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Editorial: Is a ‘new rhythm’ now returning to the social housing sector?

Moving on from the experimental phase
Over the previous five years, there had been a limited supply of traditional social housing provided. This was replaced to some limited degree by new forms of delivery through various leasing arrangements, supported by the revenue arrangements through payment and availability agreements. Although there has been a sharp learning curve with the new mixed funding schemes for the sector, and with terms and conditions of funding arrangements continually evolving and often not fully formed, it was inevitable that the scale of supply of social housing in that period could not have been predicted. This could be classified as a more experimental phase of social housing policy that housing associations participated in. This period also included in a large part trying to resolve housing market failures, such as using vacant properties, remedying poorly built private housing, and supporting tenants in mortgage arrears.

Loan finance
Although some of these legacy issues still exist, the new Government Social Housing Strategy has provided a greater energy and motivation for the social housing sector, now that significant financial resources for social housing have been earmarked by Government for a six year programme. A shifting pendulum from dependency on capital to revenue funding has created a new business environment for housing associations now to operate in, and this will be further developed over the life of the Social Housing Strategy, and beyond. Housing associations wishing to develop in this new environment have had to reorganise and upskill, so that they have the requisite skills in place to meet their expanded delivery ambitions, and also to satisfy new regulatory requirements.

The improving financial market has led to greater access to loan finance options for social housing provision. The Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and other financial institutions have provided more choice and competition for housing associations to access different types of loan finance, such as variable and fixed rates; short, medium, and longer term options; as well moving on from the initial more cautious and risk averse options of loan finance primarily for acquisitions. However, with the scale of suitable vacant residential properties for sale of rent drying up in areas of high housing need, the main focus should now turn to new construction for long term solutions. Hopefully the construction industry, which has had relatively limited activity in new residential building in recent years will be able to gear up.

Rhythm for continuous delivery
For new construction projects, there was, and is, a particular rhythm in delivering social housing projects - a sequence of stages that have to be knitted together. One would love to have the luxury to deliver things overnight like some other public services can. However, progress is being made again to get things moving and to get people housed quicker. Acquisitions have generally been the faster route. Translating the funding earmarked in the Social Housing Strategy into new homes is the key objective. The issue is to ensure all the various stages in the delivery of construction projects are streamlined to ensure a significant scale of delivery.

Fold Ireland, Ballygall Road, Dublin 9. More construction projects emerging with increased employment.
Significant response to call for proposals under CAS

There have been a number of significant developments for the sector over the last two quarters in 2015. The call for submission of proposals under the Capital Assistance Scheme was made on 19th March 2015. Given that this is the first call under CAS since July 2014, it is not surprising that the funding available was oversubscribed. Over 370 project proposals were returned across the local authorities totalling approximately 2,000 units and reaching a value of €280m. A significant number were acquisitions (approximately 1,000 units), and 1,000 were construction projects.

On 23rd July 2015, Ministers Kelly and Coffey announced an investment of €151m for CAS which is expected to deliver over 1,000 homes to those with specific needs, such as elderly persons, persons with an intellectual or physical disability, and homeless persons. Funding of €84m will be provided for new construction of homes (expected to come on stream by 2017), and a total of €67m will fund the purchase of 536 new homes this year.

When making the announcement, Minister Alan Kelly noted the, ‘important role approved housing bodies have to play in delivery under the Social Housing Strategy’. He also commented on the skills and capacity within the sector particularly in the delivery and management of special needs housing, and the important supports provided in addition to housing for tenants.

The figure below illustrates the units approved in each local authority area:
Working Towards Delivery workshop – April 2015

The Irish Council for Social Housing and the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government (DECLG) co-hosted an information workshop on the current capital and revenue based funding supply options for approved housing bodies. Over 175 delegates from housing associations, local authorities and government departments attended the one day session.

The workshop focused on the current capital and revenue based funding supply options for the sector, and provided learning on the workings of the various funding streams through case studies of projects, from both the small and large AHB perspective. The workshop also provided an opportunity for delegates to obtain clarity on process and procedures involved in funding application and approval, and addressed the key roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the development process.

Parag Joglekar, Respond! Housing Association addresses delegates at the workshop

Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) – Update on Activity

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have delivered 1,613 units to the end of July under Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) and of these 762 have been delivered utilising the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF). In total almost €21m in capital advances have been drawn down by AHB’s to the end of July 2015 in respect of these units. A further 1,208 AHB units have been approved for CALF by the Department, equating to some €33m in capital funding in respect of these units which are due to deliver over the 2015 – 2018 period.

In 2015 (January to July), 392 units were delivered by AHB’s, of which 161 of these units have been delivered utilising CALF, representing €3.5m in CALF funding approved. A further 642 AHB units have been approved by the Department for CALF in 2015 equating to almost €20m in capital funding in respect of these units.

In 2014 (January to July) 268 units were delivered, of these 160 units utilised CALF. In 2015 (January to July) 949 AHB units were approved by the Department with 642 of these for CALF, equating to almost €20m in capital funding in respect of these units. In 2014 (January to July), 535 AHB units were approved by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government of which 335 were CALF units.

To the end of July 2015 the Department has provided almost €60m in CALF funding approvals.
Homelessness - Responses and activity

Since the last ICSH newsletter in spring, the figures for individuals and families experiencing homelessness have steadily increased. At the end of quarter two (April – June 2015), over 3,000 adult individuals accessed homeless services with 15% having their first time in homeless accommodation.

Dublin Regional Homeless Executive have highlighted the “unprecedented demand” for their services, noting in particular that the level of families presenting to homeless services is not keeping pace with the number of homeless families moving out of homeless services and back into independent living. Considering that many of these families have come from the private rented sector, the figures from the most recent DAFT rental report are not encouraging. The report shows the cost of renting is up 8.6% compared with the same three month period a year ago, and average rents increasing in Galway, Limerick and Cork.

If trends continue, it is expected that by the end of 2015, over 4,000 adults and dependents will be in emergency accommodation including hotels in Dublin.

ICSH members including the Simon Communities, Peter McVerry Trust, and Focus Ireland, have repeatedly called for an increase in rent supplement levels to prevent people from becoming homeless. In the absence of an intervention to address the level of economic evictions, housing associations are working with local authorities to deliver homes as speedily as possible following the CAS announcement, and implementing the allocations protocol. Provision of modular housing is also being explored and will be debated at the ICSH conference. The ICSH believe that modular housing could provide much needed accommodation and have a shorter lead in period for delivery. Whist modular housing is often cited as a short term solution, the ICSH believe that well designed, permanent and sustainable housing can be built through this route for the longer term and therefore enable individuals and families to settle in communities.

Minister Alan Kelly has also announced the continuation of the directive on allocations, which provides that each of the specified housing authorities must ensure that at least 30% of the dwellings available for allocation during the specified period will be allocated to homeless households and other vulnerable groups who qualified for social housing support, or before 1 June 2015. This percentage is 50% for the Dublin local authorities. According to the Minister, this directive has so far yielded almost 530 homes for those households.

Local Authorities must provide details on a quarterly basis on the allocations made under the allocation scheme by specifying the different categories of dwellings and households, and the proportions of each such category by reference to the total number of such allocations.

Peter McVerry Trust

The homeless and housing charity Peter McVerry Trust officially launched six new social housing apartments in Dublin 8 today. The former local authority voids were launched by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Criona Ni Dhálaigh, and have been extensively renovated with funding from Saint-Gobain Ireland, as well as the charity’s own funds.

Pat Doyle CEO of Peter McVerry Trust said, “Peter McVerry Trust is delighted to officially launch these new social housing units today. The homeless and housing crises have been well documented so every new home we can create is extremely important. We are proud to be able to hand over the keys of these apartments to six people who can now leave homelessness behind them.”
REVIEW OF FAIR DEAL
– Implications for housing associations

The long awaited review of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme – A Fair Deal, was published in July 2015. The review was led by the Department of Health, in collaboration with the HSE, and with input and analysis provided by Deloitte consultants in specific areas. The scheme costs the State between €900 million and €1 billion each year, and the outcomes from the review set out key challenges regarding the provision of nursing care to older people in Ireland.

The ICSH made a detailed submission to the review of Fair Deal in 2012 on behalf of its members. Meetings also took place with representatives from the Department of Health and the HSE to discuss the potential role of the sector in supporting Government policy, to ensure older people can remain in their own homes and communities.

Section 7.6 of the review specifically highlights the need to build capacity in areas other than long term residential care, and recommends that the role of sheltered housing, appropriately supported by community health and social services, should be considered in the context of future service planning as an integral component of long-term care. It goes on to suggest that the Departments of Health and Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG), the HSE, and should explore the potential for developing sheltered or supported living arrangements.

The HSE has also stated that it sees a significant role for supported housing in the future, but the model requires adaptation in order to incorporate higher levels of care. This ‘extra care’ model can play an important role in giving choices to an ageing population.

The ICSH have long campaigned for a defined revenue funding stream, which would support older people to remain in their homes for longer. There is an infrastructure of supported housing arrangements in communities across the country, provided by housing associations, which has potential for further development.

The ICSH has been working with members to explore viable models of delivery of long term supported living arrangements, and a significant amount of work has been carried out by members individually. In order to assist the Department of Health, DECLG and HSE fulfil this recommendation, practical examples can be worked through to build capacity and develop the role of sheltered housing.

Actionpact – Household model

Why would we ask anyone to give up their home, just when they need it the most?

In the Household Model, long-term care homes adopt a person-centered approach that shapes the physical environment, organisational structure, and interpersonal relationships in ways that create an atmosphere of genuine home, while providing older people with clear opportunities to direct their own lives.

Steve Shields, CEO of Actionpact, is an international thought and action leader in the creation of innovative models in senior living. He will brief delegates at the ICSH conference on the importance of choice for older people and how housing associations can play a role in creating these choices.

Nas na Riogh Housing Association, Co Kildare has already translated many of the principles of the household model into practice.
The ICSH has welcomed the decision of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) to review the use of ‘designated centre’ as a benchmark upon which schemes submitted under CAS to house people with a disability can be considered for funding.

In March 2015, a call for CAS proposals was issued with additional criteria included in the circular (Housing 15/2015) which has had unintended consequences and created significant challenges to achieving the aims of the Strategy. The circular states that CAS funding is not open to:

‘the provision of accommodation in centres deemed as designated centres under HIQA or where residents cannot hold an individual tenancy agreement’.

The circular now explicitly links the need for HIQA registration with the term ‘residential or nursing home accommodation’. It has been the practice, through the model under CAS to facilitate tenants to live in individual or group / community based homes which promote independent living with appropriate supports.

ICSH members believe that section 4.9 of the Memorandum VHU: 2/02 outlined below is still relevant in terms of the type of accommodation approved housing bodies wish to provide for people with a disability and the criteria that should be applied. It requires updating to take account of the upcoming Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Legislation (2012) and the Residential Tenancies Bill (2012) but the core recommendation should remain.

‘The Capital Assistance Scheme is not intended for the provision of Nursing Home or similar accommodation where residents would require extensive medical, nursing or institutional care’.

Following consultation with members, over 12 separate criteria were agreed and submitted to DECLG for consideration to underpin proposals for housing for people with disabilities under CAS.

The approved housing body would fulfil its obligations under the terms of the CAS funding scheme; registration of the tenancies under the upcoming Residential Tenancies Bill and responsibilities for the property under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations (2009), Building control and Planning Legislation; i.e. the statutory approvals required around, building regulations, planning approvals, fire safety certification and disability access certification in addition to landlord responsibilities. Other aspects included: building in the recommendations of the Congregated Settings report, managing capacity issues and working in partnership with support providers.

To read the full submission, this can be accessed via www.icsh.ie

ICSH publishes Pre Budget Submission 2016

The ICSH recently published its pre-budget submission for consideration by Government ahead of Budget 2016. A core part of the submission was a call for a three-year incentivised housing development programme, co-ordinated centrally, to assist members in developing their housing plans. Part of this programme would see non-profit housing associations committing to the delivery of specific housing targets.

The full ICSH submission is on www.icsh.ie
ICSH Social Housing

Legislation update

Changes to Part V Introduced

The Housing and Urban Regeneration Act 2015 has recently been signed into law by the President. The Act brings into being a number of measures that will affect how housing development operates in Ireland. Chief among those changes are the amendments to Part V of the Planning & Development Acts 2000 and 2002, the introduction of a vacant site levy, and changes to development contributions. While the legislation has been enacted it has not yet been commenced by the Minister.

The pro-active management of land in areas of high housing demand is a significant factor for this new legislation.

As part of the review of Part V, a report commissioned for the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government recommended that Part V of the Planning and Development Act should be retained, and that its primary focus should be the delivery of social (but not affordable) housing.

The main changes which will affect how Part V works are as follows:

- In preparing their housing strategy, a planning authority shall consult with approved housing bodies in their area.
- Up to 10% of housing developments will be subject to a planning agreement for social housing.
- The Act now applies to developments of 10 or more units.
- The option of providing a cash payment in lieu of social housing is being removed, as is the option of providing sites. Developers will have the option of transferring completed units on land which is not the subject of the planning application.
- Also developers may meet their obligation by way of a rental accommodation availability agreement or lease agreement.

There is some concern that the option to lease units rather than purchasing may result in a watering down of the impact of the legislation. If for some reason this is considered a necessary outcome, it should include the option to purchase at the end of the lease term by the local authority or approved housing body.

There is much scope for housing associations to work with local authorities and developers in delivering social housing under Part V. It is the view of the ICSH that the housing association should be involved in the discussions from the pre-planning stage. Experience has shown that the earlier a housing association gets involved, as it can be the ultimate owner and manager of the homes, the better the outcome. Issues such as design, layout, maintenance, and cost need to be addressed by the housing association from the beginning.

Vacant Site Levy

The Act introduces a vacant site levy, which will generally be an annual charge of 3% of the market value of each site registered on a vacant sites register, to be maintained by each planning authority.

Each local authority will identify Residential Land which is vacant or idle, suitable for the provision of housing, and situated in an area where there is a need for housing. In the case of Regeneration Land, the criteria for being designated a vacant site is that the site being vacant or idle has adverse effects on existing amenities, or reduces the amenity provided by existing public infrastructure and facilities in the area, or has adverse effects on the character of the area.

The vacant site levy is to be charged and levied beginning in 2018, becoming payable in arrears from 2019.

Development contributions

The Act introduces measures whereby reduced development contributions under a new development contribution scheme will now have retrospective effect in relation to any planning permission granted prior to adoption of the revised scheme.

The Act, it is hoped, will kick start activity in the construction sector to enable greater delivery of much needed housing. Housing associations should be poised to work with local authorities and developers in partnership to provide the Part V homes.

Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No 2) Bill (2012)

The Bill is expected to go through the Dáil in the Autumn. It is expected that the Bill will include legislative proposals for rent certainty measures for the private rented sector. Legislation for a Deposit Protection Scheme will also be introduced. The ICSH will update members on the progress of the Bill.
Launch of Annual Report and Financial Standard

The first annual regulation report was issued by the Regulation Office of the Housing Agency in August. The report on the first year of operation of regulation for the sector (and sectoral analysis) provides encouraging evidence of much of the ongoing good work in the sector, and also points to certain areas for further strengthening and development, which the ICSH is currently working with members on.

At the moment over 200 housing associations are now signed up to be part of the regulation, and this figure represents over 80% of the total 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 annual return for 2014 has recently been issued and is scheduled to be returned by 30th October 2015. 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.

Water Conservation Grant - Vulnerable Customer Registration

Following discussions between the ICSH and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, it was agreed to put in place an alternative means of registration for vulnerable tenants who benefit from HSE funding under S.38 or S.39 of the Health Act 2004.

This allows housing associations to register for water bills directly and to apply for the Water Conservation Grant (without the need to nominate a tenant for payment and billing purposes), and will hopefully simplify the billing process. The ICSH contacted members asking them to identify properties eligible for the scheme for this year, and these have now been sent to the DECLG for processing.

Regulation of Lobbying Act

This Act will apply to a number of ICSH members – specifically those with more than ten employees. The purpose of the Act is to provide for a web-based Register of Lobbying to make information available to the public on the identity of those communicating with designated public officials on specific policy, legislative matters or prospective decisions. This Act is now signed into law with a commencement date of 1st September 2015.

The first formal return to the Register of Lobbying will be required by 21st January 2016 at the latest to cover the period from September to December 2015.

Who is within the scope of the Act?

Communication with designated public officials by:

- Persons with more than 10 employees;
- Representative bodies and advocacy bodies with at least one employee;
- 3rd party lobbyists (those who are paid by a client to lobby on the client’s behalf);
- Anyone lobbying about the development or zoning of land.

And only if the communications relate to “relevant matters.”

“Relevant matters” are defined as:

- the initiation, development or modification of any public policy or of any public programme, the preparation of an enactment, or the award of any grant, loan or other financial support, contract or other agreement, or of any licence or other authorisation involving public funds, apart from matters relating only to the implementation of any such policy, programme, enactment or award or of a technical nature.

What is registered?

Register after first communication with a designated official:

- Organisation Name
- Business address
- Person with primary responsibility for lobbying
- Main business activities
- Contact details
- Company Registration Office Number and address
- Confirmation that details supplied are correct.

Member are advised to familiarise themselves with the Lobbying Act which can be accessed on www.lobbying.ie.

Eircode, Ireland’s new post code system, has now officially been launched. Every property in Ireland should receive a letter informing them of their unique postcode over the next three weeks.

Housing associations can look up Eircodes for properties by using the Eircode finder tool https://finder.eircode.ie/#/

At the moment it is not necessary to include Eircodes on postal addresses, however this may change in the future and associations may wish to plan for their inclusion in their databases etc.

The ICSH have sought a collaborative approach with relevant ‘early adopters’ of the Eircode systems to try and reduce the administration and cost required for members to update their systems, however, no definitive agreement has been reached.
Forum Reports

Tier One

Representatives from over 25 Tier One housing associations attended a seminar held in the Ashling Hotel on 29th June. The seminar included presentations from the HSE, the Regulation Office of the Housing Agency, and Governance Training by Ivan Cooper, Director of Advocacy at The Wheel. Updates were also provided by the ICSH on relevant issues. This seminar builds on the work of the Tier One Working Group which has been established to focus on issues central to the work and priorities of smaller associations in the sector.

Cork Sheltered Housing Providers’ Forum

The HSE, in partnership with the ICSH, organised this evening event in the Oriel House Hotel Ballincollig for providers of sheltered housing in Cork last June, with the forum focusing on new regulatory and governance challenges facing providers in the sector. The forum included presentations by the HSE and ICSH, and also input from Charleville Care Project, who gave an insight into the development of their own Tenant Handbook. Overall, almost 40 local organisations from all over Cork were represented on the night.

HSE ‘Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy’

‘Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse’ is a new national policy on the protection of vulnerable people from abuse and neglect. The policy is relevant to older persons and persons with a disability.

It has been produced by the HSE Social Care Division, which is responsible for the provision of services for older persons and persons with a disability. It sets out definitions of abuse and building blocks for safeguarding and promoting welfare as well as procedures for responding to concerns or allegations of abuse of vulnerable people.

The ICSH advise all members, in particular housing associations involved in the provision of housing with support services, to review the ICSH briefing note in conjunction with the HSE policy.

ICSH / CIH Certificate for the Housing Profession

In early 2014, the ICSH began working with the CIH to jointly deliver the CIH’s Level 4 Certificate for the Housing Profession in Ireland for the first time. This course was aimed at managers in housing positions, or those working in housing for a number of years and aspiring towards management positions. The content was therefore pitched at a higher level than previous ICSH certificate courses.

The course was developed over the course of 2014 and the first intake of students took place in September 2014. The course is delivered through blended learning with content taught through six class days and a dedicated website with considerable relevant reading for self-directed learning. Modules were delivered from September 2014 to June 2015 in housing policy, housing need, demand and supply, housing management services, housing economics and finance, housing law and managing people.

The course content and assignments were diverse and challenging however feedback from students has been very positive throughout the course. A review taking place towards the end of the course asking for more detailed feedback was very encouraging. Some responses from students included:

“It is very relevant to my job and it has given me a great background to what I am doing. While I do have a business degree this qualification is very specific to my job and will give me a lot more credibility when it comes to housing management. It has made me more focused on where our organisation is going and what the best way to get there is.”

“Overall it has been an excellent experience and one of the best things I have done in a long time.”

“I am really enjoying what I am learning throughout the course”

“I think the course is very relevant to my job and I find that I am able to apply content from all modules learned on a daily basis

Overall I have found the course very interesting and have enjoyed learning each module, it has given me a greater understanding of the housing sector and my job”

The ICSH is very much looking forward to delivering this course again in partnership with the CIH in 2015/16 and beyond.
Túath Housing Association

New social housing in Tallaght, South Dublin and Cork

Túath Housing Association, in collaboration with South Dublin County Council, NAMA, and the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, have delivered 65 much needed new homes at Tallaght Cross. The apartments are part of a 20-plus year lease via NARPS, with an option to buy for the association. The homes have been let to high-priority persons and families on the Council’s waiting list.

Túath Housing is delighted to have procured 23 homes in partnership with Cork City Council at two schemes, Hollyhill Heights and Ard na Rí. The Association will manage the social housing units under a long-term Service Level Agreement. Finishing repairs and upgrading works were carried out the homes to ensure compliance with current standards and building regulations.

HAIL
(Housing Association for Integrated Living)

The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Críona Ní Dhálaigh, and Alan Kelly, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, officially declared open the Coultry housing development in Ballymun on the 15th July 2015. The 25 new housing units are managed by HAIL on behalf of Dublin City Council (DCC).

Speaking at the launch, Minister Kelly said “This development embodies the spirit of what we understand to be a sustainable community.”

HAIL worked closely with the Allocations Department in DCC Housing Services to ensure that those with the highest housing need locally were considered, while the local Community Mental Health Team and Dublin North City Mental Health Rehabilitation Team, together with community based support services, worked to advocate and support others with an ongoing support need.

HAIL tenant Aoife and her son and daughter moved into a three bedroom house in the new development. Aoife was struggling to pay high rents in private rented accommodation and was worried about how long she could sustain living in such circumstances. Her life was transformed when she moved into the new high quality home with affordable, manageable rent.

“My life has changed for the better! We always lived in apartments, now my children can go out and play in their own garden. It’s wonderful”.

HAIL has been in existence for 30 years. During that time HAIL has developed into an organisation with a reputation for high quality governance, high quality housing and high quality support to its tenants and clients, primarily those with mental health difficulties.

Patricia Cleary, CEO of HAIL stated that; “Approved Housing Bodies are seen as a major part of the Housing solution for the future especially for seriously socially excluded groups of people. This has been a good example of the excellent collaboration and support between DCC, BRL, HAIL, community Mental Health and Rehabilitation Services and, Local Welfare services and Community Agencies.”
Belmayne is located in an area of Dublin with a high demand for all types of housing, so Clúid proposed a mixed tenure community that would cater for people with a range of needs and incomes. In 2014, Clúid signed a lease agreement with NARPS for a further 125 properties. NARPS is a ‘special purpose vehicle’ established by NAMA to lease out vacant housing stock to social housing providers. Under a NARPS lease, Clúid agrees to pay NARPS a percentage of the market rent.

Before taking the units into management, Clúid worked in partnership with the receiver to complete a major review and upgrade to the development.

Karen Kennedy, New Business Director at Clúid commented: ‘We are absolutely delighted to be providing long-term housing for people on the social housing waiting list in this area. We are helping to breathe life back into the local community and create opportunities to make real change happen. This section of Belmayne has been transformed from an underutilised, unfinished development into a thriving community.’

Resident Helen Maguire said: ‘I am just beyond happy. Before moving here, me and my son were living in a one bed emergency accommodation hotel room. My landlord moved back into the property I was living in and I had been extremely anxious ever since. We were totally unsettled. Having a long-term lease is a massive relief for me. The service Clúid provides is very reassuring and I always have a point of contact when I need one. The whole process has been life-changing for me. Belmayne is my home now.’

60% of the 125 units acquired in 2014 are social rented dwellings for people on Dublin City Council’s housing waiting list. Of these, one third is reserved for people who have experienced homelessness. The remaining 40% are let at market rents to those who can afford to pay a higher rent.
Kilanerin Sheltered Housing Association ‘Taobh Na Coille’ scheme has been shortlisted under the Housing for Older People category in this year’s Community Housing Awards. The scheme of six 2-bed independent living units was funded through the Capital Assistance scheme and completed in February 2015. Located in the heart of Kilanerin village 5 kilometres from Gorey, Co. Wexford, the well-designed scheme is centrally located close to all village amenities, and boasts a number of sustainability features. The scheme was officially opened by Minister Brendan Howlin, TD, on Friday 11th September.

North and East Housing Association - Moneymore House

North and East Housing Association was delighted to announce that 22 homes in the McArdle Green Development in Moneymore, Drogheda were handed over to our new tenants during the week of the 27th April. This project is an attractive development of 25 houses situated within an established area and is close to all the necessary local amenities. 22 of the houses were allocated to social housing applicants from Louth County Council Social Housing waiting list, a further 3 dwellings are being made available under the Council’s Incremental Purchase Scheme.

This landmark project is one of the first build to lease projects outside Dublin, where 17 of the units are being provided with loan finance borrowed by NEHA from Ulster Bank in addition to money advanced through the DECLG Capital Advanced Leasing Facility. Five more houses are being provided through the Capital Assistance Scheme.
The 2015 Allianz Community Housing Awards saw entries received from housing-providers around the country, under 10 different categories. All the shortlisted projects presented their submissions to the assessment panel on the 1st and 2nd of September. The panel members included:

- James Gleeson, Allianz
- Fionnuala Rodgerson, Architect
- Ollie O’Loughlin, former Limerick City Council Director of Service and current ICSH Board Member

The Allianz Community Housing Awards recognise and promote quality in housing delivery, management, and services to tenants and communities. The calibre of entries received this year has been extremely high, and it was a difficult task to select a shortlist.

For a number of years now, housing providers have faced a very challenging environment. Against this backdrop, we have seen numerous housing associations and local authorities – rise to the challenge and continually make efforts to meet housing demand. It is a major accomplishment for these associations to have been shortlisted for Community Housing Awards and the ICSH would like to congratulate all the entrants.

The awards ceremony is taking place as part of the ICSH’s National Social Housing Conference, and the awards will be presented by guests of honour, Cllr. Eamon Dooley, Mayor of Offaly and Claire Byrne, RTE.
England
Changes to the Right to Buy in the social housing sector

Introduced in 1980, in the Thatcherite period, the Right to Buy allows secure tenants of councils and certain housing associations to legally purchase their residences at a significant discount. A new Housing Bill enacted in May 2015 gave approximately 1.3m housing association tenants the right to buy their homes while requiring councils to sell high value properties and invest the proceeds into building affordable ones.

Though the government has stated an aim to replace each house sold under the Right to Buy Act, this has not been maintained at the same pace the homes are being sold. From 2012 - 2015, 3,037 dwellings on site were either started or acquired, while in the same time frame there were 29,509 sales. Many ‘Right to Buy’ homes that were rented out by councils have ended up with private landlords – to whom tenants pay much higher rents. In London, 36% of homes sold under the Right to Buy ended up in the hands of private landlords.

Australia
Clean Energy Finance Corporation funds 200 social homes

More than 200 energy efficient low-income and affordable homes are set to be built by not-for-profit community housing provider SGCH (St George Community Housing) under an Australian-first agreement reached with the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC).

The CEFC has committed up to $60 million in long-term senior debt to the program which is expected to build over 200 new energy efficient homes, and upgrade a proportion of SGCH’s 4,300 existing, older properties with energy efficient technologies.

The programme will enable SGCH tenants to benefit from lower energy costs. At the same time, SGCH will reduce the carbon footprint of its extensive housing portfolio, and strengthen its environmental and sustainability credentials in the NSW community housing sector.

It is a demonstration of positive benefits of partnership across different sectors to help unlock the multiple environmental, economic and social benefits of greater energy efficiency and renewables, helping make it a wider investment priority.

The CEFC is able to make finance available over a longer period, allowing the benefits of lower operating costs to be passed on to the tenants. This model is expected to help make such investments more appealing for the housing sector to meet growing needs for more sustainable social housing.

With an estimated 400,000 social housing households in Australia, it makes good sense to improve energy efficiency and help reduce energy costs for low income households.

Denmark
Public Housing Project for Refugees

Traumatised refugees living in vulnerable public housing areas will be supported through a bespoke project over a four year period from 2015 – 2018. The three public housing areas are located in Odense, Aarhus and Copenhagen.

The project, managed by the Danish Institute Against Torture (Dignity Institute) is locally based and aims to contribute to increased collaboration between municipal and residential social work stakeholders for the benefit of traumatised refugee families, local communities and relevant municipal departments.

The overarching purpose of the project is to holistically improve the quality of life of these traumatized families, as well as, in the long term, to decrease the socio-economic costs associated with them.