



Roundtable - Homelessness, Intellectual Disability and Autism

Introduction

Thank you for attending the National Advocacy Service roundtable event focusing on the experience of people with Intellectual Disabilities and/or Autism in Homeless Services.

The National Advocacy Service works to ensure that when life decisions are made, due consideration is given to the will and preference of people with disabilities and that their rights are safeguarded.

The National Advocacy Service operates on the principle that people with disabilities:

- make decisions about their lives
- are listened to and consulted by their families and those who provide their services
- access the supports they need to enable them to live their life and enjoy meaningful participation in family, work and leisure
- enjoy the benefits of participation in and contribution to their local communities

The National Advocacy Service has a particular remit for people with disabilities who are isolated from their community and services, have communication differences, are inappropriately accommodated, live in residential services, attend day services and have limited informal or natural supports.

Advocates had noticed an increase in the number of enquiries regarding people with disabilities experiencing homelessness. Enquiries to NAS often highlighted the lack of appropriate services and opportunities to secure long-term accommodation with supports for people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism who are homeless. NAS consulted with services supporting both people who are homeless and people with disabilities, that highlight some of the issues with coordination. A review of policy and data also revealed a lack of information and policy specific to people with intellectual disabilities. All those interviewed agreed that further discussions would be helpful and the roundtable was organised in response. The event was supported by a social policy grant from CIB.

The roundtable was held in the Ashling Hotel on October 25 2017 and attended by 70 people, including disability service providers, disabled peoples organisations, homeless service providers, the HSE and local authorities in the Greater Dublin Region.



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Presentations and Panel Discussions

The first part of the day provided an opportunity from those involved in commissioning and providing services to set out the issues facing people with disabilities who experience homelessness and homeless services.

Introductory remarks | Louise Loughlin, National Manager, National Advocacy Service
Panel Chairperson | Selina Bonnie, Access Officer South Dublin County Council
Panel Chairperson | Mark O'Connor, Community Engagement Lead, Inclusion Ireland

Ed Hannon, Assistant Manager, De Paul Trust

Ed Hannon discussed the difficulties of providing appropriate supports for people with disabilities and/or autism in homeless services.

Hazel Mulligan, Service Manager, St Michaels House

Hazel Mulligan outlined the experience of disability service providers moving towards providing community support workers supporting tenancies for people living in the community. She also discussed how St Michaels House were witnessing an increased risk of homelessness among the people that they support.

Darragh Byrne, Regional Manager, Gheel Autism Service

Darragh Byrne discussed the ways in which someone with autism might experience homeless services and the additional sensory and interpersonal challenges they might face. Darragh also discussed how there was an increasing amount of people with autism living with their parents into adulthood in situations that are precarious and may break down.

Majella Darcy, Head of Treatment and Enterprise, Dublin Simon

Majella Darcy discussed the difficulties supporting people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism.

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Cormac O'Donnell, Administrative Officer, Dublin Regional Homeless Executive
Cormac O'Donnell discusses the work of the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, the Dublin City Council Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability, the case management guidebook and the Holistic Needs Assessment.



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Dr Michael Byrne, National Disability Children and Families Team, HSE (pictured left)

Dr Michael Byrne discussed issues pertaining to social care and the working group conducting the HSE Autism Spectrum Disorder Review.

Sinead Kerin, Solicitor, Mercy Law Resource Centre

Sinead Kerin outlined the role work of the Mercy Law Resource Centre and the need for supports so that people with disabilities can exhaust their rights under legislation.



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Paula Mayock, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin (pictured left)

Paula Mayock discussed the lack of available research on Intellectual Disability and/or Autism and Homelessness in Ireland, and the impact of homelessness on people, particularly women and children, with intellectual disabilities.

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Roundtable Discussions

The second part of the day took the form of roundtable discussions where participants were invited to discuss a number of questions and a case study, and provide information to each other on policy and practice in the field. They were asked to provide suggestions for actions by service providers, commissioners, and others in supporting people who experience homelessness. The following themes arose from these discussions.



Pictured are Selina Bonnie, Disability Liaison Access Officer South Dublin County Council, Darragh Byrne, Regional Manager Gheel Autism Service, Ed Hannon, Assistant Manager De Paul Trust, Hazel Mulligan Service Manager St. Michael's House and Louise Loughlin National Manager Advocacy Service. Picture Colm Mahady / Fennells - Copyright© Fennell Photography 2017



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Issues identified during the Roundtable

Current housing provision

- Landlords not accepting the HAP
- People may not know their basic rights as tenants
- Being an adult but lacking in maturity/lack of street-wisdom to deal with private landlords/house sharing
- Sourcing a property

Pathways through homelessness

- Difficulties communicating what is going on with services
- Difficulties with literacy when reading/completing documentation
- Accessibility of the built environment

Inappropriate housing

- Crises cases of PWD ending up in nursing homes
- Adults with disabilities living with their parents
- The move on for some people from congregated settings have impacted on availability of housing
- Assumptions that housing associations provide housing for PWD
- Couch surfing and hidden homelessness

Coordination between disability service providers, HSE and homeless services

- Lack of joined up thinking
- People being discharged from services and not linked in with other supports
- Housing may be available via the Council but support not available at the same time
- No communication pathways between housing providers. DSPs and the HSE

Disability Service Providers

- Not all disability services will support PWD under threat of or homeless
 - Lack of knowledge in DSP of on how to support people who become homeless
 - Supports for people with high functioning autism
 - People with mild intellectual disabilities sometimes do not qualify for supports from disability services
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Suggested Actions

- Gather up-to-date data on people with disabilities who are homeless
- Training in disability awareness to be provided to homeless services and councils
- Designated officers to work with at risk individuals in homeless services and councils
- All documents and forms to be in an accessible format
- Clear pathways identifying what homelessness is and where to go/ what to do/ how to prevent it
- Standardised access to services and supports across the country
- Assessment of need to include person's own resources and abilities to ensure people don't become disempowered by supports
- Supports to develop independent Living Skills
- Outreach Services
- Additional supports and resources in the community
- Improved family supports
- Supported community living options

Emily Logan, Chief Commissioner, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

Emily Logan also addressed the event and focused on the public sector equality and human rights duty faced by state agencies and also those funded by the state. (Section 42, IHREC Act, 2014) This means that agencies must take proactive steps to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of people who use their services. She also covered the UN CRPD and the implications for ratification and how IHREC will work to monitor implementation of the convention.



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Conclusions

- A need for research on the prevalence and experience of homelessness by people with intellectual disabilities and/or autism.
- Training for those working in all aspects of homeless services on disability issues and awareness. Specialist staff to be available when needed.
- 'Housing First' strategies must apply to people with disabilities as well as to others who experience homelessness. However housing is not a solution to the lack of supports for people with disabilities.
- Co-operation needed with services in planning for supports for people with disabilities who experience homelessness.
- HSE Social Inclusion approaches to be extended nationally - There is currently a social inclusion project in Dublin South City which supports people with Intellectual Disabilities/Mental Health Issues and other disabilities who experience homelessness. This sees HSE staff working with other agencies in planning supports for people in emergency accommodation with complex needs.

What the National Advocacy Service can do

At a regional and national level NAS will explore what we can do to progress social policy issues which arise from work with people experiencing homelessness. This may include linking with stakeholders and convening a working group to progress the recommendations from the roundtable. A policy and communications officer role has been developed for the National Advocacy Service. NAS staff also attended training event planned by Dublin City Council on working with people with intellectual disabilities who apply for housing or are currently tenants.

If you have taken any action or collaborated with anyone as a result of the conference please let us know. If you would like to be put in contact with any of the other participants at the event please let us know and we will do our best to facilitate you.

Contact details | suzy.byrne@advocacy.ie | laura.dowling@advocacy.ie

To contact the National Advocacy Service with an enquiry our National Telephone Number: 0761 07 3000 is open from 10am -4pm Monday to Friday. Enquiries can also be emailed to info@advocacy.ie



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Pictured from left: Sinead Kerins, Mercy Law Resource, Dr. Michael Byrne, HSE, Paula Mayock, TCD, Mark O' Connor, Inclusion Ireland and Cormac O' Donnell, Dublin Region Homeless Executive. Picture Colm Mahady / Fennells - Copyright© Fennell Photography 2017

Pictured were from left: Hazel Mulligan, Service Manager St. Michael's House, Dr. Michael Byrne, National Disability Children and Families Team, HSE and Louise Loughlin, National Manager National Advocacy Service. Picture Colm Mahady / Fennells - Copyright© Fennell Photography 2017



Pictured are Laura Dowling, Advocate, NAS, Angela Black, CEO, Citizens Information Board, Louise Loughlin, National Manager, NAS and Suzy Byrne, Senior Advocate, NAS. Picture Colm Mahady / Fennells - Copyright© Fennell Photography 2017