



HSE & Clare County Council Homeless Action Team Joint Working Protocols

This Policy was adopted by Clare County Council at the Monthly meeting held on July 10th, 2023.

Introduction:

Health services and local authorities are the lead statutory bodies for addressing homelessness and the needs of people who are homeless in Ireland. The responsibilities of the health services are defined in two pieces of legislation. The Health Act, 1953 imposed a duty on health boards, now Health Service Executive (HSE), to provide assistance and shelter to people who are homeless, a duty usually performed by Community Welfare Officers.

Under the Housing Act, 1988 local authorities are empowered to respond to homelessness in a number of ways: by housing people who are homeless directly, by funding voluntary and co-operative bodies to house them, by providing advice and information to them, and by providing them with financial assistance to primarily access accommodation.

Homeless Actions Teams:

The establishment of Homeless Action Teams (HAT) in each Local Authority area across the Mid-West has been central in dealing effectively with homelessness and has had a major impact in terms of improving the level and quality of services available to persons who are homeless. The Homeless Action Team in Clare County Council was established in 2019. Since this date the Homeless Action team has developed and expanded, and it is hoped that this team growth will continue into the future. Within this team a multi-disciplinary, inter-agency team approach has been employed and has proved to be most effective in providing outreach and additional specialist services and linking with mainstream services.

'Housing for All' strategy

HSE and CCC will work under the direction of the new 'Housing For All' document - <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/>

Background:

This protocol has been developed to assist staff in managing the emerging interface and to clarify the separate and distinct roles, responsibilities of both agencies, to develop, and enhance a

collaborative partnership between the HSE and Clare County Council (CCC). This will lead to a consistent approach where services are delivered appropriately, meeting holistic needs of those

in Homelessness and their families within available resources and in accordance with Government policies and legislative requirements.

While the protocol is between the HSE and CCC, the principles apply equally to all entities that are funded by the HSE, i.e., Section 38 and Section 39 agencies where appropriate and relevant to agencies that are funded by CCC i.e., section 10 where appropriate. The overarching principle is that the collaborative partnership is all inclusive.

Shared principles and service delivery objectives for both statutory organisations are reinforced by a strong interagency collaborative framework. The development of this protocol sets out mechanisms to have a range of issues addressed and resolved as they arise, such as:

- appropriate referral pathways – CCC & HSE Homeless Action Teams to develop their respective referral pathways and agree on same.
- information sharing arrangements – written/recorded information to adhere to GDPR protocols. Information can also be shared via such methods as client or service review meetings.
- care planning and case management – protocols to be developed and implemented via the rollout of a pilot. DATF co-ordinator to lead on this. HF Health co-ordinator to support this process.

The protocol provides a pathway for collaboration across HSE CHO's and the CCC (and other local authorities) at local, regional, and national level.

Terms of Reference:

- To clarify and set out the respective roles, duties, and legal requirements of the HSE and CCC, in relation to those who are or are risk of homelessness.
- To revise the current joint protocol in accordance with the above
- To establish areas of joint responsibility
- To develop pathways for increased understanding and co-operation between the HSE and CCC
- To establish mechanisms for dispute resolution

Core operating principles:

- Full and early involvement of all partners within a co-operative culture, based on a shared responsibility and collaborative approach.
- Service delivery through integrated working, while addressing gaps & blockages
- Acknowledgement of the interdependence and joint interests of the partners, and that the dialogue between both partners is of equal status.
- Commitment to appropriate consultation when one partner is planning action that impacts on the other partner within CCC or the HSE, to improve outcomes for service users.

- Information sharing as good practice including listening to the views of the service user.

Joint working at local level.

Agreement between Clare County Council and Health Service Executive for continued operation of Homeless Action Team:

Operating the Clare Homeless Action Team:

- Coordinator (CCC) and Team Leader (HSE) to converse on a regular basis with regards to the referrals into and out of Homeless Services, to discuss all health and social needs associated with any individual or family associated with service.
- Bi- Monthly Team Meetings to take place. Staff from the HSE who are part of the Homeless Action Team in Clare are invited to and attend this meeting. More regular contact will be had on a weekly basis. Should the need for a joint team meeting increase the frequency of these can be reassessed i.e., team meetings can be called earlier if necessary.
- Client Reviews to take place as part of HAT operations.
- Monthly CCC&HSE partnership Meetings and/or when required (both coordinators & SEO)
- Office space for the 2 current HSE staff in Clare HAT is provided.
- HSE team are free to book assessment rooms in HAT office to meet clients.
- Support from the Social Care Team within HAT along with support from HAT Co-Ordinator is available to HSE staff when this is both requested or required.
- Joint team approach is operated in Clare Homeless Action Team between CCC and HSE Staff.
- MDT Meetings can be initiated and take place as required, using a case management model, and discuss clients who have 3 or more services involved with them.
- Bi-weekly HAT (CCC&HSE) meetings to continue with services providers with regards to both single clients and family units. These are 2 separate meetings held every second Tuesday.
- Hospital Discharge to continue through HSE Team, if bed required in hostel, referral to be made by relevant HSE staff.
- Housing First Meetings to continue as agreed.
- Coordination of homeless services main site is Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Communication:

Clear and professional communication standards enhance joint working. All disciplines within HAT involved in joint working will determine the process and protocols needed regarding communication, which will be based on existing local arrangements/systems and take cognisance of local, area, regional and national requirements. Information handling policies

and data protection regulations will be adopted under agreed terms of reference to support this protocol in each local area.

Referrals between disciplines will be acknowledged and engagement, response or decision will commence within agreed timelines from receipt of the referral. Where a decision has been made regarding the most appropriate service provider this decision will be communicated to the referrer and copied to the relevant team without delay, detailing the rationale for the decision.

Confidentiality:

Each service will ensure that the highest professional standards are maintained in relation to confidentiality, and any information sharing will have the appropriate informed consent. In this regard, all relevant personnel will be cognisant of the requirements under Children First, HSE Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse policy and other obligations in relation to freedom of information and data protection including GDPR in each organisation.

Resolution of disputes/differences:

In situations where differences arise in relation to the management of a case and a local joint decision cannot be agreed, the disciplines from the HSE and/or CCC must make every effort to resolve them so that appropriate interventions can proceed. Where this cannot be agreed e.g., due to lack of resources or some other impediment, the matter must be escalated through the respective line management structures to the HSE and CCC.