

COPE Galway Pre-Budget Submission - Budget 2021

Introduction and Background

COPE Galway is a local charity that provides a range of services to some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in Galway. The services we provide are across three main areas:

- Homeless Services
- Domestic Abuse Services for Women and Children
- Services for Older People

Our vision is a community where every person is valued, cared for, and supported at every stage of life.

We work to achieve this vision by providing essential supports for people at challenging times in their lives, and by advocating for systemic change to remove the root causes of inequality and disadvantage that constrain the wellbeing and development of individuals, families and communities.

Our mission is to make a positive difference by empowering people, creating change, and strengthening communities.

We understand, respect, and respond to the needs of those who struggle with the challenges of homelessness and domestic abuse, and we support older people towards healthy and active ageing.

The response to the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis has clearly demonstrated that where there is political will great things can be done for the common good. The pandemic is also showing us how vulnerable many in our society are and that it is our collective responsibility to ensure all in our society feel safe and secure. Budget 2021 presents an opportunity to build on the good work of the past seven months and to further address the needs of the vulnerable in our society. In this submission we set out a range of recommendations we strongly believe are necessary to achieve this.

Housing

Right to Housing

Over the last number of years, we have seen an increasing number of households becoming homeless and who continue to live in and rely on emergency accommodation for extended periods. This has been most remarked on in wider discourse in terms of the numbers of families including children impacted but there are also significant numbers of single people who are homeless. Increasing rents, limited social housing supply and the commodification of housing are among the main contributing factors to this situation.

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The Right to Housing has been part of this wider public discourse. The Programme for Government published on June 2020 with the formation of the new Government states “We will hold referendums on housing...”¹ While this reference is vague, enumerating the right to housing in the constitution has been proposed as something which should be considered². COPE Galway feels that, as a matter of urgency, a referendum on enshrining the right to housing in the Irish Constitution should be held.

Social Housing

According to the Social Housing Needs Assessments 2019, there were 68,693 households on waiting lists for social housing nationally. Of this number, 3,146 were on the social housing list across the two Galway Housing Authorities³. At the end of the second quarter of 2019, over 62,700 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies were in place nationally with more than 48,000 households in total actively in receipt of HAP support⁴. Households receiving HAP have a housing need they cannot meet themselves. Therefore, it can be argued there are approximately 116,693⁵ households with a housing need that cannot be met through their own resources. With 17,025 HAP tenancies set up in 2019⁶ and a target of 86,510 HAP tenancies to be set up by 2021⁷, solutions to the housing crisis are increasingly being sought in the private rental sector rather than through the provision of traditional social housing. COPE Galway contends that this is not sustainable and strongly advocates that social housing need must be met through the construction of additional social housing units. However, the target for building of social housing between 2016 and 2021, which is 33,617,⁸ is far below what is required. The overall target for social housing provision through all streams of social housing support including social housing build, acquisitions and refurbishments and through HAP and other rent subsidy type schemes during the 2016-2021 timeframe is 140,793. By the end of 2019, a total of 100,124 had been delivered through all streams⁹.

COPE Galway welcomes the new Government’s commitment to “Increase the social housing stock by more than 50,000, with an emphasis on new builds”¹⁰ and recommends that the necessary financial resources and funding be put in place through Budget 2021 to demonstrate the Government’s intent to honour this commitment. However, it must be noted that 50,000 social housing homes is not enough to house all households on the social housing waiting list.

¹ Programme for Government – Our Shared Future. 2010. 120

² Convention on the Constitution .Eighth Report of the Convention on the Constitution Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) Rights. March, 2014 and Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs. Report on the Impact of Homelessness on Children. November 2019

³ Housing Agency. Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2019 Key Findings. December 2019.

⁴ Murphy, E. Housing Assistance Payment Expenditure Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday - 10 December 2019. Available at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2019-12-10/652/> Accessed 12th June 2020

⁵ 68,693 plus 48,000 equals 116,693.

⁶ HAP Quarterly Statistics 2019. Available at <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision> Accessed 12th June 2020

⁷ Rebuilding Ireland - Progress against Targets. Available at <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision> Accessed 12th June 2020

⁸ Rebuilding Ireland - Progress against Targets.

⁹ Rebuilding Ireland - Progress against Targets.

¹⁰ Programme for Government-Our Shared Future. 2020 . 54

Older Persons Housing

At the last census the population aged 65 years and over increased to 637,567 and of this total, 156,799 lived alone¹¹. Over 39,000 people aged 55 or over rent from a private landlord¹² and there are also 16,486 households whose main social housing applicant is over 50¹³. With the state pension being just under €1,076¹⁴ per month and standardised average rent nationally at €1,226,¹⁵ COPE Galway is concerned as to how those renting will afford rent as they progress into their later years. Planning for the increasing number of renters in the private market who may not be able to afford housing when retired must be a priority. This planning should focus on increasing social housing for older people.

COPE Galway welcomes the joint policy statement “Housing Options for our Ageing Population” and its programme of strategic actions, launched in 2019. While we welcome all actions that increase housing and accommodation options for our older population, we particularly welcome Action 1.1: “Develop a catalogue of housing options that provide a range of choices that meet the diverse need of an ageing population, spanning owner occupier, private rental and social housing, whilst providing accessible care and the associated support needs”¹⁶ and Action 4.6: “In partnership with industry, introduce measures to ensure that over a five year period delivery is increased to ensure that 30% of all new dwellings are built to incorporate universal design principles to accommodate our ageing population”¹⁷. COPE Galway believes that housing policy specifically for older people should consider a planning requirement whereby all housing developments be required to deliver a number of units designed specifically for the needs of older people.

Housing Assistance Payment

HAP does not represent value for money in the view of COPE Galway, costing €1,063.514 in the period between its introduction in 2014 and May 2020¹⁸. Budget 2020 increased funding for the HAP to €497.7 million¹⁹. This is not value for money.

Research conducted by the Simon Communities of Ireland in March 2020 analysed the initial impact of COVID-19 on the availability and rent levels for residential properties advertised on Daft.ie across the four main cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway.²⁰ It showed a 32.5% increase in properties advertised to rent between March 2nd 2020 (1,330 properties) and March 25th 2020 (1,762 properties).

¹¹ Central Statistics Office. Census of Population 2016 - Profile 3 An Age Profile of Ireland. Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep-p-cp3oy/cp3/agr/> Accessed 16th September 2020

¹² Central Statistics Office. Age Group of Persons in Private Households 2011 to 2016 by Nature of Occupancy, Sex, Type of Private Accommodation, Census Year and Statistic. Available at <https://statbank.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=E3015&PLanguage=0> Accessed 16th September 2020

¹³ Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2019. Key Findings. 17

¹⁴ Maximum State Pension (Contributory) rate in 2020 for people who qualified before 1 September 2012 is €248.30 (€248.30 multiplied by 52=12,911.60 divided by 12 equals 1,075.96)

¹⁵ The Residential Tenancies Board. The RTB Q4 2019 Rent Index. Available at

https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/images/uploads/Comms%20and%20Research/RTB_Rent_Index_2019_Q4_Infographic_Final.pdf Accessed 12th June 2020

¹⁶ Government of Ireland. Housing Options for Our Ageing Population - Policy Statement. 2019. 27

¹⁷ Ibid 30

¹⁸ Compiled from data provided by Murphy, E. response to parliamentary question from O’Broin, E. Housing Assistance Payment Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday - 16 June 2020 Available at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2020-06-16/1057/#pq_1057 Accessed 06/07/2020

¹⁹ Murphy, E. response to parliamentary question from O’Broin, E. Housing Assistance Payment Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday - 16 June 2020 Available at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2020-06-16/1057/#pq_1057 Accessed 06/07/2020

²⁰ Dublin City Centre, Dublin City North, Dublin City South, Limerick City Centre, Limerick City Suburbs, Galway City Centre, Galway City Suburbs, Cork City Centre and Cork City Suburbs.

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The introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic restriction occurred during March 2020. Of the 1,762 properties advertised for rent across these four Irish cities on March 25th 2020, the asking rent levels for 510 of these, representing 28.9% of properties advertised, were within maximum rent limits for homeless HAP²¹. Of these 510 properties, 490 were in the Dublin region with just 20 across the other three cities. In the case of Galway City Centre there was a 96% increase in the number of advertised properties in this period, up from 26 to 50 properties, with only one within a HAP limit²². Of a total of 64 properties advertised on 25th March 2020 in Galway City suburbs, just two came within the HAP limits relating to at least one of the four demographic groups²³. This data is indicative of COPE Galway's experience working with those searching for affordable properties and something we have long stated, that HAP levels must reflect actual market rents.

Private Rental Sector

COPE Galway welcomes the new Programme for Government's commitment to "Improve the supply and affordability of rental accommodation and the security of tenure for renters"²⁴. We are particularly pleased to see a commitment to legislate for tenancies of indefinite duration and increasing RTB inspections and enforcement. However all measures must be adequately resourced.

The issues of high rent levels needs to addressed in Budget 2021. As part of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a total ban on rent increases. While COPE Galway welcomed this measure, it failed to address the issue of what we consider were already excessively high rent levels. The standardised average rent nationally is €1,226 while in Galway City it is €1,147²⁵. In terms of asking rents for residential properties advertised for rent, Daft.ie indicate that the average monthly rent in the first quarter of 2020 is €1,418 nationally and in Galway City it is €1,319²⁶. Irrespective of which figures you focus on, what is clear is that rents are unacceptably high.

Between March and April 2020, average rents nationwide dropped by 2.1%, the largest one-month drop since March 2009²⁷. While any drop in rental costs is welcomed, when this drop is put in the context that between their lowest point in the early 2010s and the peak in quarter 1 of 2020, rents rose by between 52% in Connacht-Ulster and 107% in Dublin,²⁸ it does not represent any great improvement.

Simon Communities of Ireland research found that in Galway City suburbs there was a 33.3% increase in properties advertised for rent in the period between March 2nd and 25th 2020. The median advertised rent levels of one-bed properties fell from €829 to €800 over this period while two-bed properties rose from €1250 to €1300 and three-beds rose from €1350 to €1500. This research concluded that affordability does not seem to have improved with the increase in available properties in Galway²⁹.

²¹ Single people. Couples with no children. Couples/one parent with one child. Couples/one parent and two children

²² Simon Communities of Ireland. Assessing the initial impact of COVID-19 crisis on rental Availability. A Comparative Analysis. March 2020. 3-4

²³ Simon Communities of Ireland. Assessing the initial impact of COVID-19 crisis on rental Availability. A Comparative Analysis. March 2020. 6

²⁴ Programme for Government-Our Shared Future. 2020.54

²⁵ The Residential Tenancies Board. The RTB Q4 2019 Rent Index. Available at https://onestopshop.rtb.ie/images/uploads/Comms%20and%20Research/RTB_Rent_Index_2019_Q4_Infographic_Final.pdf Accessed 12th June 2020

²⁶ Daft.ie. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report – 2020 Q1. 12th May 2020

²⁷ Daft.ie. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report – 2020 Q1. 12th May 2020. 9

²⁸ Daft.ie. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report – 2020 Q1. 12th May 2020. 9

²⁹ Simon Communities of Ireland. Assessing the initial impact of COVID-19 crisis on rental Availability. A Comparative Analysis. March 2020.

Short Term lets

On May 1st 2020 there were almost 3,800 homes available to rent, an increase of 40% on the same month the previous year, which had been an all-time low in availability since January 2006³⁰. According to DAFT.ie, there was an increase in rental listings in central Dublin, and to a lesser extent in Galway City, in the second half of March, apparently a result of short-term lets moving over to the long-term rental market³¹. AirDNA reported a drop in new bookings on their platform, down from 10,000 in the beginning of February to 4,000 nationally in mid-April. This trend is reversing with a peak in bookings of 14,000 during the second week of June³². While it is unclear if these bookings were rooms or full homes, COPE Galway has always believed that the availability of full homes to rent on the short term letting market is contributing to the housing crisis by removing homes from the rental market. In addition to the 2019 legislation on short-term lettings, COPE Galway welcomes the Programme for Government's commitment to "Strengthen the regulatory and enforcement mechanisms with regard to short-term lettings³³". Budget 2021 must show its commitment to improving the regulation of rental sector by providing adequate financial resources to support the commitments in Programme for Government.

Homelessness

In 2019, COPE Galway's Homeless Service supported 1,622 people, including 868 single people, 18 couples and 187 families with 433 children. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, our services were regularly at capacity meaning we were heavily reliant on private emergency accommodation such as hotels and B&Bs to address the accommodation needs of newly-presenting homeless households and a number of people continued to rough sleep in Galway.

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis COPE Galway, working in close cooperation with Galway City Council, mobilised quickly to ensure that we responded to all those who needed accommodation. It is important to acknowledge this would not have been possible without the dedication and sacrifice of our frontline staff across homeless and housing services. Our staff were responsive and flexible and mobilised to ensure services stayed open and that additional emergency accommodation provision was properly and professionally operated. This necessitated changing how we worked and for many, this involved working longer or extra shifts to ensure homeless individuals kept safe. This work and that of colleagues in this sector has gone widely unacknowledged by our Government.

³⁰Daft.ie. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report – 2020 Q1. 12th May 2020.9

³¹Daft.ie. The Daft.ie Rental Price Report – 2020 Q1. 12th May 2020.4

³² COVID-19 Data Center, Country-Level Insights. Available at <https://www.airdna.co/covid-19-data-center>. Accessed 6th July 2020

³³ Programme for Government-Our Shared Future. 2020 . 56

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Recent homeless figures detail that there were 6,046 adults and 2,653 dependents homeless and living in emergency accommodation across the state in June 2020. In the west region, which includes Galway City and County, Mayo and Roscommon, the number in June 2020 was 297 adults and 170 children³⁴, with the vast majority of these in Galway City. This was a decrease from the same time in 2019 when figures stood at 6,497 adults and 3,675 children nationally including 337 adults and 199 children in the west region³⁵. While any reduction is welcomed, COPE Galway are concerned that these figures may not reflect an accurate picture of the situation. Homeless figures do not include those who are rough sleeping or are hidden homeless or living in over-crowded accommodation and therefore do not accurately reflect the true extent of homelessness in Ireland.

Length of stay in Emergency Accommodation

Recent Data highlights that by the end of the second quarter of 2020, 62% of adult individuals had been accessing emergency accommodation for more than six months with the West region having the second largest proportion at 61%³⁶. While there is no data regarding the picture nationally, the figures highlight that within the Dublin region 72% of families in emergency accommodation at the end of Quarter 2, 2020, were being accommodated for 6 months or longer, with 19% accommodated for 24 months or more³⁷. We know that spending a long time in emergency accommodation is not appropriate or acceptable with risks of institutionalisation and such situations being detrimental to a child's development.

Through our work with families, what we understand is that some families who are homeless will likely remain in emergency accommodation in such settings and have high support needs that require alternative responses.

Youth Homelessness

The latest figures are that there are 731 young people, aged between 18 and 24 accessing homeless accommodation³⁸. COPE Galway, as a member of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, has long advocated for a dedicated youth homelessness strategy and are pleased to see a commitment in the Programme for Government to Develop a National Youth Homelessness Strategy³⁹.

Prevention, Housing First and Tenancy Supports

In 2019 in the West Region, €895,587 was spent on Homeless Prevention, Tenancy Sustainment and Resettlement Supports, while €7,323,998 was spent on emergency accommodation⁴⁰. There has not been adequate investment in homelessness prevention. The expression 'prevention is better than cure' is especially relevant in respect of homelessness. Accessing homeless services can be traumatic for individuals and families and should be undertaken only when all other options are exhausted.

³⁴ Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Homelessness Report June 2020. Available at https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless_report_-_june_2020.pdf. Accessed 14th August 2020

³⁵ Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Homelessness Report June 2019.

³⁶ Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government. Homeless Quarterly Progress Report Quarter 2. 2020. 5

³⁷ Homeless Quarterly Progress Report Quarter 2 2020. 7

³⁸ Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Homelessness Report June 2020. Available at https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless_report_-_june_2020.pdf Accessed 14th August 2020

³⁹ Programme for Government-Our Shared Future. 2020 .55

⁴⁰ West Region Local Authority Homelessness Financial Report End of Year 2019. Available at https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/financial_report_end_of_year_2019_-_west.pdf Accessed 17th August 2020

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COPE Galway welcomed the publication of the Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021. However, achieving its targets of 663 housing first tenancies nationally, including 30 for Galway City and 19 for Galway County⁴¹ is proving challenging. As of the second quarter of 2020, the numbers of individuals in Housing First tenancies was 449, with nine in the western region⁴².

Recommendations - Housing and Homelessness

- Increase social housing supply through new build with a mix of dwelling types and sizes that correspond to the profile of households on social housing waiting lists.
- Introduce legislation for tenancies of indefinite duration⁴³.
- Adequately fund and resource the RTB to help ensure an increase in rental inspections and enforcements.
- Adequately fund and resource regulatory and enforcement mechanisms for short-term lettings and monitor and report on the performance of local authorities in relation to the enforcement of these regulations.
- Increase HAP limits to reflect actual asking market rent levels.
- Ensure the accurate reporting of homeless figures by aligning to the ETHOS typology⁴⁴.
- Increase investment in prevention and tenancy supports⁴⁵.
- Hold a referendum on the Constitutional Right to Housing⁴⁶.
- Set a time limit on the use of family hubs and emergency accommodation⁴⁷.
- Introduce a fully resourced Youth Homeless Strategy
- Adequately resource Housing First to ensure all targets are met, including introducing a Housing First programme for families.

Social Welfare

Many clients of COPE Galway are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. It is their source of income, their only financial lifeline. However, the level of payment is too low. The Programme for Government does not go far enough in the view of COPE Galway by only committing to “Protect core weekly social welfare rates”⁴⁸. Welfare rates must increase to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Recommendations - Social Welfare

- Increase Social Welfare payments by €7 per week⁴⁹.

⁴¹Government of Ireland. Housing First National Implementation Plan 2018-2021. 30

⁴²Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Homeless Quarterly Progress Report Quarter 2 2020. 7.

⁴³ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland

⁴⁴ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland.

⁴⁵ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland.

⁴⁶ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland.

⁴⁷ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland.

⁴⁸ Programme for Government-Our Shared Future. 2020 .74

⁴⁹ Figure recommended by Social Justice Ireland

Domestic Abuse

In 2019, COPE Galway's Domestic Abuse service supported 638 women and their children. We provided 68 women and 79 children with refuge. We offered 155 Play Therapy Sessions for children, conducted 855 outreach appointments and supported 197 court accompaniments. We also assisted and supported 162 women and 267 children whom we were unfortunately unable to accommodate in the refuge on 192 occasions due to not having sufficient capacity. This support included referral and facilitation to other refuges nationally, safety planning and other interventions and supports.

A major concern for COPE Galway is the reported⁵⁰ increased incidents of domestic abuse that occurred due to the measures and restrictions introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Social Impact of COVID-19 Survey April 2020 highlighted, of respondents living in multiple person households, 2.1% were very concerned about violence in the home⁵¹. An Garda Síochána launched Operation Faoiseamh in April 2020, which has seen thousands of contacts made with victims of domestic abuse⁵², with records indicating an increase of 20% in the number of domestic abuse incidents on PULSE and recorded by CAD, compared with the same time period in 2019⁵³.

COPE Galway's Domestic Abuse Service at Modh Eile House provides refuge accommodation and outreach support to women and their children who experience domestic abuse. In May 2020, we moved into our newly renovated and extended premises, which provides much more suitable accommodation. It contains 9 self-contained apartments with the capacity to accommodate at least 9 women and 20 children; a fit-for-purpose children's service; a support area with facilities and sufficient space to work with children ages 0 to 18 years; one-to-one consultation rooms; a group meeting/training room and office space for outreach services. In Modh Eile House, women have access to specialised support for themselves and their children. They can cook for themselves and their children, and ensure their children continue to go to school and have a safe environment conducive to family life. While this is very positive, our experience tells us that the refuge element of our service does not have enough space to accommodate all women and children on occasion. The Council of Europe recommends there is one family place per 10,000 of population⁵⁴. However, Tusla is applying a standard of shelter space per 10,000 head of female population⁵⁵. Under the Istanbul Convention, Ireland is obliged to have 472 places for victims of domestic violence⁵⁶, far above the 141⁵⁷ currently available.

Recommendations for Domestic Abuse Services.

- COPE Galway recommends that resources be put in place to provide an additional 331 refuge spaces, ensuring Ireland can meet its commitments under the Istanbul Convention⁵⁸.

⁵⁰ Farragher, F. Gardaí confirm domestic abuse rise during pandemic. Connacht Tribune. Published June 11, 2020 Available at <https://connachttribune.ie/gardai-confirm-domestic-abuse-rise-during-pandemic-098/> Accessed 12th June 2020

⁵¹ Central Statistics Office. Social Impact of COVID-19 Survey April 2020 Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-sic19/socialimpactofcovid-19surveyapril2020/personalconcerns/> Accessed 18th May 2020

⁵² An Garda Síochána. Monthly Report to the Policing Authority. August 2020.4.

⁵³ Ibid 5

⁵⁴ Council of Europe. Final Activity Report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence. 2008.84 Available at https://www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Source/final_Activity_report.pdf

⁵⁵ Zappone, K. Written answers. Department of Children and Youth Affairs Domestic Violence Refuges Provision. Tuesday, 22 January 2019. Available at <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2019-01-22a.1529> Accessed 28th April 2020

⁵⁶ Social Justice Ireland. Budget 2021 must address lack of domestic abuse refuge spaces. 19th August 2020. Available at <https://www.socialjustice.ie/content/policy-issues/budget-2021-must-address-lack-domestic-abuse-refuge-spaces> Accessed 19th August 2020

⁵⁷ Social Justice Ireland. Budget 2021 must address lack of domestic abuse refuge spaces. 19th August 2020.

⁵⁸ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland. Budget 2021 must address lack of domestic abuse refuge spaces. 19th August 2020

Older People

In 2019, COPE Galway's Senior Support Service supported 724 older people, ensuring independent ageing at home and helping older people in the community to continue living in their own home for as long as they wish to do so.

Ireland's older population is increasing, thus presenting new challenges in the areas of healthcare, pensions and housing. We must plan for these challenges now. Stated Government policy is 'to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence for as long as possible'⁵⁹, something that is repeated in the Programme for Government. This is in line with the preferred choice of the majority of older people. While life expectancy in Ireland has increased⁶⁰, not all additional years gained are lived in good health. COPE Galway has long believed that for many older people most supports can be provided in their own home.

Pensions

11.4% of pensioners live in poverty⁶¹. The state pension is a vital source of income for many older people. However, for those living alone, a recent ESRI study found they are at a greater risk of falling into poverty⁶².

Housing Adaption Grants

Eurostat data indicates that in 2017, 11.1% of those aged 65 and older were living in a dwelling with a leak, damp or rot⁶³. TILDA research from 2016 found that over half of adults aged 50 years and over experience some housing problem. However, 69% of these were classified as 'minor'⁶⁴. Between 2010 and 2018, the total spent on the Housing Adaption Grant for older people has fallen from just over €30million⁶⁵ to just over €13.9million⁶⁶, with the numbers receiving a grant dropping from 7,205 to 3,640⁶⁷. Housing adaption grants are vital in supporting older people to live in their own home for longer.

⁵⁹ Government of Ireland. Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement. 1

⁶⁰ OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2019), Ireland: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels. 4

⁶¹ Social Justice Ireland.2020. Poverty Focus 2020.May 2020.4

⁶² Beirne, K. Nolan, A. Roantree, B. Income Adequacy in Retirement: Evidence from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) July 2020.xii

⁶³ Data from Eurostat. Ageing Europe - statistics on housing and living conditions. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_housing_and_living_conditions#Living_conditions_for_older_people_in_their_local_area. Accessed 18th August 2020

⁶⁴ Scarlett, S. Donoghue, O. McGarrigle, C. Orr, J. Housing conditions of Ireland's older population Implications for physical and mental health. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing On behalf of the TILDA team October 2016. Key Findings.2016. 3

⁶⁵ 30,775,000

⁶⁶ 13,904,374

⁶⁷ Statistics from <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics>. Accessed 21st August 2020

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Homecare

To age in your own home requires adequate and properly resourced health supports. As the home care system currently operates, services can be limited and waiting lists long. In December 2019, there were 545 Delayed Discharges of older people with 7,819 people waiting for home support⁶⁸. The Government has committed to increase homecare hours and introduce a Statutory Homecare Scheme⁶⁹.

Recommendations - Older People

- Introduction of a single-rate universal state social welfare pension⁷⁰.
- Increase the state pension by €5 per week⁷¹
- Increase living alone allowance by €6 per week⁷²
- Increase the funding of Housing Adaption Grants.⁷³
- Put additional resources and funding in place to address urgent waiting lists and to increase the number of home help hours provided.
- Include a nutritional assessment in the proposed Statutory Homecare Scheme.

Health

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has shown us how vital a properly resourced health system is for all in our society, and importantly it has shown that change is needed. The emergency measures implemented are welcome and necessary. However more specific planning must take place to address the issues within our healthcare system that were present prior to the crisis and to better prepare for any future crises.

Prior to the pandemic, hospitals were working at almost full capacity. Many admissions to hospital are avoidable and can be treated in the community⁷⁴. It is widely acknowledged that countries with a strong primary care sector have better health outcomes, greater equity, lower mortality rates and lower overall costs of healthcare⁷⁵. The vision of The Sláintecare Report, adopted by Government, is to 'achieve a universal, single-tier health and social care system, where everyone has equitable access to services based on need, and not ability to pay'⁷⁶. The Sláintecare Report has highlighted the importance of integrated care and the relocation of care out of hospitals and into community and primary care settings. COPE Galway welcomes the new Programme for Government's Mission for Universal Health Care⁷⁷ and the acceleration of the implementation of Sláintecare⁷⁸ and expanding community-based care⁷⁹.

⁶⁸ Health Service Executive. Performance Profile October - December 2019. 27

⁶⁹ Programme for Government –Our Shared Future.45

⁷⁰ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland

⁷¹ Recommended by Age Action. Pre-Budget Submission 2021. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. 20 July 2020. 3

⁷² Recommended by Age Action Pre-Budget Submission 2021. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. 20 July 2020. 3

⁷³ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland

⁷⁴ OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Ireland: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU. 2019.15

⁷⁵ Department of Health.2016. Better Health, Improving Health Care. 17

⁷⁶ Department of Health. Sláintecare Action Plan 2019.8

⁷⁷ Programme for Government - Our Shared Future.2020. 43

⁷⁸ Programme for Government -Our Shared Future -.2020. 44

⁷⁹ Programme for Government- Our Shared Future.2020. 45

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We also welcome the commitment to “Establish a workforce planning expert unit to work with the education sectors, regulators, and professional bodies to improve the availability of health professionals and reform their training to support integrated care across the entire health service”⁸⁰. COPE Galway believes in ensuring health services are organised and managed so that individuals receive the right care they need, when it’s needed and delivered by the right discipline. This is vital in improving the quality of life for all individuals but especially for older persons we work with. The rollout of the Integrated Care Programme for Older People must be prioritised. Making a start in Integrated Care for Older Persons⁸¹ provides a practical guide to implementation using 10 essential steps. Two of these steps are a particular focus of the work of COPE Galway; step 5 - Develop a case management approach to manage the care needs of older people with the highest level of complexity⁸² and step 8 - Supports to live well⁸³. COPE Galway recommends prioritising the rollout of integrated care for older people.

Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic is also placing a burden on people’s mental health. Research undertaken in April 2020 found that 41% of people reported feeling lonely, 23% reported clinically meaningful levels of depression, 20% reported clinically meaningful levels of anxiety, and 18% reported clinically meaningful levels of post-traumatic stress⁸⁴. CSO data from April found that the number of respondents who would rate their overall life satisfaction as high had reduced. The share of respondents in this research aged 18-34 who felt they could *not* access non-material help such as somebody to talk to or help with doing something was over four times higher than in 2018, increasing to 16.0%. The figure for respondents aged 70 and over was 8.7%, double that of 2018⁸⁵.

Ireland has one of the highest estimated prevalence of mental health disorders in Europe with rates of 18.5% or more of the population having at least one disorder⁸⁶. Worryingly there were 421 deaths by suicide in 2019⁸⁷, an increase from 352 in 2018⁸⁸ while in 2018, the National Self-Harm Registry recorded 12,588 presentations to hospital due to self-harm, involving 9,785 individuals⁸⁹. 4.0% of all self-harm presentations was made by residents of homeless hostels and people of no fixed abode⁹⁰.

By the end of June 2019, there were 8,498 on the waiting list for Psychology in Primary Care of which 2,086 were waiting over 12 months⁹¹.

⁸⁰ Programme for Government- Our Shared Future.2020. 46

⁸¹ Health Service Executive. Making a start in Integrated Care for Older Persons.2017

⁸² Ibid 24

⁸³ Ibid 35

⁸⁴ Maynooth University. COVID-19 Mental Health Survey by Maynooth University and Trinity College finds high rates of anxiety. April 16, 2020. Available at <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/news-events/covid-19-mental-health-survey-maynooth-university-and-trinity-college-finds-high-rates-anxiety> Accessed 7th July 2020

⁸⁵ Central Statistics Office. Social Impact of COVID-19 Survey April 2020. Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-sic19/socialimpactofcovid-19surveyapril2020/introductionandsummaryofresults/> Accessed 18th of May 2020

⁸⁶ European Commission. Health at a Glance. Europe 2018.22.

⁸⁷ Central Statistics Office. CSO statistical publication, 29 May 2020, 11am Vital Statistics Yearly Summary. Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vsyt/vitalstatisticsyearlysummary2019/> Accessed 25th August 2020

⁸⁸ Central Statistics Office. CSO statistical publication, 31 May 2019, 11am Vital Statistics Yearly Summary. Available at <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-vsyt/vitalstatisticsyearlysummary2018/> Accessed 25th August 2020

⁸⁹ Griffin, E, McTernan N, Wrigley, C, Nicholson, S, Arensman, E, Williamson, E, Corcoran, P.

National Self-Harm Registry Ireland Annual Report 2018. Cork: National Suicide Research Foundation. 2019. 4

⁹⁰ Ibid 15.

⁹¹ HSE. (2019). Performance Profile April - June 2019 Quarterly Report. HSE: Dublin. Available at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/performance/april-to-june-quarterly-report-2019.pdf>. Accessed 03/12/2019

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The HSE recognises that over 90% of mental health needs can be treated successfully in a primary care setting, with less than 10% needing referral to specialist community-based mental health services⁹². However, waiting lists are long.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, COPE Galway also worked with those living in their own homes or in accommodation we provided. What became evident was that, for some, the measures to keep people safe meant increased isolation and loneliness. Recent research by Alone and The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) found that measures put in place in response to COVID-19 were likely to increase loneliness and social isolation⁹³. While COVID-19 persists, we must find innovative ways to support those who are struggling with issues regarding their mental health and loneliness. COPE Galway welcomes the announcement in April 2020 of an additional €1.1 million investment in online mental health supports⁹⁴. However, additional funding must be ring-fenced for technological resources to support mental health. Consideration should also be given to including broadband costs in the Household Benefits Package.

Recommendations - Health

- Allocate an €500m⁹⁵ towards initial infrastructure to ensure the speedy implementation of Sláintecare
- Prioritise the rollout of the Integrated Care Framework
- Invest in mental health in primary care⁹⁶
- Provide additional resources for technological resources to support the use of online mental health services.
- Consider including broadband costs in the Household Benefits Package.

⁹² Health Service Executive. 2018. National Service Plan 2019 .53

⁹³ Ward, M. McGarrigle, C. Hever, A. O'Mahoney, P. Moynihan, S. Loughran, G. Kenny, R A. Loneliness and social isolation in the COVID-19 Pandemic among the over 70s: Data from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and ALONE. July 2020. 8

⁹⁴ Department of Health. Press Release. Minister for Health announces additional investment in online mental health supports. 26 April 2020 Available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/729f22-minister-for-health-announces-additional-investment-in-online-mental/> Accessed 07th September 2020

⁹⁵ As recommended by Social Justice Ireland.

⁹⁶ As recommended by Mental Health Reform. Invest in Mental Health Pre-budget submission 2021. 1

Support for the Community and Voluntary Sector

COVID-19 has highlighted the important and vital work Ireland's community and voluntary sector undertake.

With the emergence of COVID-19, COPE Galway opened new services and mobilised staff and volunteers to ensure those reliant on our services, many of whom are extremely vulnerable, were supported. Yet there was very little recognition of this. Cuts made to our sector during the last recession have not been restored and services are still reliant on fundraising to make up funding shortfalls. COPE Galway, like most charities, struggle with the continued rising cost of insurance and seek to have insurance industry costs reformed as soon as possible.

The VAT Compensation Scheme was introduced to help reduce the VAT burden on charities to partially compensate for VAT paid by charities on goods and services bought using non-public funds⁹⁷. COPE Galway, along with other members of The Wheel, wish to see this scheme extended beyond its initial three years and funding for the scheme increased⁹⁸. Other measures needed in order for charities to maintain sustainable levels of funding are introducing a direct tax incentive for major gifts and donors⁹⁹.

Recommendations - Charity and Voluntary Sector.

- Increase funding for the community and voluntary sector so that, rather than simply meeting adequate service provision needs, service development, training, and innovation are ensured.
- Introduce a direct tax incentive for Major Gifts and Donors¹⁰⁰
- Extend VAT Compensation Scheme and increase funding¹⁰¹
- Bring down insurance costs by reforming the sector¹⁰².

⁹⁷ Revenue.ie. VAT Compensation Scheme for Charities. Available at <https://www.revenue.ie/en/companies-and-charities/charities-and-sports-bodies/vat-compensation-scheme/vat-compensation-scheme-for-charities/index.aspx>. Accessed 28th September 2020

⁹⁸ As recommended by the Wheel "Recovery Through Co-operation Collaboration Community.2021.11

https://www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2020-09/15288_The%20Wheel_Budget%20Submission_FINAL_web_v2.pdf

⁹⁹ As recommended by the Wheel "Recovery Through Co-operation Collaboration Community.2021.11

¹⁰⁰ As recommended by the Wheel "Recovery Through Co-operation Collaboration Community.2021.11

¹⁰¹ As recommended by the Wheel "Recovery Through Co-operation Collaboration Community.2021.11

¹⁰² As recommended by the Wheel "Recovery Through Co-operation Collaboration Community.2021.14