Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act (2015) signed into law

Creating Homes for Life

General Election 2016

Sector Activity and Innovation

The Iveagh Trust celebrates 125 years
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General Election 2016

At election time, there are many promises made across the political spectrum. A number of the key pledges from the parties are outlined below.

**Fine Gael**

Implementation of the targets contained in the Social Housing Strategy along with a proposed annual increase in housing output to 25,000 by 2021.

**Labour**

Larger role for Approved Housing Bodies. €300m to develop an affordable rental scheme; New Land Development Agency.

**Sinn Fein**

Sinn Fein to bring state ownership of housing stock to 200,000 (by building at least 70,000 houses and 30,000 cost purchase and cost rental). It will provide an additional €30m to support homeless services in 2016.

**RENUA Ireland**

RENUA Ireland propose to develop a €10bn Public Private Partnership over five years to fill the gap between the existing demand and the supply shortfall currently being experienced.

**Social Democrats**

The Social Democrats propose to establish Housing Ireland (to replace the Housing Agency), and give it a central, hands-on co-ordinating remit in the procurement, planning, design and delivery of new homes and the creation of sustainable communities. Social Democrats have a specific target to reduce waiting lists by 10,000 per annum.

In what often becomes a complex debate on housing supply, the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) has proposed a number of simple solutions which will effectively address many obstacles to housing delivery as well as contribute to a more sustainable housing system.

### 4 Key Pledges the ICSH is Seeking

| Land & Supply | • Active land management through a delivery agency to lead and co-ordinate a continuous pipeline of building land for social housing and other housing in partnership with planning and housing authorities;  
• Identification and transfer of land banks from state sources and NAMA for social housing to housing associations. |
| --- | --- |
| Capacity & Delivery | Support an enhanced capacity building programme for housing associations to fulfil the social housing programme in partnership with housing authorities through the following measures:  
• Establish a single, dedicated unit centrally co-ordinated with responsibility for increasing delivery by housing associations and drive policy forward;  
• Support housing associations in their establishment of an off-balance sheet financial vehicle (SPV);  
• Review and streamline procurement and funding approval processes to ensure best value and most efficient and quicker delivery of social housing;  
• Seek a 20% requirement of social housing under Part V. |
| Choice in Housing Options & Support | • Develop and resource assisted independent living options for older persons, and other vulnerable tenants through inter departmental co-operation;  
• Explore choice based letting options to include housing association tenancies to improve speed of nominations and ensure parity with housing authority tenancies;  
• Develop a real time housing assessment process reflecting housing and support needs;  
• Support an intermediate affordable rental model earmarked at 75-80% of market rent to promote the development of mixed tenure neighbourhoods;  
• Support measures to promote security of tenure for tenants;  
• Introduce housing management performance of social housing providers. |
| Partnership | • Promote joint ventures between housing associations and housing authorities including stock transfer and management programmes;  
• Include social contracts in all social housing and publicly funded projects that would benefit the locally based unemployed e.g. apprenticeships. |
New partnerships in the delivery of housing

Peter McVerry Trust has delivered twelve homes in a collaborative project which brought together the skills and expertise of members of the Construction Industry Federation who donated time, money and materials. The objective was to refurbish and renovate twelve apartments which were in a state of disrepair with some uninhabitable. The project saw extensive internal renovations of the properties, with new windows, electrics, plumbing, dry lining and improvements made to fire safety standards and ventilation. External works focused on creating a more aesthetically appealing block of apartments and accessibility for people with disabilities to the ground floor units. Landscaping of the green areas will add to the construction improvements and help achieve a significant improvement in the visual amenities in the community. The homes were officially launched by Ard-Mhéara BAC, Críona Ní Dhálaigh, and Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection, Kevin Humphreys TD.

Supporting the development of a more effective system of funding for AHBs – how the ICSH are working for a better, streamlined funding approvals system for members.

The ICSH represent members on the AHB workstream. This is one of the groups within the governance structures of the Social Housing Strategy focused on progressing the actions within the Strategy relating to approved housing bodies.

Action 13 above commits to reviewing the funding system and schemes for the sector and the ICSH have, in consultation with members, highlighted a number of concerns in this regard. At the end of last year, a set of recommendations related to streamlining the existing current funding scheme (CALF) for immediate / short term implementation were approved. These measures include:

- A 2-Year Multi-Annual Programme 2016-2017 - The first phase of the 2-year allocations to larger AHBs will be in 2016, with a portion of funding set aside for other AHBs
- Maximum of 1.5% start-up funding being made available
- Funding being made available for drawdown at an accelerated rate, in addition to being available for drawdown prior to projects commencing on-site, to assist with costs of professional fees
- The Department has now invited submissions from AHBs for potential inclusion in phase 1 of the Multi Annual programme. It is intended that as an initial phase, two-year allocations will be made to up to five of the larger AHBs in 2016. CALF funding will continue to be available to other AHBs in the normal manner.
New Housing Finance Agency product for Tier 2 bodies launched

The ICSH were delighted to form part of the launch of a new lending initiative offered by the HFA specifically targeted at Tier 2 or Tier 3 AHBs which are not currently approved Certified Bodies.

The product launched is tailored to AHBs with lending requirements from a minimum of €250,000 up to €1,500,000 and is specifically tailored towards property acquisitions. The lending is offered on a variable interest rate over 30 years with a 10 year fixed offered of 3.85% (reverting to variable thereafter). Tier 2 AHBs who uptake on the new product will not have to undergo a full HFA credit review process but rather applications for the new Category 2 Certified Body status will instead be accompanied by:

- a specific project application for acquisition finance only;
- the most recent annual report;
- evidence of AHB status;
- a current tax clearance certificate, and
- confirmation that they are signed up the Voluntary Regulation Code.

A Facility Agreement will be completed for each transaction, post approval and prior to drawdown, conditions include a Payment & Availability Agreement & Continuation Agreement. The ICSH welcomed the product as it offers further diversification of lending across the sector.

Social Housing Output Report

The Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG) has before published a report on social housing output for 2015. The report provides an update on capital programmes, revenue funding and actions on homelessness. It is the first annual output report on the Government’s delivery programme set out in the Social Housing Strategy. The report is available on www.environ.ie.

Oaklee Housing Trust

Oaklee Housing Trust handed over 45 new homes at Pairc Na Greine, Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24 to new tenants.

The development which is located on the Cookstown Road beside Springfield Shopping Centre, St Mark’s School and St Marks GAA Club, consists of 44 two bedroom apartments and a one bedroom apartment. It is located in an area close to all the necessary local amenities

The apartments are well laid out and generous in size with the one bed 59 sq.ms and the 2 bedroom apartments range between 66 – 87sqm. All apartments are dual aspect, have under floor heating and come with a B energy rating for most of the properties. The properties are set out in two separate blocks with 6 lift cores and entrances. Car parking is provided at basement level.

This project has been made possible through funding from the DECLG’s Capital Advance Leasing Facility, Long Term Leasing with South Dublin County Council and private finance from the Housing Finance Agency.

13 Approved Housing Bodies now with Certified Borrower Status from the HFA

Congratulations to Saint John of God Housing Association Ltd on receiving certified borrower status from the Housing Finance Agency. This is significant development for housing associations focussed on delivery for persons with a disability and for the sector as a whole as this brings the total number to thirteen AHBs now confirmed to access finance from the HFA.

Donal McManus, CEO, ICSH and Barry O’Leary, CEO, Housing Finance Agency

ICSH Social Housing

Saint John of God Housing Association Limited

13 Approved Housing Bodies now with Certified Borrower Status from the HFA

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The end of year report for delivery of social housing from NAMA properties confirms a cumulative total of 2,000 properties delivered with over 1,800 (90%) delivered by Approved Housing Bodies.

Of the 2,000 properties, 1,176 are apartments and the remaining 824 houses. Housing associations have worked in collaboration with local authorities and NAMA as well as other stakeholders to deliver social housing across the country.

Budget 2016 announced that NAMA would be tasked to provide 20,000 homes by the end of 2020; this is through new build construction. 10% of these (2,000) will be earmarked for social housing. Clearly, the volume is small compared to the overall need for social housing but, in combination with other measures, this scheme can make an important contribution to overall efforts to meet housing need. Housing associations will continue to seek opportunities for further delivery through NAMA.

The ICSH believe there should be a 20% requirement of social housing under Part V and have highlighted this this and other issues in the run up to Election 2016.

Funding for Social Housing (Budget 2016)

The budget for 2016 provides for an increase in both capital and current spend for housing with an indicated total of €811 which is an increase of 18%. This incorporates an additional €56m for capital programmes and €69m increase in current spending.

For 2016, there is a provision of €74m for CAS to ensure continued focus on meeting the housing needs of vulnerable groups. A total of 450 units are to be provided for people with specific needs in 2016.
The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) has published updated guidelines on apartment standards – Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments.

These new guidelines set out national planning policy requirements that will take precedence over policies and objectives of development plans, local area plans or strategic development zone planning schemes and apply to all housing developments, whether public or private.

The updated 2015 apartment guidelines retain the minimum floor area standards that were set nationally in 2007 but require, for the first time, that the majority of apartments in an apartment scheme exceed the minimum floor area standard in the previous 2007 guidelines, by at least 10%.

The updated guidelines introduce studio units (which are 27% smaller than the minimum apartment size in Dublin) as a possibility (min. 40sq.m), but only in managed, build-to-let developments of over 50 units in certain circumstances.

The DECLG have stated that the updated guidelines are aimed at ‘ensuring well sized apartments but reducing hidden costs in relation to lifts and stair cores that have strong potential to feed into significantly higher purchase, rental and management charges for occupants’. Estimates of cost reductions for changes to stair and lift core arrangements are estimated to be in the region of €20,000 or more and come on top of other cost savings that have been delivered through reductions in local authority development charges and social and affordable housing costs.

Both the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) and the Royal Irish Institute of Architects (RIAI) have expressed concerns over the measures and analysis undertaken by a range of stakeholders has suggested that despite the measure, there will still be a gap between the cost of construction and the market cost of apartments across the country.

For the past 125 years, The Iveagh Trust has offered affordable rented housing to people on low incomes and has been a vital part of the architectural and social fabric of Dublin city.

Since its foundation, the Trust has continued to provide:

- Affordable rented housing for families and single people on low incomes
- Good quality hostel accommodation for homeless men in the Iveagh Hostel

Throughout its long history, The Iveagh Trust has continued to adhere to and apply the aims and values that are set out in the founding Deed of Trust of 1890. The primary purpose of the Trust as described in the Deed is:

The amelioration of the conditions of the working population of Dublin and their manner of living, by the provision of improved dwellings...

Today, The Iveagh Trust owns and manages circa 1,350 units of social rented and hostel accommodation in Dublin City and suburbs.

A night of celebration

A great night was had by all on December 11th as the Iveagh Trust held a variety show to mark its 125th anniversary. Hundreds attended the show in the main assembly hall of the Liberties College – which has been beautifully restored. Frances Black started proceedings and was the special guest performer on the night while a selection of tenants and staff took to the stage to unveil hidden talents of all sorts within the Trust itself.

New apartment standards announced

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Launch of Governance and Housing Management Toolkit

In January, the ICSH launched its Governance and Housing Management Toolkit. The toolkit was developed as a resource for members in light of the evolving enhanced governance environment in which housing associations now operate. The toolkit builds on and updates the ICSH publication Working for Good Governance (2008) and consolidates the range of available resources to members through the Members section of the ICSH website. It provides a range of information, checklists, questions and templates linked to the key governance objectives outlined in the Voluntary Regulation Code.

The policies and templates within the toolkit are quite general in nature and are a starting point for boards that wish to develop their own policies in each area. With the diversity in backgrounds, ethos, approach and operations amongst ICSH members, we would strongly recommend that housing associations review the templates contained in the Toolkit and amend them as appropriate to reflect their own organisation’s activities. It is recommended that where new policies or procedures are being adopted, they are put forward for collective discussion at Board meetings and that all policies and procedures are regularly reviewed.

It is important that board members of housing associations fully understand their responsibilities to ensure that they adopt the highest standards of governance within their housing association. Boards provide the leadership and ultimate accountability for how their association operates and demonstrating good governance should not be viewed as a purely desk top exercise. In addition, housing associations demonstrating sound ethics to achieve good governance within their organisation will also foster confidence with all stakeholders they engage with, including those in the public and private sectors, regulators, tenants, and the general public.

The ICSH Governance and Housing Management Toolkit was emailed or posted to all members in January and is available in the Members Section of the ICSH website.

If you have any queries on implementing the policies outlined in the toolkit or on any governance queries, please contact Kevin Ryan on 01 6618334 or kevin@icsh.ie.

Information Sessions on Procurement and Funding Processes

In recent weeks the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) have been holding information sessions throughout the country on the funding processes for new social housing construction projects relating to both Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) with the overall aim to equip both local authorities and AHBs to deliver housing units in a timely manner and to avoid delays where possible in the process. The Department provided information on the approval process in relation to Capital Works (applying 4 Stage Process as per local authority approval process) setting out that further clarification on process and procedures in relation to CAS funding would come in the form of a revised Green Memorandum/Book with revised project review forms also to be issued in the coming weeks. An update relating to the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SCHEP) was provided by the Housing Agency setting out in particular recent changes to CALF including the provision of Accelerated CALF and Start-up funding (up to 1.5%) in addition to outlining that a Multi annual CALF programme was being developed. The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) also provided information in relation to a newly established Framework Panel for Housing Design Team Consultant Services (due to go live in early March) from which both local authorities and AHB can avail of consultant services. Members should note that all presentations and housing circulars referenced from the Information sessions can be obtained from the members section on the ICSH website.

Further Information available from Paula Kenny, ICSH Housing Development paulakenny@icsh.ie

Túath delivery through CAS and Part V

A communications protocol is being developed by a subgroup of the Dublin Social Housing Task force consisting of representatives of the four Dublin Local Authorities, the ICSH and approved housing bodies, who met on a number of occasions to formulate this proposal.

The purpose of the protocol is to provide a transparent process through which local authorities can engage with AHBs for the delivery of social housing, as Túath have done recently with a CAS and Part V scheme.

Túath announced the delivery of forty new homes in two developments in Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow. Túath worked in partnership with Wicklow County Council and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to provide these high quality homes.

Thirty two apartments within the Glenbrook Development were purchased for €7.2m using CAS funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The purchase represents the largest single approval from the 2015 CAS allocation both in terms of the number of homes delivered and level of funding provided. It also settles the Council’s Part V agreement for this development.

Eight apartments located within the Rossmore Development have been secured on a long term lease by Túath for ten years. The properties are fully furnished to a turnkey standard and have already been allocated to tenants from Wicklow County Council’s waiting list.
Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015 signed into law

Three years after the Bill was first published, the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act was signed into law on 4th December 2015.

When the section of the Act bringing approved housing bodies under the remit of the PRTB is commenced, housing associations will have 12 months to register each of their tenancies with the PRTB. This will allow housing associations and their tenants to access the dispute resolution services, such as mediation and adjudication, which are currently open to private sector tenancies.

How much will this cost?

Following consultation with the ICSH, it has been agreed that AHBs will be given a period of 12 months for the initial registration of their tenancies at a reduced cost. Housing Associations will be charged €45 per tenancy registration, for a period of one year, beginning from the commencement of the Act. This is a one off fee for each tenancy and is not a recurring fee.

When the property is re-let the new tenancy will need to be registered.

- 12 months to register for reduced fee
- Registration Fee – €45 AHB (Normally €90)
- Composite Fee – €187.50 max of 10 (Normally €375)
  Composite Registrations: multiple dwellings in the one building, registered at same time (within one month of tenancy commencement of earliest tenancy, owned by same Landlord)
- After 12 months normal fees apply
- “Further Part IV” (re-registration after 4 years) will be free provided if submitted on time.

What Tenancies are under the Remit of the Act?

It is a requirement under the Act to register all tenancies held by approved housing bodies. The Act applies to tenancies and as such where individuals reside in temporary or emergency accommodation (for example license type agreements in hostel accommodation) the Act does not apply.

Where a housing association provides transitional accommodation (up to 18 months duration) then the tenancy falls under the remit of the Act, however the Part IV section regarding security of tenure does not apply. What this means is that the housing association will register those tenancies with the PRTB, however they will designate those tenancies as transitional accommodation and notify the Minister accordingly.

By designating a tenancy as ‘transitional’, Part IV of the Act will not apply, i.e. the tenant will not acquire the four year security of tenure protections.

Services Provided by the Residential Tenancies Board

Dispute Resolution: The PRTB replaced the Courts for the majority of landlord & tenant disputes and this will continue and now apply to housing association tenancies. The PRTB operate a two stage dispute resolution process. The first stage consists of either mediation, if chosen by both parties, or adjudication. Either party has a right to appeal their case to the second stage, a public tribunal hearing. Adjudication Determination Orders and Tribunal Reports and Determination Orders are published on the PRTB website. Mediation Outcomes remain confidential to the Parties.

Deposit Protection Scheme: The amending legislation will establish a deposit protection system whereby any deposits held by landlords will be sent to the PRTB until the end of the tenancy. If there is a dispute between the landlord and tenant regarding the repayment of the deposit then the PRTB will deal with those disputes. This scheme is not expected to be operational before 2017.

When the section of the Act relating to housing associations is commenced there are a number of actions that each housing association should undertake:

- Register each tenancy with the Private Residential Tenancies Board.
- There is no legal requirement to furnish your tenants with a new Tenancy Agreement however it is good practice to do this (depending on the particular sensitivities involved).
- The PRTB will be writing to all housing associations shortly to advise of the new legislation and to provide you with details on the next steps for registration etc.
Support and Guidance for members

- The ICSH will be providing a dedicated resource to assist members with the requirements under the Act. The new Tenancy Registration Support Officer will be available to members to provide practical assistance with the registration of tenancies, the introduction of new tenancy agreements and responding to any queries members may have.

- The ICSH will provide members with a guide to the new Act and a model tenancy agreement that incorporates the new provisions under the Act.

- Regular information bulletins will be sent to members

- The ICSH are planning a number of seminars for members on the Residential Tenancies Act and the steps required in the run up to and following commencement.

- The ICSH will issue a series of guidance notes on the RTA. This includes how to register your tenancy, the process of dispute resolution under the RTA, changes to the sector’s tenancy agreement, Landlord/Tenant responsibilities, the RTA and transitional housing and other areas as required.

- The ICSH Tenancies Working Group comprising members from all tiers will continue to meet to discuss the application of the legislation to the sector, the roll out following commencement and any highlight any unintended consequences of the Act.

Oireachtas Committee publish report on the General Scheme of the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2015

The primary purpose of the Bill is for the establishment of a regulatory framework for the sector in order to support financial viability and good governance within the sector.

In December 2015, the Heads of Bill for the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill were published and, following a request from the Minister for Environment, a pre legislative scrutiny process was undertaken by the Oireachtas Committee on Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht. This process involved a public consultation and hearings with a range of stakeholders, including the ICSH.

During the hearing, the ICSH, on behalf of members, provided a response to the main provisions in the general scheme. The ICSH noted that the introduction of a Regulator for approved housing bodies will provide an important level of assurance and confidence for the various stakeholders the sector engages with such as private financial institutions, elected members, local authorities, tenants and the general public.

The range of increased regulatory requirements that the sector complies with was highlighted along with the fact that the legislation is focused on the organisational regulation aspects of approved housing bodies and not the landlord-tenant relationship which will come under the Residential Tenancies Act which approved housing bodies will have to comply with from April 2016. It was emphasised that the new statutory Housing Regulator must be fully aware of the regulatory requirements of all other Regulators who have role in the sector to avoid duplication and additional reporting requirements for housing associations.

A summary of the main points highlighted to the Committee are below however, the ICSH full submission and opening statement to the Oireachtas Committee is available on the www.icsh.ie

- The Regulator should be independent and should act in the public interest whilst also have a key enabling role in ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

- Some of the powers of the Regulator are extensive and intrusive and must be re-examined.

- The principle of proportionality needs to be maintained to ensure that local smaller voluntary AHB’s are supported during the transition to statutory regulation rather than undermined.

- The Regulator should not undertake a role that could be viewed as a shadow director or even micro manage the business activities of approved housing bodies.

- Further detail on proposed co-ordination across the many agencies is needed, how they will interact and whether the Regulator will drive co-operation with regards to PRTB, Charities Regulator etc.
Developments in Housing People with a Disability

Guidance issued to clarify provision of housing for people with disabilities under CAS

Circular 45 / 2015 was issued by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government on 21st December 2015 to address the unintended consequences of the March 2015 CAS circular which excluded the provision of accommodation in centres deemed as ‘designated centres’ under HIQA regulatory requirements or where tenants cannot hold an individual tenancy agreement. The ICSH, members and Service Providers highlighted the issues created by the barrier to access funding and proposed a series of criteria which could address this. The new circular provides clarity for housing associations in applying for funding under CAS (as well as CALF and Leasing) and particularly relates to individuals moving out of congregated settings.

The DECLG and Department of Health have agreed a set of guiding principles and specific requirements in the circular, Supplementary Guidance for the Provision of Housing for People with Disabilities.

What does this mean for housing associations considering proposals under any future CAS call?

- The use of HIQA designated centres as criteria for housing funding (as set out in Housing 15/2015) will no longer apply.
- Housing associations must obtain certification which will be submitted with the CAS application to demonstrate that they have engaged with the relevant housing authority and their local HSE Social Care Disability Office. Contact information is available from the ICSH for all local Disability Managers.
- Not more than four individuals with a disability may be housed together and each individual must have a meaningful tenancy which they must have the capacity to sign.
- New housing projects and units for people with disabilities must be located in a mixed residential community and dispersed appropriate to avoid clustering. The circular notes that the service providers must liaise with the local HSE Social Care Disability Office and secure this certification (i.e. a letter of approval from the HSE).
- It must be clearly demonstrated that there has been meaningful involvement of the resident, their family or advocate in the development of the housing proposal and evidence of a community living transition plan and / person centred care plan.
- It must also be demonstrated that care supports are configured to support the individuals living in one home in the housing neighbourhood.

For further information or any queries, please contact Caren Gallagher caren@icsh.ie

Housing Needs Assessment – April 2016!

The Social Housing Strategy 2020 specified two actions (31 & 34) in relation to the Local Authority Waiting lists. The first was to carry out a detailed analysis of the current housing list and develop a clearer understanding of the projected housing need, for people with disabilities including those leaving institutional care. The second was a commitment to increase the regularity of the housing needs assessment by undertaking it on an annual basis from 2016 on.

A person or household who is included in the assessment of housing need is eligible to be housed by a housing association as well as the local authority. Therefore, the assessment process should be seen as a gateway to a housing association tenancy.

Housing associations should take the opportunity to feed into the assessment for this reason. It is particularly important that housing associations working with special needs groups such as the elderly, people with physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual disabilities or homeless persons ensure the inclusion of all those who may be eligible, as historically these groups have been significantly under-represented in previous assessments.
New Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Law passed

On 30th December 2015, the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) legislation was signed into law by President Higgins. The assisted decision making laws bring about the repeal of the Lunacy Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871, Marriage of Lunatics Act and will start the discharge of people from the ward of court system. The legislation will mean that persons with capacity issues will have their ability to make decisions for themselves recognised in law. There is a six month timeframe for the commencement of all aspects of the new law which applies to everyone and to all in health and social care settings.

- Provides for the individual’s right of autonomy and self-determination to be respected through an Enduring Power of Attorney and an Advance Healthcare Directive (AHD) – made when a person has capacity to come into effect when they may lack decision-making capacity.
- Provides for legally recognised decision-makers to support a person to maximise their decision making powers.
- Establishes a Decision Support Service (DSS) with clearly defined functions which will include the promotion of public awareness relating to the exercise of capacity by persons who may require assistance in exercising their capacity.
- Places a legal requirement on service providers to comprehensively enable a person make a decision through the provision of a range of supports and information appropriate to their condition.
- Provides for a review of all existing wards to either discharge them fully or to transition those who still need assistance to the new structure.
Creating a Home For Life

The housing and support needs of Clúid’s older tenants

A Home for Life is a research report commissioned by Clúid which confirms that, as people get older, they want to stay in their own home and should be able to do so with appropriate supports.

The research was carried out by a team from the Centre for Gerontology and Rehabilitation, University College Cork. It found that 83% of older tenants living in mainstream housing said the design of their home met their needs very well, or met most of their needs. An overwhelming majority (95%) of sheltered housing tenants said the design of their home met their needs very well or met most of their needs.

Speaking at the launch, Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., then Minister of State at the Department of Health with special responsibility for Primary Care, Social Care [Disabilities & Older People] and Mental Health said: “I very much welcome the publication of this important research on the housing and support needs of older tenants. Ireland’s older population is growing rapidly and it is imperative that we plan for future needs now. “Older people want to remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible. Our policy is to prioritise allowing them to do so, and to ensure that appropriate residential care is available when it is needed. One way of helping older people remain in their communities is through the provision of suitable accommodation, including sheltered housing”.

ICSH Proposal on the need for Assisted Independent Living Revenue Fund

The ICSH have, for many years, advocated and promoted the supported housing model which has worked effectively for tenants of housing associations across the country. In 2005 a dedicated funding stream was established specifically for housing related supports for older persons however what was a small fund lasted only until 2008, leaving a gap in ongoing funding provision.

Housing associations have already demonstrated how better value for money can be achieved in preventing early admittance to hospital or nursing care. More efficient, cost effective and flexible service models have also been introduced through the bundling of home care packages in one case example. The ICSH is, once again, highlighting the need for ‘Assisted independent living funding mechanism’, similar to Supporting People in Northern Ireland which can be accessed by housing associations to provide housing related support to tenants.

A number of reports have been published in Northern Ireland critically reviewing the ‘Supporting People Model’. The research carried out found that for every £1 spent on the programme saved the public purse £1.25.

The need for the assisted independent living funding stream will be raised as an election issue on behalf of ICSH members and further work is being undertaken through the Dublin City Council working group on ‘Housing with Care for Older People’.

Locked out of the Market: The gap between Rent Supplement/HAP Limits and Market Rents

This research published by the Simon Communities looks at the current state of Ireland’s rental market and its effects on the country’s most vulnerable people. This study follows up on Locked Out of the Market report completed in June 2015, tracking the growing gap between rising market rents and the Rent Supplement / Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits, which have remained unchanged since 2013. By tracking the number of properties available to rent within these state support limits in ten regions throughout the country, the study shows how far these payments are from the market and how far things have deteriorated in the past three months.

Action on Homelessness

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive conducted a rough sleeper count on the night of the 30th November. A total of 91 rough sleepers were recorded – this compares to the 168 that were recorded in November 2014. Although this is being welcomed as a notable decline in rough sleeping, it is important that these figures are seen in the context of the overall increase in the provision of emergency accommodation from 2,365 individuals in winter 2014 to 3,766 individuals. This is an overall increase of 71%. The Dublin Regional Homeless Executive note that this increase reflects the continuous infl ow of families in emergency accommodation with the number of dependents increasing from 671 to over 1,570.
Regulation Updates

Lobbying

The Regulation of Lobbying Act was commenced on 1st September 2015 and the first return was due to be made by organisations covered under the Act is by 21st January 2016 (this return covers the period 1st September 2015 to 31st December 2015).

Persons who fall within the scope of the Act who communicate with Designated Public Officials about relevant matters must register and submit returns of lobbying activity. Persons within scope are:

- A person with more than 10 employees;
- A representative or advocacy body with 1 or more employees;
- A professional lobbyist paid to communicate on behalf of a client that falls within the previous categories; or
- Anyone communicating about the development or zoning of land.

A volunteer organisation with no paid staff would generally not fit within the Act, unless they are communicating about development or zoning.

If you have any queries on the Act, or require assistance completing a Lobbying Return, please contact Kevin Ryan, Compliance Development Officer on 01 661 8334 or kevin@icsh.ie.

Charities Regulatory Authority

All members are required to register online with the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) and to complete an annual activity report (due not later than ten months after the end of the financial year to which it relates) which summarises the charities activities for the specified period. The CRA wishes to remind those who have yet to complete their information to do so without delay and ensure that you are meeting your obligation under the Charities Act 2009. The deadline for completion of your information on the Public Register and submission of your first Annual Report is extended until 16 April, 2016.

The CRA has just completed a nationwide series of open evening workshops on the registration and reporting process and information on the registration process is also available online at www.charitiesregulatoryauthority.ie. Alternatively, the ICSH can provide assistance to members on the registration or reporting process and for any queries please contact Kevin Ryan, Compliance Development Officer at 01 661 8334 or kevin@icsh.ie.

Voluntary Regulation Code – update

A total of 215 housing associations are now signed up to the Voluntary Regulation Code (VRC), and the accompanying Financial Standard which is now in place and these associations account for over 80% of the stock in the sector.

Associations who sign up to the Code commit to following a set of agreed principles and actions, as well as completing an annual return to the Regulation Office on their activities. The VRC is a forerunner to statutory regulation of the sector which is expected in 2017. The Financial Standard was launched in July 2015, to define and set a standard for financial viability for the sector and contains additional reporting requirements particularly the larger Tier two and Tier Three bodies.

The Annual Return for 2014 was due to be completed by 30th October 2015. Associations who have completed the Return will receive Regulation Assessment Reports which appraise their performance against the parameters and expectations as set out in the Code. Members who are signed up to the Code but have yet to submit a return for 2014 are urged to contact the Regulation Office immediately.

If members require any assistance with their return, or in relation to any aspect of governance/ compliance with the Voluntary Regulation Code, please contact Kevin Ryan, Compliance Development Officer on 01 661 8334 or kevin@icsh.ie.
Clanmil Housing Association
Ireland delivery through NARPS

Clanmil Ireland is delighted to announce the delivery of eight new homes in Dublin through the NARPS Leasing scheme.

The apartments are within Elm Park, Merrion Road, Dublin 4 and were handed over to the new tenants just in time for Christmas. This scheme was delivered in partnership with NAMA and Dublin City Council.

HAIL Celebrate 30th Anniversary

The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Críona Ní Dhálaigh, was joined by the High Hopes choir at a special event in the Wood Quay Venue in Dublin to mark the Housing Association for Integrated Living’s (HAIL) 30th year providing quality housing and support to people with mental health difficulties.

HAIL Chairperson, Mr Éanna McHugh, stated that;

“Housing is not only the solution to homelessness but is also critical to a person’s health and wellbeing. The homeless crisis is well documented, though the part of mental illness plays in creating and embedding homelessness is less so. HAIL has a critical role, with many others to find solutions to the crisis. Our immediate challenge is find a voice for those in homelessness, whose situation is made all the worse by manifestations of being unwell. This we can only do in collaboration and partnership with others.”

IN TRIBUTE | Jim Byrne RIP

2015 has been a sad year for all at North & East with the death of our long serving Director and former Treasurer Jim Byrne. Jim joined the Board twenty one years ago and was Treasurer for all of that period. Like most things Jim was involved with, his commitment was always one hundred percent. Jim had a strong sense of social justice and saw his commitment to North & East and its work as an extension of that. Jim was a people person who had a strong empathy and kindness for people. He also had a big personality who could hold a room. He was also a man of strong and forceful views and was never loathe to express them. I will particularly miss his stories often exaggerated for dramatic effect and his sense of fun. North & East has lost a director of commitment and an exceptional human being.

Pat Lennon, Chair, North and East Housing Association
North and East Housing Association officially open McArdle Green, Drogheda, Co. Louth

North and East Housing Association held the official opening of their housing scheme in McArdle Green, Drogheda, Co. Louth. This scheme won the Allianz ICSH Community Housing Awards Innovative Finance Solutions Category. North and East Housing Association have also launched their 2016-2020 Strategic Plan.

Ballygall Road Scheme near completion – Fold Housing Association

The 50-unit development is expected to be completed in mid-February and will comprise 47 apartments and three bungalows. It was financed through a combination of private funding and local authority support by Dublin City Council through stock transfer.

Respond! opening of St John’s College Development

Minister Paudie Coffey welcomed the opening of the St. John’s College development which comprises 57 new units of accommodation. This comprises self contained apartments for older persons, a community housing facility and a supporting day centre.

A conference was also held in November 2015. The aim of the conference, entitled Responding to Isolation and Loneliness: Housing and Community Perspectives, discussed strategies, supports and interventions to address social isolation and loneliness amongst social housing tenants and other vulnerable tenants.
2016 Training and Events

The ICSH is committed to delivering a wide range of education and training events throughout 2016 and continuing to meet the diverse needs of our membership. Final dates and full details of all events will be sent to members shortly.

Throughout 2016

- Procurement and Capital Works Management Framework, Social Housing Capital Build Project Assessment Processes and National Framework for Design Team Services – workshops to be held regionally
- Residential Tenancies Act and Residential Tenancies Board workshops to be held regionally throughout 2016.
- ICSH Regional and County Meetings

January – March 2016

- Housing and Asset Management seminar – March
- Clare county forum – Early March
- Risk Management for board members – March
- Certificate for the Housing Profession – Housing Need, Demand and Supply module – 9th March

April – June 2016

- Governance seminar – April
- Tipperary county forum – April / early May
- Financial Modelling on CALF and Brixx – May
- Tier One seminar – late May
- Certificate for the Housing Profession – Housing Law module – 4th May
- Training for Elected Members on engaging with voluntary housing sector – May
- Strategic Business Planning – June
- Certificate for the Housing Profession – Managing People module – 22nd June
- Supported Housing including housing and dementia, stress management for care staff and compassion fatigue

July – December 2016

- Third intake of students for CIH Certificate for the Housing Profession course – September
- 2016 Finance Conference backed by AIB, Kilkenny – 20th and 21st October
- Housing Law seminar – November

To discuss your training needs or make suggestions for future events, contact Catherine McGillycuddy, Membership Development Officer on 01 6618334 or Catherine@icsh.ie

ICSH AGM

The 2015 ICSH Annual General Meeting took place in the Ashling Hotel on Monday, 30th November and was attended by almost 70 delegates from ICSH members all over the country.

With significant changes in the social housing sector in recent times, as well as changes to structures within the ICSH in October 2014, the AGM allowed delegates the chance to reflect on the impact of these changes on the voluntary housing sector, interact on common issues and develop further collaborative relationships.

At the AGM, activity reports on various aspects of the sector were presented along with the more formal reports required. In addition to this, Eugene Cummins, CEO of Roscommon County Council and Chairperson of the County & City Managers Association (CCMA) Housing Committee was invited as a guest speaker to address members. Eugene presented his views on enabling partnerships between local authorities and approved housing bodies for increased delivery. In order to deliver on increased delivery targets for the sector in the coming years, strong partnerships with key stakeholders, such as local authorities will continue to be essential, even if roles may change. This presentation was a valuable insight into how such partnerships could be developed.

It was reported to the AGM that elections had taken place to replace members obliged to retire from the ICSH Council by rotation. Marina Keane, a Tier 1 representative, was unable to stand for election again due to work commitments and her positive contribution during the previous year was acknowledged. Following a recent election process, Ian McNinch of Carbery Housing, Co. Cork was elected to represent Tier 1 and Martina Smith and Liam Tobin were re-elected as Tier 2 representatives.
Turning the Tide for Social Housing Conference 2015

The 2015 ICSH Biennial National Social Housing Conference, backed by AIB, took place in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly on 16-17 September 2015.

The theme of the 2015 conference was ‘Turning the Tide for Social Housing – Performance, Partnership and Delivery’. This conference was set in the context of the implementation of the Government’s Social Housing Strategy (2015 – 2020) and the need to address the huge level of social housing need in Ireland together with the real problems facing homeless households, particularly families who need a stable housing environment.

The conference was addressed by over 40 Irish and international speakers from the voluntary housing sector, local authorities, government departments, academic institutions and the private sector reflecting the partnership approach required for future social housing development and delivery. The conference challenged delegates to examine and debate solutions in a number of areas such as further increased delivery through the framework of the Social Housing Strategy, commitment to supported independent living for people with special needs, delivery of sustainable communities within Construction 2020, innovation in social housing design and energy use, active asset management, housing association collaboration for example of housing delivery through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), regulation and risk and housing, and support for homeless households.

There was great interest in the conference with over 300 delegates in attendance over the two days.

The 2015 Community Housing Awards, sponsored by Allianz, were presented as part of the conference dinner. As in previous years, the Awards recognised the exceptionally high standard of housing projects within the social housing sector, demonstrating the commitment of approved housing bodies and local authorities to deliver the highest quality housing.

The conference also featured a number of exhibitors showcasing innovative products relevant to delegates throughout the conference. Exhibitors included leading names in the fields of housing development and management, banking, housing software, insurance, utilities, security, heating and ventilation.

The ICSH would like to thank all speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and delegates for making the event such a success and we look forward to welcoming you to our Finance Conference taking place 20th and 21st October in Kilkenny.
Housing Overseas

**Australia**

New South Wales faces similar housing issues to Ireland

The Government of New South Wales (NSW) has recently produced a new 10 year social housing strategy. One of the underlying objectives is to use social housing as a tool for breaking the cycle of disadvantage. It focuses on two groups of social housing. Firstly, households who require social housing as a safety net and require support for an extended period of time. Secondly, the group of social housing households who wish to become independent and no longer require social housing.

Similar to Ireland, New South Wales has encountered an increasingly unaffordable private rental market for those on low incomes, problems with homelessness and few social housing vacancies and turnover has increased housing waiting lists to 60,000. One of the commitments in the social housing strategy is to increase the capacity of community housing associations. Part of this increased capacity is to transfer the management of Government and publicly owned social housing to community housing associations. It is proposed that the community housing association sector will manage up to 35% of all social housing in ten years.

**UK**

Priorities shift from social housing to homeownership

The Chancellor George Osbourne recently announced that there will be a shift away from social housing towards low cost homeownership, including shared ownership. 200,000 starter homes are pledged by the Conservatives with 135,000 help to buy shared ownership homes by 2021. This includes shared ownership homes eligible to those households earning less than £80,000 or £90,000 in London. This will mean that there will be increased housing association development activity in the shared ownership area and less on traditional social rented housing. The target is to have 400,000 affordable housing starts by 2021. Currently in the UK, the stock of the largest 222 housing associations has now increased to three million homes. This scale of the social housing stock in the UK as well as population size can be put in context with Ireland where the combined social housing stock of local authorities and housing associations is around 5% of this level.

**France**

Zero interest loans for social housing construction and energy renovation

President François Hollande announced in January that a budget of €3 billion will be made available by the public financial institution Caisse des Dépôts by 2017. The objective will be to devote significant additional resources for the construction of social housing and the energy renovation of public buildings.

Half of this budget (€1.5 billion) will take the form of zero-interest loans for social housing organisations, for periods equal to or exceeding twenty years. These loans should allow an additional amount of €8 billion to be raised. In the end, it is estimated that 50,000 new homes will be built.

The other half of the budget will take the form of zero-interest loans for the very long term, fully intended for the renovation of public buildings, which should cover 100% of the needs of the borrowers such as local authorities, hospitals and universities.