Clare Co Council Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2021-2026

# **Purpose of the local Strategic plan**

The vision of the local Strategic Plan is to facilitate access, for people with disabilities, to the appropriate range of housing and related support services, delivered in an integrated and sustainable manner, which promotes equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living.

The core goal of the Strategy is to meet the identified housing needs of people with disabilities locally whether they are currently living in the community and or in a congregated setting. The Strategy is intended to form an integral part of the Housing Services Plans and will promote and support the delivery of accommodation for people with disabilities using all appropriate housing supply mechanisms. Furthermore, the Strategy is intended to support longer term strategic planning.

The four categories of disability targeted in the Strategy are:

(a) sensory disability

(b) mental health disability

(c) physical disability and

(d) intellectual disability/autism

This Strategic Plan has been prepared by the Clare Housing and Disability Steering Group (HDSG) and aims to facilitate strategic planning in providing the local authority , other housing and service providers with information that will help to inform and guide housing provision and necessary support services for people with a disability over the next 5 years. This Strategy has had input from individuals with lived experiences as well as all groups, agencies and representatives involved with people with disabilities. Each representative group of the Steering Group is aware of and committed to the deliverables and targets set out in this Strategy.

# **2.Awareness and promotion of the local Strategic Plan for housing PWD**

Raising awareness of the Strategy within the stakeholder organisations in the Steering Group is of paramount importance. Information, advice and advocacy services are identified as crucial in meeting the housing needs of people with disabilities. Having access to comprehensive and accurate information enables people to make fully informed decisions regarding their housing options. This enables people to plan for their future need and changing circumstances, thereby, helping to avoid crisis decision making. Without access to appropriate information, people may feel that they do not have any control over their housing choices and may not feel fully involved in the decision making process. Many people with disabilities report difficulties in accessing information and advice in terms of housing and are often unaware of the supports available to them. As some people with disabilities require specific and tailored supports to enable them to access and sustain housing, information may need to be sought from a wide variety of agencies and sources. Gathering this level of information can be a time consuming and challenging job, which can be further exacerbated by an individual’s particular disability. People faced with the onset of a disability may not be in a position to manage the information gathering process and may require assistance in this regard. Steering Group members will ensure that, as far as possible, access to information provided by them, or on their behalf, will be available to persons with disabilities in an accessible format as provided for in Section 28 of the Disability Act 2005.

# **2.1 Local Authority**

Local Authorities acting as Housing Authorities have a key role in the provision of social housing supports for all eligible persons with a disability, including people currently living independently, or with families or in other arrangements. In many cases the solution for the individual will also require the support of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and or other Service Providers.

Clare Co Council will raise awareness of the Strategy for the public by easy access and promotion for all by ;

* publicly advertising
* organising workshops emphasising the importance of applying for & being included on the Council’s Social Housing list.
* promoting with the Housing SPC
* advertising on social media platforms
* providing link on Council website

# **2.2 HSE**

HSE Disabilities and Mental Health along with their contracted Service Providers will :

* actively promote the NHSPWD to all its service users
* work to develop clear pathways for service users to obtain housing and awareness re availability of appropriate housing
* promote the Local Strategic Plan amongst its local staff teams and service users through its internal communication and engagement pathways

The HSE will promote the Strategy to all service providers and will via partnership ensure that all service providers are making service users within their remit aware of the Strategy and its implementation – a clear pathway for service users to obtain housing and awareness re availability of appropriate housing.

In some cases, the HSE is the direct service provider to an individual Service User subject to an Assessment of Need. In addition, the HSE commissions and provides, subject to resources, the funding of Personal Support services by Services Providers via Service Level Agreements. The HSE is also one of the key leads of implementing the “Time to Move on from Congregated Settings – A strategy for Community Inclusion” where individuals or groups of people with disabilities are supported to transition from institutions to their own home in the community with supports.

In addition, the HSE must also identify current and future individual needs of residents living in their new housing environments and provide required personal supports subject to available resources or approved additional funding. The HSE has the overall statutory responsibility for the management and delivery of healthcare and personal social services. In respect of disability services, the HSE’s responsibility is fulfilled by the provision of services directly by the organisation and also, to a very significant extent by non-statutory organisations (Service Providers) to provide such services on its behalf subject to available funding resources. The HSE aims to support each individual with a disability in living as normal a life as possible, in an environment that provides opportunities for choice, personal development, fulfilling relationships and protection from exploitation and abuse. With regard to individuals currently residing in a congregated type setting, the HSE strongly supports their transition to more socially inclusive community integrated services and is fully committed to promoting and ensuring that people with disabilities are aware of the Strategy and will be actively and effectively supported to live full inclusive lives at the heart of their family, community and society.

# **2.3 Service Providers**

This would include HSE (direct service provision) and the non-statutory service providers. Responsibilities will include the development of an individual care plan to include person centered planning, provision of information with regard to housing options, supporting the individual with regard to application for assessment of housing needs, access to external advocate, support around tenancy arrangements, care support needs identified, assistance with the development of circle of supports etc. Service providers must also participate in the local implementation teams and identify any obstacles / challenges to delivery of the objectives of the Strategy.

Service Providers will promote the Strategy amongst its membership base of people with physical disabilities by;

* advertising on their websites & social media
* through their internal communication and engagement pathways
* holding information sessions for staff and members informing them of the key elements of the strategy
* actively participating in the local Housing & Disability Steering Group & share learning, share experience & share key information
* promoting the Local Housing Strategy with Approved Housing Body design teams, allocation teams and management. Irish Wheelchair Association is happy to offer disability awareness training based on its Best Practice Access Guidelines 4th Edition and 60 years’ experience.

# **3.Stakeholder Engagement and HDSG Functionality**

The following stakeholders are represented on the Housing & Disability Steering Group (HDSG):

* Clare Co Council
* HSE
* Irish Wheelchair Association
* Brothers of Charity
* Daughters of Charity
* Rehabcare
* Banner Housing Association
* Respond
* Clare Crusaders
* Acquired Brain Injury
* Enable Ireland
* Novas
* Nua Healthcare

The HDSG is chaired by the Director of Service for Housing in Clare Co Council & meets quarterly. The Terms of Reference of the HDSG needs to be monitored and reviewed & the roles & responsibilities of each of the stakeholders need to be clearly defined & required outcomes identified with the Local Authority being responsible for housing provision & the HSE & Support Services identifying the needs of the disabled person and providing the necessary supports.

Stakeholder engagement within the HDSG needs to be enhanced so that there is a greater awareness of roles and responsibilities within each group as well as a greater level of participation in HDSG meetings. The goals and achievements of the HDSG should be shared on an annual basis.

There needs to be a very strong emphasis on the Lived Experience with stakeholders encouraging the participation of persons with a disability in the HDSG. Stakeholder representation on the HDSG should not alone be representing the stakeholder but also the people represented by that stakeholder.

Disability Awareness training can be offered to all people engaged in housing for people with disabilities, including Local Authority and Approved Housing body design teams, allocation teams and management. Irish Wheelchair Association is happy to offer this disability awareness training based on its Best Practice Access Guidelines 4th Edition and 60 years’ experience.

Any requirement to develop any local interagency protocols should be highlighted at national level for potential inclusion in the new National Strategy.

# **4.Local aims and objectives**

The following are the strategic aims of the Strategic Plan:

* Housing authorities will develop specific strategies to meet the identified housing needs of people with physical, intellectual, mental health and sensory disabilities locally. These strategies will be informed by the assessments of housing need and broader formalised consultation with relevant statutory agencies, service user groups and disability organisations. These strategies will form an integral part of local authority Housing Services Plans and will promote and support the delivery of accommodation for people with disabilities using all appropriate housing supply mechanisms.
* In line with the development of specific disability housing strategies, housing authorities will consider reserving certain proportions of units to meet specific identified need within each disability strategy

Actions and objectives of the Strategy should be linked to the priority action and key aims of the NHSPWD and any other relevant strategies such as the UNCRPD and NDIS 2017-2021 eg;

* As identified in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy (NDIS), people with disabilities will be supported to live an independent life in a home of their choosing in their community by ensuring equal access to appropriate social housing for people with disabilities so as to promote independent living, choice and access to support and community services
* The HDSG will also adhere to Articles 19 of the UNCRPD which recognizes the equal rights of all persons with disabilities to live in the community with choices equal to others.
* The local Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to allow for the incorporation of any revised national disability strategies, regulations or legislation.

In addition, it is proposed that:

* the Plan for housing delivery for disability will be aligned to the development of sustainable communities close to services and resources required and enjoyed by disabled people as active citizens
* interagency protocols will be developed to ensure housing delivery in line with effective support services to those who require it
* relevant information be communicated to all stakeholders and the wider community regarding the local Strategy
* the delivery of universally accessible housing units and adaptations to meet need based demand
* identify barriers, risks and challenges to these objectives as they arise, and develop prompt and flexible responses through interagency collaboration
* an easy access to the Strategy for all which would include links on County Council home page; social media; regular updates to be included on reaching targets. This will also include a register of available accessible housing
* The HDSG promotes the use of Assistive Technology with design teams in order to support independence and efficiencies in terms of requirements for personal assistants and informal supports.
* The HDSG will call for a review of the Housing Adaption Grant upper limit of €30,000 which is out of touch with current building prices.
* That all government funded social housing includes 7% of wheelchair accessible units creating mixed tenure sustainable communities.
* That each Local Authority creates a register of local authority and AHB wheelchair accessible housing stock.
* The HDSG supports Irish Wheelchair Association’s national campaign for a review of Part M of the Building Regulations (2010) to provide for regulations for liveable wheelchair accessible housing.

# **5.Quantify the current need of housing.**

# **Identify sources of potential emerging need for housing for PWD**

Housing need has been defined as the extent to which the quantity and quality of existing accommodation falls short of that required to provide each household or person in the population, irrespective of ability to pay or of particular personal preferences, with accommodation of a specified minimum standard and above. This definition applies equally to all people with a disability.

The assessment of an individual need for social housing support is based on difficulties that an individual may experience for providing housing from their own means. The housing need is the type of housing size etc. that is required to allow them to live appropriately.

1. The HDSG will promote innovative housing design models to include housing for a single person, a group of friends, for a family and for a group requiring 24/7 support.
2. Summary of housing need as follows:

* Wheelchair accessible housing. The IWA are requesting that a minimum of 7% fully wheelchair accessible houses are built over the next 5 years;
* Housing designed to meet the physical, sensory, cognitive or behavioural needs of service users;
* Housing incorporating recent innovations in Smart and Assistive Technology around the home, which would offer more opportunities for independence for people with a disability. The inclusion of button and voice activated control systems should be considered, along with the training and maintenance requirements of these systems;
* The need for large 5 bed community group homes, where staff will be available 24/7. These Designated Centres that come under the remit of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) will need to meet the highest accessibility and fire safety standards. It may be preferable to develop these as new builds rather than trying to adapt existing houses, due to the requirements;
* The need to develop small clusters of individual housing which gives people independence within their own space, while also allowing for easy access to support staff and the opportunity to socialise with peers. A creative design allowing for multi-purpose shared spaces will be an important feature of this model.

1. The HDSG will promote the development of housing located in an area with good access to shops, transport, neighbours, services and other facilities;
2. The HDSG will establish targets that are Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timeframed (SMART) with clear actions and timelines. The group should have a role in monitoring progress towards those targets, as well as incorporating changes policy and legislation.
3. The HDSG will call for a review of the household income criteria for housing grants which currently includes all persons residing in the home as opposed to the person to whom the grant applies and benefits.

In relation to people with a disability living in congregated settings, deinstitutionalisation refers to the move away from housing people with disabilities in residential institutions, where all services were generally provided on site, to community based settings. Large residential institutions, while maximising the pooling of support services, segregate residents from the community and from normal social life. Research has demonstrated that such institutions are not able to deliver the same quality of life for their residents as community based alternatives.

At present there are 299 persons identified on the Clare Co Council Social Housing List whose Classification of Need is determined by Disability. This data is recorded on the Council’s IHouse system. Going forward more accurate records will be available to Local Authorities regarding social housing applicants with disabled needs as a result of new applicants having to complete a new Disability form (HMD-Form 1) as part of the new Social Housing Application form. In addition, the new Social Housing Application form will ask new applicants if they require wheelchair accessible housing. This additional information will support Local Authorities in the future strategic planning for wheelchair accessible housing.

The current demand will be determined from various sources from which a comprehensive breakdown of need can be compiled. The breakdown of demand/need will include details on unit size, location, design and any other specific requirements. An element of estimation and forecast is also required to address emerging need which probably can be quantified based on previous annual averages but not specific to location. The relevant information from which the detail can be extracted is held as follows and then is consolidated for the county at Paragraph 5.5;

**5.1 Housing Waiting List (** @ 01/06/2021**)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total** | **299** | |
| **Physical** | **137** | |
| **Sensory** | **6** | |
| **Mental Health** | **68** | |
| **Intellectual / Autism** | **87** | |
| **Unspecified** | | **1** |

**5.2 Approved Housing Bodies**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Total** | **30** |
| **Physical** |  |
| **Sensory** |  |
| **Mental Health** |  |
| **Intellectual / Autism** | **30** |

**5.3 Emerging Disability Need**

The Local Authorities can only deal with Housing Applicants and households already identified to them through the Social Housing Support Application Process. However, it is accepted that there will always be an emerging need in this area. This is forecast based on past evidenced presentations and projections from those currently in receipt of care and under 18. The needs of individuals will vary and as a result the housing needs will vary.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Description** | **Likely Disability** | **Forecast of Presenting Numbers** |
| **HSE** | **Various** | **Various** | **150\*\*\*** |

**\*\*\* *Projected provisional figure based on the number of children/young people currently been supported through children services. This does not include those who are not in direct receipt of support services from the HSE and who may require housing/personal supports in the future \*\*\****

**5.4 Owner Occupied Stock**

Requirements for adaption or alternative accommodation due to disability arise in Owner Occupier properties. From a housing authority perspective, this can be gauged by the number of applications made annually for either Housing Adaption Grants or Mobility Aids Grants. The table below outlines the number of applications made annually under these schemes for the last three years from which the assumptions for the number of predicted applications over the coming years for the duration of the Strategy, are contained in the second table.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** |
| **Housing Adaptation Grant  for People with a Disability** | 106 | 106 | 114 |
| **Housing Aid for Older People** | 182 | 186 | 120 |
| **Mobility Aids Grant** | 130 | 124 | 112 |
| **Total** | 418 | 416 | 346 |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **2025** |
| **Housing Adaptation Grant  for People with a Disability** | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| **Housing Aid for Older People** | 150 | 150 | 150 | 150 | 150 |
| **Mobility Aids Grant** | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| **Total** | 375 | 375 | 375 | 375 | 375 |

**5.5 Total Disability Need**

Arising from Paragraph 5.1 to 5.3, it is evident that there is a significant disability housing need in the county. The type of properties that are required will be difficult to determine as a forensic assessment of the individuals or their specific needs have not been carried out. However, the table below summarises the basic disability needs within the county.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Total 479** | |
| **Physical** | **137** | |
| **Sensory** | **6** | |
| **Mental Health** | **68** | |
| **Intellectual** | **117** | |
| **Unspecified** | | **151** |

# **6.Housing Delivery Pipeline and Housing for PWD Delivery**

In the 5 years of the Strategy the LA and AHB pipelines for the provision of social housing needs to be estimated and of this pipeline the targets for the delivery of housing for PWDs from both the LA and the AHBs needs to be identified.

**6.1 Local Authority Stock**

Clare County Council are the largest landlord in the county with approximately 3,000 social housing units. An individual must apply to the Local Authority for Social Housing Support in order to be considered for housing and there are a number of criteria that need to be met, including income limits, being unable to provide housing from their own means and being considered as being inadequately housed in their current accommodation. A tenant of a Local Authority will pay an income related differential rent.

**6.2 Approved Housing Body Stock**

Approved Housing Bodies have become a major player in the provision of Social Housing Support to people from all sections of the community. There are over 700 Approved Housing Bodies in the country of varying types and sizes. The housing provision of these also differ with some Approved Housing Bodies dealing primarily with general housing provision while others have a more specialised role. In Clare there are approximately 20 Approved Housing Bodies providing housing, including the following type of accommodation:

* General housing
* Older persons accommodation
* Housing for people with disabilities
* Homeless accommodation

To avail of such accommodation an individual/household must in most cases apply and qualify for Social Housing Support with the Local Authority.

Approved Housing Bodies provide accommodation through

* New build
* Purchases
* Leasing

While Approved Housing Bodies access private finance to fund some of their development/purchases, they also receive the following funding from the State through the Local Authorities:

* Capital Assistance Scheme
* Capital Advance Leasing Facility
* Payment and Availability Agreements

**Social Leasing Initiative**

Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies can provide accommodation through long term leasing arrangements of privately owned housing where suitable properties are identified. With landlord consent some adaptation works can be carried out to such properties. Housing For All has significantly reduced the potential to lease properties.

**Rental Accommodation Scheme**

RAS will continue to provide suitable accommodation until subsumed into HAP.

**Private Rented/ Rent Supplement**

##### Approved Housing applicants able to source their own accommodation in the private

market can qualify for Rent Supplement.

**Housing Assistance Payment**

##### Housing Assistance Payment was introduced in Clare in late 2016 enabling rent supplement recipients to transfer to this form of support.

Each of the supply mechanism listed above will be examined to provide housing for those with disabilities in the coming years in accordance with this Strategy. It is important that we are realistic in any policy that is put in place to try to meet the needs of people with disabilities. A partnership approach needs to be undertaken by HDSG stakeholders, to plan for the future housing needs of disabled people requiring housing in the immediate or near future. This will ensure that housing needs can be met and support packages put in place, in a co-ordinated way, to help facilitate residential services for those who require it.

# **7.Supports – social and care**

All categories of disability need to be examined from a supports perspective. There needs to be an awareness on who needs supports, what type of supports are needed, funding sources for the supports identified etc.

Article 19 of the UNCRPD states that persons with disabilities should have access to a range of in-home support services including personal assistants. This is imperative if people with disabilities are to be able to live independently. To this end it will be necessary;

1. to provide where required innovative housing design models; e.g. (a) those that incorporate the provision of a shared overnight ensuite bed/living room for shared personal assistants internally accessible from 2 or more houses and (b) a common room internally accessible from a number of houses where people with disabilities can gather socially for informal supports.
2. HSE to undertake an individual assessment of need to assist with determination of Personal & Social Supports which will be provided subject to available resources.
3. for the HDSG to establish a Multi-Disciplinary Working Group or Stakeholder Forum with representatives from HSE, County Council, Service Providers etc . whose purpose will be to assist and drive the processing of new housing developments across the spectrum of disabilities.
4. For the HDSG with the support of the HSE Disabilities & Mental Health Services to endeavour to support persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home support services such as personal assistants, thus ensuring that people with disabilities are to be able to live independently;
5. that there be a greater need for collaboration between the County Council, HSE and stakeholders on receipt of a housing application with specific needs – this will enable the HSE/stakeholders to ensure that a person has an assessment of need completed to identify the supports that are required;

# **8.Challenges, risks and opportunities**

There are a number of challenges that will have to be addressed in order to achieve the vision of the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability but we must approach the task in a positive manner and without giving false expectations to individuals we must give hope of a real choice in how they live their lives.

* The supply of housing is a common challenge that is faced by all individuals, young and old, trying to source appropriate accommodation whether it is through social housing support, the private rental market or private home ownership. However, for some people with a disability where their income is limited or there is a requirement to have the property adapted, the challenge is even bigger.
* It must also be noted that in a number of cases even if the most appropriate property was identified the proposed occupant may not be able to avail of the opportunity to live there due to the lack of support to live independently. The availability of Personal Assistant Workers can be a challenge to providing Personal Supports to people with disabilities accessing housing in order to live independently. Solutions to this challenge need to be identified as early as possible. The HDSG encourages persons on the approved housing list to apply to the HSE for an “Assessment of Need” for Personal Supports to meet their needs to live independently.
* Irish Wheelchair Association’s Think Ahead Think Housing campaign will help mitigate against the risks of people with disabilities becoming homeless (Currently one in four homeless people have a disability.)
* The lived experience must be considered in housing design. Creative housing design will assist people with disabilities to live independently.
* One of the key benefits from the Disability Housing Group meetings has been the opportunity for services to communicate and collaborate. This will hopefully develop a better understanding of the housing needs and the process involved in providing housing. Collaboration between the HSDG stakeholders on receipt of a housing application with specific needs – this will enable the HSE/stakeholders to ensure that a person has an assessment of need (AON) completed to identify the supports that are required as early as possible.
* HSDG stakeholders need to be familiar with new housing developments so clients can be identified as suitable and plans for funding and necessary supports put in place. It will be necessary to list the number of accessible housing which will be available through new developments.
* The cap on housing adaptation grants does not reflect the increase in building costs. While the means test for the housing grant may include the income of people who will not be contributing to the costs, such as siblings. The complexity of the application process itself, as well as the timeframe for the whole process, is also a significant challenge for some people with a disability, their families and caregivers.
* Streamline the CAS process. Furthermore, Services accessing the CAS scheme may be requested to compromise on the space and adaptations incorporated into the building in order to reduce the unit price. However, it is often essential that the building include full wheelchair access, sensory room / quiet space, space for support staff, etc. It is also more cost effective to include adaptations initially rather than retro-fitting.
* Collaboration between the HSE, County Council and the disability services may help to bring the timelines for housing and support service funding into closer alignment. A delay in support service funding from the HSE will often lead to a delay in the person being able to live in their new home.
* Clustered housing/apartment model gives people independence within their own space, while also allowing for easy access to support staff and the opportunity to socialise with peers.

# **9.Targets and Deliverables under the Strategy**

The HDSG stakeholders will have a key role in driving the Strategy & it will be essential that;

* HDSG quarterly meetings are attended by all stakeholders
* Agenda & reporting information be circulated well in advance of these meetings
* Minutes of meetings circulated promptly after these meetings
* Actions agreed at these meetings are promptly followed up on
* Annual review of membership of the HDSG

Based on the figures outlined in Section 5 and the various delivery methods outlined in Section 6, an overall allocation target based on existing needs to be set each year of the Strategy, aiming to improve on the number of homes delivered for PWD in previous years.

# **10.Reporting**

This plan will be reviewed at the end of the first quarter of each year in order to report on the deliverables for the previous year and to examine the appropriateness of the proposed outputs for the coming year. It will be very difficult to set targets further into the future as housing requirements will vary year on year. Reporting will include allocations made to those with disabled needs.