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EU Structural Funds can play a role in social housing

Although the EU does not have a dedicated responsibility in housing matters, there are a number of other areas of EU competency which do impact on social housing provision. These include directives in procurement and rules, services of general interest and EU programmes in the social inclusion area. In addition, one other area that has gained significant prominence has been the use of EU structural funds where social housing providers such as housing associations in other EU member states have successfully accessed structural funds in areas such as energy efficiency and urban regeneration as well for providing housing for vulnerable groups with support programmes.

EU Structural Funds programmes and use in social housing

The Structural Fund programme comprises funding under the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and the European Social Fund.

In the 2007-2013 EU Structural Fund programme for the EU 15 member states was not directly eligible for housing. However, in 2009 an amending regulation on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was introduced to enable each member state to use up 4% of its ERDF allocation for energy efficiency measures in housing with the objective to support social cohesion. Based on the estimate of the ERDF allocation for Ireland a 4% allocation would have been in the region of €15m. EU member states may not have needed to change their operational programme and it is unclear whether Ireland had made use of this regulation to use as investment in social housing for energy efficiency.

A new additional ERDF regulation was introduced in 2010 which meant that up to 3% of ERDF funding can be used for housing interventions of marginalised groups. The ICSH have sought to establish the scope for using this regulation in Ireland for addressing the needs of vulnerable groups such as older people, the homeless and people with disabilities.

EU Structural Fund investment contributes to social cohesion

In the next round of structural funds which run from 2014-2020 discussions have already begun on the priorities that will be included. Within the Europe 2020 Strategy targeted measures have to be included which contribute to achieving the overall EU poverty target within each member states’ individual National Reform Programme (NRF). It is anticipated by the European Commission that 20% of the future European Social Fund (ESF) would be dedicated to reinforcing the social dimension of the ESF. The Commission has proposed that each member state allocate 5% of its ERDF allocations for sustainable urban development.

One of the important considerations is that structural funds do not simply replace existing limited state funding. It is essential that with the next round of structural fund priorities in Ireland 2014-2020, the operational programme for Ireland would be flexible to allow for investment in energy efficiency, urban regeneration and housing interventions for vulnerable groups. In all of these areas housing associations can play a role. Outcomes from this Structural Fund investment can be measured by the number of households with improved energy consumption, number of vulnerable households benefiting from improved living conditions and new and improved housing in urban areas. In turn these areas of activity can provide significant employment. Importantly structural funds, through the ERDF, have been used as a vehicle to lever significant additional investment such as from the European Investment Bank (EIB) in regeneration areas.

St. Michael’s Road Housing Estate, Longford

Regeneration can be a cost-effective way of providing a high standard of housing and rejuvenating local communities. Clúid Housing Association works with a number of communities in housing estates, around the country, on regeneration projects. One such project is in St. Michael’s Road Housing Estate, Longford (pictured – before and after). The estate, which comprises both social housing and privately owned housing, had fallen into disrepair over its lifetime, with negative social consequences for the local neighbourhood. Regeneration works involved taking the existing properties and repairing and refurbishing them and their surroundings to full social and physical regeneration. St. Michael’s Road has seen a significant change to its once distressed landscape. ERDF funding can provide sustainable medium term funding for regeneration.

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1 CECODHAS 2009 Calculation of 4% of ERDF allocation
New Mortgage to Rent scheme underway

Following the publication of the ‘Keane Report’ from the inter-departmental working group on mortgage arrears last September 2011, a pilot mortgage to rent scheme has been established. The pilot has been undertaken by Clúid Housing Association in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and other stakeholders and should be fully launched this summer.

The scheme is aimed at mortgage holders with an unsustainable mortgage facing repossession of their home and who meet the eligibility criteria for social housing. The basis of the scheme is that a housing association will purchase the property from the bank with assistance from the DECLG under the CALF scheme and the mortgage holder remains in the house as a social housing tenant, paying a differential rent to the housing association. In the pilot phase one of the conditions has been that the house should have a current market valuation of no more than €220,000.

Some progress has been made in developing the architecture of the scheme

The pilot phase was aimed at an initial tranche of 10 units, however progress has been slow in identifying suitable cases. Some progress has been made in developing the architecture of the scheme, for example a mortgage to rent guide has been published and made available and engagement is ongoing between the numerous stakeholders. Many issues have arisen over the course of the pilot and it is hoped that many of the key problems have been identified.

There are a number of potential pitfalls with such a scheme given the sensitive nature of the problem for the family facing losing their home. The role of the housing association needs to be clear to all parties, in particular the mortgage holder who will no longer own their home but rather become a social housing tenant. It is important to note that the housing association purchases the property directly from the Bank after the mortgage holder has voluntarily surrendered their property. Also it has been essential throughout that the mortgage holder has independent legal advice during the process.

So far it is not clear the extent to which the scheme will be utilised, however the scale of the mortgage arrears problem continues to grow. The intention is that the scheme will be formally launched in the summer. The overall aim is to assist those who are in serious mortgage distress, facing repossession and meet the eligibility criteria for social housing. While it will not solve the mortgage arrears crisis, it is one part of a response framework being developed to deal with this issue.

Expressions of interest are currently being sought from housing associations who are interested to form a panel of participants for the scheme. Further details on the terms and conditions of the scheme can be found on the ICSH website www.icsh.ie

Leasing Update for the Sector

From Autumn 2009 until April 2012, 1,330 housing units have been approved for inclusion under the leasing initiative from approved housing bodies, of which 195 have become operational with agreements either signed or in the process of being signed. There are 21 approved housing bodies with units approved across 38 housing authorities.

Number of leased units operational, provisionally approved or with funding approved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Units Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHB Owned Build to Lease</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHB Owned Pre-existing</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately Owned Build to Lease</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately Owned Pre-existing</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECLG figures - April 2012

CALF

Under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility €20m has been made available to the sector for 2012. This is available to approved housing bodies to assist in accessing private or HFA finance for the purchase, or in some cases, construction of units for social housing. Applications for 760 units have been received since the scheme was introduced last year and of these over 360 units have been approved for inclusion under CALF.

NAMA Expressions of Interest

Minister Phil Hogan announced in December 2011 that a potential 2,000 residential properties would be made available by NAMA debtors and receivers for social housing purposes. Since then, the Housing Agency has been working with NAMA and the Department in relation to the availability of these residential properties and approved housing bodies could submit their expressions of interest until the end of June 2012. At the time of writing, 16 expressions of interest from the sector have been made to lease or purchase these properties and they are working to deliver these units for social housing in the coming months.
ICSH Regional Meeting Report 2012

Each year the ICSH hold regional meetings in each of the ICSH regions (South East, South, Dublin/East, Mid-West, Midlands, West and Borders). Throughout April and May, a series of seven regional meetings were held and all ICSH members, local authorities and the HSE were invited. The meetings were as busy as ever this year with over 220 delegates from 124 housing associations attending various locations across the country. Minister for Housing Jan O’Sullivan T.D, local authority officials, HSE staff and officials from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government also attended.

The regional meetings bring members together and provide an important networking opportunity as well as being a valuable tool for the ICSH staff to engage with members, hear their views and from this determine policy priorities. Issues that arise from the meetings are used to inform the work of the ICSH thus ensuring that our work is responsive to the needs of the membership. Elections for ICSH Board Members also took place in some regions.

Members were encouraged to provide feedback and work with the Department both in developing the voluntary code and the extension of the RTA for the sector.

The meetings varied greatly across the country and contributions from local representatives, members and local authorities shaped the discussions and were, importantly, a reflection of the issues affecting voluntary housing associations in that specific area.

The first part of the meeting focussed on regulation of the sector and the proposed voluntary code being introduced by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) in advance of legislation as well as the proposed extension of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) to the voluntary housing sector.

Cian Ó Lionáin and Jim Ganley, senior officials from the Department, gave presentations outlining how the Department is committed to improving governance and achieving more formal accountability in relation to the activities of the sector. The ICSH initiatives used by members such as Housing Association Performance Management (HAPM) and the Good Governance Guide were acknowledged. In adding to this it is intended that the voluntary code of governance will provide the key basic principles of good governance and financial management and will also set out the range of reporting obligations that currently apply to the sector. The voluntary code will be the first part of an evolving regulatory framework that will underpin the sector and be placed on a statutory basis.

Cian Ó Lionáin also discussed some of the implications of the extension of the RTA to housing associations including operational issues, additional administration and costs. Members were encouraged to provide feedback and work with the Department both in developing the voluntary code and the extension of the RTA for the sector.

The presentation provided a good basis for discussion and the open session and roundtable discussions which followed allowed delegates to raise any issues of concern to them. Members are now awaiting the draft voluntary code.
More efficient use of Homecare packages

Following the announcement of the review of the Fair Deal Nursing Home Support programme, members discussed how home care packages can be bundled together for a number of tenants. This ensures cost savings and greater efficiency in service delivery. Housing associations can provide housing with care for older people in their own community at a fraction of the cost of the average weekly cost of a nursing home.

Following the open session, Kathleen McKillion, ICSH, continued with an update for members on a range of areas relevant to the specific region including:

- Leasing, acquisition and the new Capital Advance Leasing Facility (C.A.L.F);
- The national housing strategies for people with disabilities, elderly & homeless;
- Good governance and performance management, including HAPM 2011 results;
- Collaboration and partnership working.

Homecare packages in sheltered housing represent better value for money and the HSE are getting more bang for their buck

The meetings brought members’ main concerns to the fore and made clear what the common concerns are for those involved as voluntary board members and staff of housing associations across Ireland. They also highlighted particular issues arising in individual regions and localities which might otherwise be lost in the discussion of national policy.

The meetings had a lot of energy and there was a general feeling of determination to continue and develop the work of voluntary housing associations across the regions. The Department and local authorities need to continue to work with the ICSH and its members, providing the necessary tools to deliver and in developing new ways of acquiring social housing and greater efficiencies through collaboration and structured partnerships with local authorities. Members were also keen to ensure that the introduction of a statutory framework of regulation would not stifle and hamper the ongoing development, commitment and success of the voluntary housing sector to date in providing over 27,000 homes nationally.

Impact of policy changes on smaller community based housing associations

Local community based associations with no staff will be particularly affected by many of the changes proposed. It was made clear at regional meetings that the views and needs of such housing associations are not forgotten in these debates.

New funding options and CAS underspend

ICSH members queried the under spend of nearly €50m in CAS funding in 2011 to officials from the DECLG. The need for careful management of the scarce resources was raised as well as discussion around other options for ongoing finance including private finance and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF).

Partnership with the HSE and DSP

Many members outlined the need for better partnership working arrangements between the HSE and voluntary housing associations which is critical to the provision of housing with the necessary supports. The need for improved departmental working with the Department of Social Protection (DSP) was also highlighted as critical given the many issues currently facing associations in relation to rent supplement alongside the proposed transfer to the Housing Assistance Payment.

Review of Fair Deal Nursing Home Support Scheme

Minister of State with responsibility for Older People, Kathleen Lynch T.D has indicated that the review of the Fair Deal Nursing Home Support Scheme will look at other options for older people. These will involve looking at different types of accommodation for older people and at the mechanisms used to determine whether or not an older person should be in a nursing home. She has undertaken to discuss with Minister for Housing Jan O’ Sullivan the options of sheltered, supported and assisted living accommodation as part of a housing strategy for older people.

The ICSH will input into this review and will meet with Ministers O’Sullivan and Lynch to highlight the role of the sector in providing supported accommodation for older people in the community and to agree how this sector can be developed and encouraged.
The ICSH and its members welcomed Minister of State for Housing and Planning Jan O’Sullivan T.D. to the Mid-West Regional meeting in her home constituency of Limerick. The Minister acknowledged the central role that housing associations must play in the future if there is to be continued development of social housing.

The County Limerick Housing Services Company was acknowledged as one of the success stories in the region. Minister O’Sullivan described how 14 Limerick-based housing associations have come together to demonstrate ‘strength in diversity’ and the benefits of collective action. These housing associations collectively employ a part-time manager who provides day to day services to tenants and a range of advisory and other services for its member organisations.

The Minister spoke of the funding collapse in the housing sector and the wider economy and the need for a ‘fit for purpose’ regulatory framework which will provide independent scrutiny and validation in this new environment. She stated that she was fully committed to developing a regulatory framework in collaboration with the sector and other stakeholders. The voluntary code, she believes will assist the sector in presenting itself as a stable, mature and attractive long-term investment, whether in terms of money or voluntary commitment.
Last October the Government published a National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2011-2016). The strategy was developed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE, and with the assistance of a National Advisory Group, comprising relevant stakeholders, including organisations representing people with a disability.

Given the number of stakeholders involved in its development, it’s not surprising that the Strategy commits to a wide breadth of nine strategic aims. The strategy sets out a framework for the delivery of housing for people with a disability through mainstream housing policy to support people with a disability to live independently in their own homes as opposed to the more traditional approach of institutional / residential care settings. The strategy aims to redirect the efforts of Departments, agencies and publicly funded voluntary bodies away from ‘managing institutionalised dependency to ensuring mainstream assessment of individual housing needs, finding person centred community based housing solutions’. This will involve providing appropriate tenancy, health and social care support to people with disabilities.

The move from a medical model of institutional, nursing care to one of supported or independent living in the community is to be welcomed.

At its core is a commitment to mainstream access to independent living for adults living with physical, mental, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

Two of the big ticket items in the Strategy are the fulfillment of the long promised housing commitments in the mental health policy ‘A Vision for Change’ which seeks to re-house people with mental health disabilities from institutional settings into living in the community and the aims of the report of the Working Group on Congregated Settings (‘Time to Move on from Congregated Settings’, 2011) which has similar commitments to re-house people with intellectual disabilities currently residing in congregated institutional / residential care settings. The strategy aims to redirect the efforts of Departments, agencies and publicly funded voluntary bodies away from ‘managing institutionalised dependency to ensuring mainstream assessment of individual housing needs, finding person centred community based housing solutions’. This will involve providing appropriate tenancy, health and social care support to people with disabilities.

Implementing the strategy will involve providing appropriate tenancy, health and social care support to people with disabilities.

Another example is Roscara Housing Association which was founded in 1994 to support the provision of social housing for people with intellectual disabilities in County Roscommon.

There are currently houses in Castlerea, Elphin, Ballinlough, and Kilteevan. As well as providing accommodation directly, Roscara has worked collaboratively with the Brothers of Charity to develop the Supported Living Initiative (SLI). This is a network of people with intellectual disabilities who live close to each other in their own homes in the Athlone/South Roscommon area of County Roscommon, who provide mutual support to each other. The Initiative is funded for a 12-month period by the Genio Trust and is based on the Keyring model in the UK.

ICS SH Mapping of Schemes for People with Disabilities

The ICSH are currently undertaking a mapping exercise of housing for people with disabilities provided by voluntary housing associations. This exercise will capture the number of units and geographical locations of this housing provision. The interactive map, which will be part of the ICSH website, will make it easier for people to find out the locations of housing for people with disabilities as well as contact information. This follows on from the mapping of housing for older people which was launched last year.
Housing issues to be tackled

Some of the priority issues with social housing supply will need to be clearly identified and dealt with – for example the leasing model currently does not allow for group housing schemes. While many people with disabilities will be moving into independent units this will not be the case for all and some group housing will be required whether it be for support reasons or because of the individual’s choice. The leasing model also has not conclusively dealt with how properties off the shelf can be adapted for people with disabilities and how this will be financed. All of these barriers will limit the supply at a time when resources are already stretched and every unit of accommodation counts.

The issues of assessment of an individual’s housing, housing support and care needs need to be tackled with clarity around where responsibility sits for assessments, referrals and on-going funding. The tenancy has to be sustainable and in many cases on-going support will be required.

Housing associations have also had persistent problems with the application of Rent Supplement within some existing CAS Schemes for people with disabilities. These issues need to be resolved and the RAS scheme should be scrutinised to make it work effectively as a supply option.

There is also the issue of best practice models for CAS group home schemes. To date the CAS scheme has allowed for 6 individual tenants sharing a group house whereas the congregated settings report recommends no more than 4 individuals sharing. This has implications for future CAS schemes and existing ones and clear guidelines on how to deal with issues such as referrals and financing need to be addressed.

In some cases HSE housing will be directly taken into the portfolio of the local authority or a housing association and in such cases due diligence is required into the long term provisions put in place by the HSE, such as sinking funds, life cycle costing, service provision to tenants.

It is hoped that the Strategy can achieve a significant sea change in how we approach housing for people with disabilities. The existing systems have favoured the medical approach which has led to the inappropriate institutionalisation of upwards of 5,000 individuals. There is a coherent strategy now in place with a reasonable timeframe and Government commitment that can hopefully achieve this sea change and improve the living conditions of those individuals while overhauling the system for the future. To achieve the aims of the strategy there are significant housing delivery issues to be tackled, and this can be done. The housing association sector with its long experience in delivering on housing need can play a key role.

CASE STUDY

HAIL, Housing Association for Integrated Living

HAIL received funding in 2011 from GENIO Trust under the grant stream to support the development of community alternatives to congregated or institutional care.

HAIL and the Rehabilitation team of St Brendan’s Hospital, Dublin (HSE, Nth City) are partners in the DORAS project. The aim is to enable 12 individuals to successfully move from current mental health hostel settings to independent accommodation in the community. A dedicated housing support worker employed by HAIL manages this interagency process by providing personalized and flexible support to the individuals and links with the clinical teams. So far 10 are housed and in the settlement process. The housing is a mix of Local Authority, private rented and approved housing body. The hope is that projects like this one can be funded sustainably to deliver on the recommendations re housing in Vision for Change 2006.
The Way Home – a long way to go for the Homeless Strategy

The homeless strategy was launched four years ago and has one year left to run on its original timeframe (‘The Way Home’ 2008-2013). The timing of the Strategy was unfortunate in that it was launched during a period of recession and austerity measures, however despite this there has been a concerted effort to implement the new framework committed to in the Strategy.

The aims of The Way Home guided this reconfiguration of the response to ending homelessness in Ireland and these are:

- preventing homelessness
- eliminating the need to sleep rough
- eliminating long-term occupation of emergency accommodation
- providing long-term accommodation solutions
- ensuring effective services
- better co-ordinated funding arrangements.

Since 2008, Regional Homeless fora have been established and produced Statutory Homeless Action Plans for the period 2010-2013. The plans aim to place homelessness firmly within the local authority housing programme and improve the planning of services for people who are homeless at local level. The Support to Live Independently Scheme (SLI) has also been launched and this provides support to homeless families who are allocated tenancies in long term mainstream housing. This signals a concrete move away from emergency and transitional approaches to dealing with homeless households.

The new Government, in its Programme for Government (2011), made a commitment to ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough. It committed to reviewing and updating the existing Homeless Strategy, including assessing how housing services can best aim to meet this commitment. The Programme asserted that a ‘housing first’ approach to accommodating homeless people would be introduced.

The Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) welcomed this statement of intention from the Government and supports the current move to incorporate a ‘Housing Led’ approach into the Strategy. The ICSH has played a key role in FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless and has sought the acceptance of housing led approaches to ending homeless for some time. The aim of this approach is to place an emphasis on ending homelessness through housing solutions and robust preventative services rather than focussing on managing homeless.

Housing Led Approach

To achieve a housing led approach then clearly the emphasis on housing solutions must be central. The nature of the provision of social housing has changed rapidly over the last three years with the demise of the capital build and acquisitions investment programme and a switch to provision based on leasing accommodation from the private sector. The number of units of social housing provided annually has decreased significantly during this period. This is a significant challenge facing the Government, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, local authorities and approved housing bodies.

Facilitating the steady supply of social housing should be the key priority

Approved housing bodies have demonstrated their commitment to utilising the new approach to social housing delivery but there is a need for continuing support of the sector as the new delivery programmes develop. These include the Social Housing Leasing Initiative, the Build to Lease Scheme and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility involving the use of private finance. There is also scope for social housing units leased or acquired from NAMA to be made available for homeless households.

The ICSH has also worked with members and statutory stakeholders in the Dublin Region to introduce a Protocol on Social Housing Nominations aimed at adopting a consistent approach to homeless nominations in the Dublin region. It is hoped the Protocol will be used to streamline the nominations process and improve homeless nominations in the region. It is imperative that units that are available are utilised to their maximum potential.

The next phase of the Homeless Strategy will be shaped further by adoption of a housing led approach. Given the transition of the housing investment programme from capital investment to a revenue based programme and the all time high demand on social housing then facilitating the steady supply of social housing should be the key priority.
Collaboration Update

Following the launch of the ICSH Collaboration Toolkit in 2010 activities between housing associations has continued to gather pace and momentum. The resource of the toolkit has been valuable in setting out the guiding principles to assist associations build partnerships and achieve appropriate collaboration. Progress has been incremental across a number of associations from agreeing an agenda, appraising different options through to developing a business case and plan to achieving measurable outcomes.

Updates include the agreement by Tullamore Housing Association with Midlands Simon Community to support its emergency accommodation provision and the transfer of Liscarroll Housing Association Limited to Respond!

Kilkenny Housing Forum

As part of the Kilkenny Age Friendly Strategy the ICSH represents members on a collaborative housing forum in Kilkenny. The forum aims to review the current provision of supportive housing, look at current and future housing care needs, carry out maintenance and management analysis and explore home supports and adaptations available in the county.

Debra O Neill, Ageing Well Network said “the housing forum is facilitating new models of care and support that allows older people to continue to remain in their own communities and home was identified as one of the key challenges for the Kilkenny Age Friendly County Initiative following extensive consultation in 2010. In response to this challenge a cross agency group have been working together since 2011. Key to the success of the group is the support and expertise of ICSH. Social and supported housing and ageing in place offers a real and desirable outcome for older people. With the support and advice of ICSH, HSE, Local Authority and Community Groups the Kilkenny Age Friendly Housing Action Group aspires to drive real change in resources, services and structures in order to facilitate older people remain living at home in their own communities.”

For more information on the forum please contact Margaret Coleman, Development Officer, margaretcoleman@icsh.ie or 01-6618334

CASE STUDY

Liscarroll Housing Association and Respond!

In the summer of 2009 Liscarroll Housing Association decided to collaborate with Respond! Housing Association to complete its 10 units of accommodation for the elderly and 7 serviced sites development at Liscarroll, Co. Cork and have Respond! take over the Association’s management responsibilities.

In advance of this the ICSH had met with Liscarroll Housing Association and explored the options open to the them, along with Cork County Council through the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, Ballina. It was agreed by all parties that Respond! should take over the management of the project and through a series of negotiations a plan was brokered to overcome the funding shortfall.

As a result of the adverse conditions facing Liscarroll Housing Association the builder had become disaffected from the Association and was in dispute with them. Respond! entered into discussions with the builder and the association and concluded an arrangement to complete the development to everyones satisfaction. The builder entered back on site and the project was completed in February 2012. At this stage in June 2012 most of the CAS units have been tenanted.

Ned Brennan of Respond! said ‘The process is a very good example of what can be achieved through collaboration between large and small housing associations with the support of the Local Authority, the Department and the ICSH’. Liscarroll is in the process of winding up the organisation and Gerry Murphy and Liam Fitzpatrick say “we could not have done this without the input and assistance of the ICSH in those early days of appraising our options and finding a partner”. The Board members were not in a position to carry on and are delighted that Respond! has stepped into the breach for the benefit of the local community and its tenants.
Official Opening of Tinteán Eala – Tinteán Housing Association, Carlow

The official opening of Tinteán Eala took place last Thursday with Carlow T.D. Pat Deering performing the ceremony. The opening was also attended by Anne Phelan T.D., Senator Denis Landy, Cllr. Thomas O’neill, Chairperson of Carlow Town Council and members of Carlow Town and County Councils.

Tinteán Eala is the latest development by Tinteán of quality housing in the community for people with intellectual disabilities.

The residents are supported to live independently by social care workers who are employed by Delta Centre. The adapted and refurbished house provides a high standard of accommodation in the community for 4 people with intellectual disabilities, plus a house parent from Delta.

Each resident has their own bedroom plus there are excellent communal facilities plus landscaped gardens. Tinteán Eala was developed by Carlow Voluntary Housing Association and working in partnership with Delta Centre and Carlow County Council.

Fold Ireland entertain residents and friends

On May 20th, residents and friends of Fold Ireland Housing with Care Centre in Cherryfields, Hartstown Dublin were treated to an afternoon of songs and music, kindly performed by the PASO group. These pictures show Gerry, a resident of Cherryfields in best voice singing along to ‘Waltzing Matilda’ and Carlos, an accomplished musician and singer, also a resident of Cherryfields.

A great afternoon of entertainment was enjoyed by residents, family members, staff and all the musicians.
1st June 2012

The European event spans 33 countries, with over 12 million people taking part in celebrating the day. In Ireland, voluntary housing associations across the country hosted a wide variety of neighbourhood events for residents including tea parties, music, dancing and face painting. The Irish Council for Social Housing encouraged its member associations to hold events with residents in local communities.

In Blanchardstown, Fold Ireland organized music and entertainment for tenants in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and the local community. A tea dance was also held in the Anam Cara scheme in Glasnevin.

Many housing associations took part and hosted a variety of events in Dublin and across the country including Cluid Housing Association, Fold Ireland Housing Association, Sophia Housing Association. The ICSH will continue to promote European Neighbours Day in Ireland as an important annual event.

Launch of Newgrove Housing Association development, Limerick

A new development at Parnell Street/Sexton Street by Newgrove Housing Association and Rehabcare was officially launched by Minister for Housing and Planning, Jan O’Sullivan TD. The housing and resource centre development will consist of 35 units of supported and independent living housing and a resource centre for people with disabilities, autism/Aspergers syndrome and mental health difficulties from the Limerick area.

The new development will enable people to be as independent as possible and support them to be fully integrated in their local community. Construction work commenced on the site on 20th March 2012 with an expected completion date of Spring 2013. The development will include:

- 35 units of supported and independent living housing units and apartments for members of the religious congregation of the Presentation Order, people with disabilities and other people who may be disadvantaged. There is a range of different sized units and individuals will be able to live alone or with others depending on their wishes. Six apartments are specifically designed for people with physical disabilities.

- a resource centre for up to 32 people with facilities such as a computer room, training kitchen and areas for social and leisure activities, education and independent living programmes and sensory programmes. Resource centres support people to fulfill their personal goals by learning daily living skills, taking part in sport and leisure activities or getting support to take up employment.
Official Opening of Sean Treacy House, Buckingham Street, Dublin 1

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Andrew Montague and Minister for Housing and Planning, Jan O’Sullivan T.D., jointly unveiled a plaque to officially open the Sean Treacy House Regeneration Project, Buckingham Street, Dublin 1.

Justin O’Brien, Chief Executive Circle Voluntary Housing Association said, “This scheme demonstrates the successful partnership between an approved housing association and a local authority in the provision of social housing. Circle VHA has worked closely with Dublin City Council interviewing all the nominations from the housing waiting list, the selection of tenants and the Tenant Induction process with tenants prior to the move in and then in undertaking the management of the scheme. Circle VHA works in partnership with our tenants and local services so that the quality of the physical and community environment can be sustained.”

Sean Treacy House also won the overall ICSH Community Housing Award in 2011 and Best Regeneration project.

Fold Ireland’s Brain Bus

Fold Ireland held a demonstration of the Brain Bus in April. The Brain Bus is a mobile activity unit for older people and those with dementia. The Brain Bus provides participants with both physical and cognitive activities; this can aid the management of dementia symptoms and enhance overall well-being.

Participants can engage in a variety of puzzles; quizzes; gaming challenges; travel and history based reminiscing therapies or life story work; a variety of light exercise programs including a virtual cycling experience or a virtual flight and drive on simulators.

The Brain Bus has been specifically developed to assist those organisations that care for people with dementia and older people by providing a range of interactive activities which engage participants in a fun, social yet safe environment.
ICSH CPDs

In the first half of 2012, the ICSH continued to expand its Education and Training programme by holding a range of Continuing Professional Development seminars.

These seminars focused on some of the key issues that housing practitioners are currently dealing with and allowed delegates to update their skills and knowledge on a range of practical issues including housing law, fuel poverty and energy affordability as well as the impact of the Multi Unit Development Act for social housing providers.

In March and May, we held two seminars in partnership with the Chartered Accountants of Ireland focusing on equipping delegates with the most up to date financial skills required by housing practitioners to operate effectively in the changing social housing environment. These two seminars addressed accessing private finance and treasury management for social housing practitioners.

Well over 100 delegates from voluntary housing associations and local authorities have attended our CPD seminars so far this year and we look forward to welcoming more delegates in the second half of 2012 and beyond.

For information or suggestions in relation to upcoming seminars, please contact Catherine McGillycuddy on 01 6618334 or catherine@icsh.ie.

ICSH Call for Member News

The ICSH is inviting members to send in advance notice of news, up-coming events, publications openings and website launches planned throughout 2012.

ICSH Blog

Social Housing in Ireland

Read the first blog on our Social Housing in Ireland blogspot by ICSH Executive Director, Donal McManus, ‘A Housing System in Demand’. The blog will provide commentary on current issues on the housing sector and in particular, social housing.

ICSH Social Housing Finance Innovation Forum

3rd & 4th October 2012

The ICSH is holding a Social Housing Finance Innovation Forum on 3rd and 4th October 2012 in the Radisson Hotel in Athlone, Co Westmeath. This seminar will focus on new thinking and innovation with particular reference to the evolution of funding and finance for social housing as well as delivering organisational efficiencies through innovative solutions. Topics will include regulation and financial viability, risk management and repairs and maintenance. There will also be a session specifically tailored for smaller housing associations and voluntary board members.

Full details and booking information available on www.icsh.ie shortly.

Chartered Accountants Ireland
Scotland
Social Housing Regulator launches consultation on Social Housing charter
The Scottish Government’s Social Housing Charter was introduced last April which sets standards and outcomes that tenants and others can expect from the service from social housing landlords. The regulator worked with stakeholders to develop the range of indicators. These indicators will be a part of the regulatory framework alongside the focus on good governance and financial health. The service indicators will give tenants of housing associations and local authorities an insight into the performance of their landlord. The consultation process is to ensure that the indicators are relevant and meaningful. The consultation process is also to seek views of tenants and other service users.

The Scottish housing regulator regulates housing associations as well as landlord and homelessness functions of local authorities.

FEANTSA produces new good practice guide on Social Rental Agencies
FEANTSA’s Housing Working Group has produced new good practice briefing on Social Rental Agencies. The briefing was drafted by Pascal De Decker of Saint-Lucas School of Architecture in co-operation with the FEANTSA office and the members of the FEANTSA Housing Working Group. The FEANTSA housing working group believes that ending homelessness requires developing, testing and scaling up a range of effective housing-led responses to homelessness. This report puts forward Social Rental Agencies (SRAs) as an example of a housing-led innovation in the area of homelessness. It demonstrates that the SRA model has considerable potential to help meet the housing needs of homeless people in Europe.

European Housing Forum
The European Housing Forum (EHF) comprises EU organisations working in the area of housing has recently made three recommendations on the policy recommendations of shrinking budgets for housing in the EU. These include a tenure neutral housing policy to be promoted; the inclusion of the urban element in EU Cohesion Policy aimed at integrating sustainability in housing; the privatisation of housing stock should take account of the effect on sitting tenants, and be more considerate in finding solutions for ‘poor home owners. The EHF and its 12 members from European Bodies promote the importance of the housing sector in Europe including the growing number of EU decisions on domestic housing policies.

Armenia which was a former state of the Soviet Union has recently established a housing association with support from the Netherlands, including the Dutch ministry of Foreign affairs and housing associations. This programme is to assist the large number of low to middle income households. These households have had difficulties in raising mortgage finance and are not able to purchase for home ownership. Armenia with a population of over 3 million and 10 regions is predominantly rural with 866 of its 915 communities deemed rural yet a significant scale of apartments including those that require upgrading. It is typical of former Soviet states who undertook large privatisation of state housing in the early 1990’s with now over 95% of the population owner occupiers. In addition, due to their conflict Armenia has a significant number of empty properties despite over 70,000 households in housing need. A number of representatives from former Eastern European countries have been in Ireland to learn how a non-profit housing association sector has been established to meet varied housing needs. The scale of poor quality apartments with often no governing management arrangements is common in Eastern European countries.

White paper on Housing launched in Wales – Homelessness a key priority
Included in new proposals in the White Paper in Wales announced by the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage is a planned statutory duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness and, importantly, to ending family homelessness by 2019. In relation to tackling the problem of empty properties, it has been proposed that local authorities will be given powers to increase council tax on properties for longer than one year. It is also estimated that at least 12,500 empty properties can be made available for affordable housing. Proposals in the white paper also provide for the regulation and accreditation of private landlords and management agents. Importantly, the Minister in Wales in the white paper recognises that the Government does not have control of all the elements of the housing system and that housing investment is a significant economic driver.