



# Submission to the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan

February 2026

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# Background to submission

The vision of Peter McVerry Trust (PMVT) is an Ireland that supports all those on the margins and upholds their rights to full inclusion. A human-rights based approach through a trauma-informed lens is integral to the ethos, mission and values of the organisation and provision of services. It applies to how decisions are made, how people are spoken to, how risks are managed, and how support is provided when someone is ill, vulnerable or needs care. PMVT are committed to supporting parents experiencing homelessness to maintain their role as the primary caretakers of their children as we work with the family to support them to exit homelessness.

PMVT would like to acknowledge the commitment of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the launch of their new housing strategy Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025 – 2030. We support the strengthening of legislation and placing increased importance on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In particular, the impact of the Housing For All Homeless Action Plan is noted with regards the intention or commitment to nonemergency accommodation.

Our aim is to provide feedback under headings laid out in Pillar 2 of the new strategy which is also a key focus of our work - Supporting People. PMVT works with children and families across a wide spectrum of needs, where services and supports are individualised and tailored to meet all families where they are at and support them out of homelessness.

For our submission to the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan, the recommendations have been developed with the varied needs of the following cohorts in mind:

- Youth parents (18 to 24) – including care leavers and single mothers
- Travelling/Roma Community
- Large families (4+ children/ dependents)
- Families with children with additional needs
- Intergenerational families in homelessness
- Those experiencing homelessness due gender-based violence

# Recommendations on addressing homelessness for families

In Pillar 2, the strategy outlines the plan to address the needs of the ‘most vulnerable in our communities’ to support them in accessing housing. While this list is by no means exhaustive, PMVT proposes the considerations of the following interventions to ensure that these communities have their specific needs addressed in the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan.

## 1. Preventing homelessness through enhanced tenancy sustainment supports and increase Higher Housing Assistance Payment rates and discretionary payments

PMVT is pleased to see prevention as a core element of the strategy with the inclusion of the Second- Hand Social Housing Acquisitions Programme. In relation to preventing tenancy breakdown in the early stages of progression and for those progressing out of emergency accommodation situations, PMVT proposes the inclusion of further tenancy sustainment supports which might include:

- Increased HHAP rates to reflect the private market costs of renting in specific areas.
- Some Local Authority discretion with regards to providing additional financial means to support families into private rental properties.
- Enhanced availability for wraparound supports such as Tenancy Sustainment Support (TSS) and Support to Live Independently (SLI) for families who are transitioning into long-term accommodation if required. These could include but not limited to tenancy management, wellbeing supports and education and employment access for the first 12 months.

## 2. Re-establish the role the National Family Homelessness Liaison Officer and expanding teams across catchment areas

As part of the ‘Whole of Government Approach’, PMVT highly values the recognition of a cross-departmental initiative, with this in mind we would encourage the re-establishment of the National Family Homelessness Liaison Officer role and developing family homelessness support units under the remit of every catchment area. From previous organisational experience, we found working with this National Homelessness Liaison Officer based in the Dublin Region Homelessness Executive, beneficial to assessing and supporting vulnerable homelessness families.

- Under the cross departmental initiative re-establishing the national homelessness liaison officer role and the expansion of teams for each catchment area.
- The creation of multi-disciplinary teams which sit across agencies and catchment areas to support families experiencing homeless could include:
  - Social worker
  - Public health nurse
  - Social Welfare Liaison
  - Social Inclusion
  - Housing Progression Liaison Workers

### 3. Ensure the standardisation of social inclusion health, transport, educational and welfare supports across catchment areas for families experiencing homelessness

The organisation recognises the significant impact high mobility has on families experiencing homelessness such as moving across waiting lists (e.g. assessments for additional needs). The ability to access education, social inclusion health, transport, and welfare supports can differ across catchment areas. For example, while maintaining educational placements is a protective factor for children experiencing homelessness, it is difficult when no access to transport is available from emergency accommodation services.

Increased availability of accessible, affordable, child care and early education for children is critical. Also, the provision of supports for school age children, to target particular needs which children in homelessness may experience, including culturally appropriate supports. Also, having access to such childcare allows families to maximise their potential of moving out of homelessness by allowing time for education, employment and seeking accommodation. This is also important to support children to meet their developmental milestones and provide consistency during times of transition.

Other supports such as access to psychiatric care can also vary across catchment areas. This transitional period across catchment areas and services is recognised as a heightened period of vulnerability where PMVT believes a whole of government approach offers a crucial opportunity to address this and could include the following:

- An MDT could support with navigating these transitional periods and accessing supports in new catchment areas and ensure that families are prioritised in terms of access.
- Targeted availability of childcare and early education places for families experiencing

homelessness.

- Targeted, culturally appropriate interventions and supports for children experiencing homelessness in schools.
- Financial support, similar to the DRHE leap card provision, to homeless families with school aged children to access education, particularly when families change location due to homelessness.

#### 4. Prioritising the availability of appropriate short-term housing.

As mentioned similarly in the Delivering Homes, Building Communities strategy, article 27 of the UNCRC highlights the importance of providing an adequate standard of living for every child including State obligations to provide nutrition, clothing and housing supports. PMVT would like to reinforce the shared awareness between government and other relevant bodies, such as the Ombudsman for Children of the impact of emergency accommodation on children's psychosocial, emotional and physical development. With this in mind it would be of benefit to increase the availability of alternative, quality short-term housing options.

The importance of a child-centred perspective guides the following considerations to include:

- Establishing increased 'own front door' units for families where delays are likely to be higher to due particular needs such as size, requirement for disability access etc to minimise the impact of prolonged periods in homeless accommodation in line with the national housing Strategy for Disabled People, 2022-2027.
- The continued oversight of National Quality Standards Framework across all accommodation provision to support quality and enhancement of provision.

# Recommendations on supporting specific housing needs for families

## 1. Ensuring a range of housing options and tailored support infrastructures are available.

There are a wide variety of demographics of families accessing homeless service provision. We would like to emphasize the diversity of housing and social needs required for families experiencing homelessness. While some individual families require minimum interventional social supports, other families require longer-term supported housing.

All of the services provided by PMVT are underpinned by a trauma-informed approach. For children and families with specific needs, some of the challenges in providing specific housing needs remain practical and supply driven. In particular:

- A number of our participants face challenges in the allocation of housing large enough for their families, as such, larger families can end up spending more time in emergency accommodation due to the lack of supply. PMVT acknowledge the plan to increase construction of four-bed properties as integral to future social housing planning and project developments.
- For families who also include elderly or people with disabilities, a greater number of ground floor properties should be constructed or made available to ensure manageable access for these cohorts.
- An increase in the number of supported housing options, to provide a range of supports available that meet the varied circumstances of those in need; including a consideration of an introduction of Housing First for Families and additional long-term supported accommodation with stepped- down supports.

## 2. Incorporating and actively implementing UNCRC Article 12 in social housing allocation

Aligned with the *Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025-2030*, PMVT strongly agrees with enhancing legislation to ensure the best interests of the child at the forefront of any decision-making affecting their lives. In particular, PMVT would like to emphasise increasing the importance the role of the child's voice in the allocation of social housing. For example, their contributions on social housing needs requests may include such issues as access to friends, family and wider social communities.

Additionally, education and sustaining educational placements in schools is paramount for positive child outcomes and school placement stability should be strongly considered when allocating social housing. With specific mention to article 12 of the UNCRC, we recognise the State's legal obligation to ensure that children are given the opportunity to be heard, and that their voices be listened to, meaningfully engaged with and valued. We would like to recommend that:

- The child voice, their expressed, and felt needs, are given due weight when decisions are made on the allocation of social housing for them and their families.
- In particular, focusing on ensuring students school placement is maintained and accessible when allocating social housing in a given area.

# Summary of key recommendations

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>Addressing homelessness</b>	1. Preventing homelessness through enhanced tenancy sustainment supports, increasing HAAP rates and discretionary payments. Provision of Housing First for Families.
	2. Re-establish the role of National Family Homelessness Liaison Officer and create linked MDT teams across catchment areas.
	3. Ensure the standardisation of child care, social inclusion health, transport, educational and welfare supports across catchment areas for families experiencing homelessness
	4. Prioritising appropriate short-term housing for families who's housing needs will require a longer period to resolve.
<b>Supporting specific housing needs</b>	1. Ensuring a range of housing options and tailored support infrastructures are available
	2. Incorporating and actively implementing the UNCRC Article 12 in social housing allocation

## Concluding statement

PMVT would like to thank the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for the opportunity to contribute to this public consultation. We are committed to the delivery of the Delivering Homes, Building Communities Strategy and the future Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan, in partnership with the Department and our shared stakeholders for the benefit of the children, families and the communities we work with.

Due to format constraints of this submission, PMVT would welcome the opportunity to provide the space for meaningful contributions of the children and families availing of our services. This contribution could be from a co-creative, participatory action research approach. This can be organised by our research and policy team, and/or with department of housing representatives. We look forward to hearing from you.

