

Leaving homelessness behind for good

A core objective of Focus Ireland's current strategy – which runs to 2020 – is to deepen our commitment to preventing homelessness and supporting people into housing.

We work to ensure that all our efforts either help to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place or actively support families and individuals to secure a place to call home.

Sadly, the overall crisis deepened again in 2017, as well over 9,000 people were homeless by year end. However, it is important to highlight that without the work of Focus Ireland the crisis would be even worse. We helped a record number of 14,500 people in 2017 who were homeless or at risk. We provided a place to call home for nearly 1,000 households nationwide who were formerly homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The work of our staff changed the lives of more people than ever before in 2017 by helping them to leave homelessness behind. The men and women working for Focus Ireland across the country made this possible. All of our projects work in close collaboration with statutory organisations (Department of Housing, local authorities, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, Tusla and the Department of Social Protection), and make the most effective use of the range of

government supports now available.

In 2017 our Family Team continued to be the lead agency helping families who are homeless in Dublin with the support of the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive. The team provided vital case management support to **1,033** families by the end of the year, compared to **946** in 2016. Our child support workers on the family team supported over 200 children in 2017.

The work of our Family Team was expanded in 2016 to help respond to the growing numbers of families becoming homeless. It was a great achievement that this team managed to help **387** families out of homelessness and into a home during the year. This is really life-changing as all these families and children now have a place to call home and can move on in life.

Focus Ireland also continues to be a leader in delivering Housing First services in Ireland. This innovative approach sees staff working to get people who are sleeping rough into a home where they are provided with vital support services.



Children take part in a special Christmas art workshop run by the Focus Ireland family team in Dublin in mid-December 2017. Photograph: *Irish Times*.

Dublin Housing First (in partnership with the Peter McVerry Trust) provided homes for 106 additional people with a long history of rough sleeping, bringing to **220** the total number provided with secure homes by this service. Focus Ireland also took the lead in establishing the Housing First good practice platform where all homeless organisations can share skills and experience in delivery Housing First in an effective way.

We also continued the work of our 'Youth Housing' services developed in Limerick, Waterford, Cork, Clare, North Tipperary and Dublin to provide homes for vulnerable young people, along with vital support to help them sustain their tenancies as they make the transition into adulthood. This independently evaluated programme has already changed the lives of **103** young people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness. This innovative work involves collaboration between Focus Ireland, Tusla and the City and County Council in these areas. Focus Ireland believes this approach need to be extended elsewhere to meet growing needs around the country.

Housing is essential, but it is not the only thing needed to help people leave homelessness behind for good. People also

need access to education, training and employment. Our employment programme, which supports young care-leavers into employment, also continued its great work during the year and helped **35** people. Meanwhile, our PETE (Preparation for Education, Training and Employment) service worked with **274** people in 2017.

1,033

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387

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