research came from submissions and interviews with statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and homeless people. The researchers would like to thank all the people who gave of their very busy time. Their thoughts and ideas have critically informed this report.

A range of gaps in service provision were identified and are detailed in section 4. Interviews and submissions covered a wide range of topics under the area of service provision. They commented on current service delivery by the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU); broader service delivery by the sector; assessment procedures; information and research issues; co-ordination and networking; the needs of specific groups of homeless people; management anomalies; structural barriers; decentralisation; training and development; emergency accommodation needs; research and evaluation; support services; referral and linkages; resources; information technology; and HPU physical layout. There was consistent agreement by both statutory and voluntary agencies regarding the many key gaps in service provision.

The key concerns were:

- The importance of identifying and understanding the needs of different groupings of homeless people is critical to the successful development of services. People felt that the responses by statutory agencies to date had not taken these differing needs into account.
- A critical weakness in the system is the legislative provisions (Housing Act 1988 and Section 54 of the Health Act 1953) which place responsibility for the provision of services to homeless people in the hands of both the Local Authorities and the Health Boards. Basically, this lack of clarity of responsibility has created both confusion and frustration in the sector.
- In both submissions and interviews it was the actual delivery of services which received most attention, with focus on: assessment and referral; prevention; short term emergency services; rehabilitation and developmental; the physical space of the HPU; decentralisation of services and resettlement. The fact that demand for emergency accommodation exceeds supply is a matter of great concern to the sector.
- While there is a willingness by both statutory and voluntary agencies to engage in discussion, there is an acknowledgment of the difficulties in bringing up sensitive issues that may be interpreted as attacks.





























































