



**Peter
McVerry
Trust**

Opening doors for
homeless people

Peter McVerry Trust's Proposals for Budget 2021

September 2020

About Peter McVerry Trust

Peter McVerry Trust is a national housing and homeless charity committed to reducing homelessness and the harm caused by substance misuse and social disadvantage. The charity provides low-threshold entry services, primarily to younger people and vulnerable adults with complex needs, and offers pathways out of homelessness based on the principles of the Housing First model. Our vision is an Ireland that supports all those on the margins and upholds their rights to full inclusion in society.

Peter McVerry Trust provides residential and supported temporary accommodation for under 18s, adults and families. The charity also provides Housing with Supports and Tenancy Sustainment services for various local authorities in the form of Housing First and SLI (Support to Live Independently), which serves people who are, or are at risk of, homelessness.

Peter McVerry Trust also provides specialised drug treatment services through a stabilisation day-programme and a residential community detox. Peter McVerry Trust delivers an accommodation and resettlement service, on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality and in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), for people staying in Direct Provision centres who have a status of leave to remain. In 2019, the charity worked with 6,184 people and was active in most local authorities across Ireland.

Peter McVerry Trust's national headquarters are located in Dublin. The charity also has a mid-west regional office in Limerick City and a northeast regional office in Drogheda, Co Louth. As of September 2020, Peter McVerry Trust was supporting 1,850 people per night across Ireland in our housing, homeless and residential services. We are currently working across 27 local authorities and doing more than ever to tackle homelessness.

Key Actions

In Budget 2021, Peter McVerry Trust is asking Government to make provision for the following actions.

- 1 Increase all regional Housing First targets
- 2 Ensure State-funded housing schemes deliver one-bedroom homes
- 3 Reduce VAT on building re-use projects to 9%
- 4 Increase funding to support vulnerable and at risk students
- 5 Increase budget threshold for Repair and Leasing projects to €60,000
- 6 Increase funding for Mental Health Supports
- 7 Introduce a Social Care/Social Work Bursary Scheme

1. Increase all regional Housing First targets

Context:

Housing First is a globally recognised and well-established model of supporting people out of homelessness. The model has been rolled out nationally under the remit of the National Director for Housing First. As it works predominantly with single people who are sleeping rough and/or long-term homeless people, it plays a key role in housing some of the most vulnerable in our society. Expanding the targets means more vulnerable people within homelessness can be housed.

Aim:

To set out a more ambitious target for the delivery of Housing First programmes across Ireland by increasing regional targets.

Action:

Increase Housing First funding to allow targets to be increased by 25%.



2. Ensure State-funded housing schemes deliver one-bedroom homes

Context:

The largest cohort in homelessness are single-person households. The largest cohort on the social housing waiting list are single-person households. Yet, there is both a lack of availability and undersupply of this type of home across both the private and public sector. This makes it more challenging to secure housing pathways for people in homelessness and makes it harder for people to stop falling into homelessness if they lose a one-bedroom home they already have.

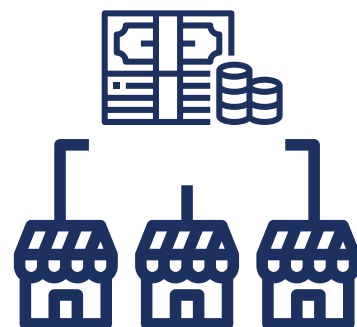
Aim:

To ensure that State-financed and enabled projects adequately contribute to the delivery of one-bedroom homes to meet the housing needs of single people.

Actions:

To undertake a full review of the schemes where the State is directly financing, contributing to, or enabling delivery of housing schemes to ensure those schemes truly reflect a balance of housing need.

To establish annual, local authority-specific targets for the delivery of one-bedroom homes.



3. Reduce VAT on Building Re-use Projects to 9%

Context:

There is scope to achieve increased delivery of apartments in urban environments by re-using vacant upper floors and commercial premises for the delivery of social housing units. Any mechanism that can make these projects more financially viable, and thus more likely to be delivered, should be pursued by Government.

Aim:

Identify vacant sites and buildings across Ireland, and use them as an efficient, cost-effective way to deliver social housing that improves housing availability, housing affordability, and ultimately reduces homelessness.

Action:

Reduce the rate of VAT on re-use projects that deliver social housing units to 9%.



4. Increase funding to support vulnerable and at risk students



Context:

In 2019, Peter McVerry Trust and DCU's Educational Disadvantage Centre published a research report on the educational needs and experiences of young men in homeless services. The report highlighted gaps in the provision of appropriate supports for at risk and vulnerable students within the school system. In particular, the report recommended significant additional resources to enable schools to provide a more holistic support environment to their students and to enable students to achieve better educational outcomes, and reduce the risk of expulsion, suspension and detention of students.

Aim:

To ensure that vulnerable students within the education system receive timely, appropriate access to supports that enable them to remain and succeed in our education system.

Actions:

Provide a distinct funding strand for adequate emotional counselling and/or therapeutic supports in and around schools to support children and young people experiencing trauma and adverse childhood experiences, and to support the mental health of vulnerable students.

Establish a distinct funding strand to develop Community Lifelong Learning Centres, integrated with Multidisciplinary Teams as one-stop-shops for meeting diverse holistic educational needs, including for young people at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.

Establish an Interdepartmental National Expert Advisory Group to develop a National Strategic Action Plan for meeting the holistic educational needs of children and young people in care.

5. Increase budget threshold for Repair and Leasing projects to €60,000



Context:

The Repair and Leasing scheme is a welcome initiative that supports bringing long-term vacant units back into use as social housing. It is a scheme that is fully supported by Peter McVerry Trust and one that we think could deliver more units if the budget threshold was increased from the current €40,000 to €60,000. Since the onset of Covid-19, there has been an increase in the number of property owners seeking information on the Repair and Leasing scheme to turn their vacant residential, and indeed commercial units, into social housing units.

Aim:

To increase the delivery of social housing units by making more projects financially viable.

Action:

Increase the Repair and Leasing scheme budget threshold to €60,000 per project.

6. Increase funding for Mental Health Supports

Context:

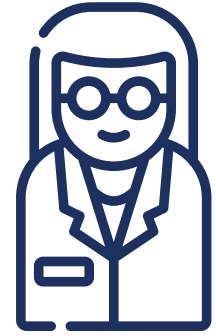
The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in lower levels of face-to-face interaction with people who are accessing homeless day services and people living in supported social housing units. This has presented clear and obvious challenges for people, and in particular, it is impacting negatively on their mental health. Given the uncertainty as to when we will return to 'normal', it is vital that a comprehensive set of counselling, therapy and support services are available to people by telephone, or online, that can deal with the particular issues faced by people with a history of homelessness.

Aim:

To improve the availability of suitable mental health supports for people accessing homeless services and vulnerable social housing tenants.

Action:

To allocate an additional €5 million for the roll out of a national programme of online/telephone mental health supports for people impacted by homelessness and vulnerable social housing tenants.



7. Introduce a Social Care/Social Work Bursary Scheme

Context:

There is clear and obvious need to ensure that we have enough qualified social care/social work staff to offer support to vulnerable people and communities. There are challenges for statutory and voluntary bodies in recruiting the number of staff required to deliver key, core services.

Aim:

To increase the availability of high-quality social care/social work staff for the delivery of essential frontline services.

Action:

Introduce a new social care/social work bursary scheme to enable and encourage more people to take up social care/social work courses at third level.





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