

# Foreword

**We can all take home for granted a lot of the time. But deep down we all know what it means. Our home is the foundation stone of our personal and family life. It's where we belong and feel safe.**



**Sr Stanislaus Kennedy**  
Life President and  
Founder, Focus Ireland

**All of us at Focus Ireland firmly believe that homelessness can be ended. We know what is working and what isn't. And we also have a very clear vision of what needs to be done by the government and all parties concerned in order to ease and then end this crisis.**

Sadly, not everyone has this security. The harsh reality is that an average of three families lost their home every day in 2019.

I can remember back in 1987, which was the International Year of Homelessness, predicting that within six or seven years, we would end long-term homelessness.

It could have happened, except that governments reneged on commitments to provide houses. And so the numbers of people experiencing homelessness grew and grew, up until now. It is way beyond crisis.

I did not think that things could still get worse, but they did in 2019. It is truly awful that we are now seeing more babies being born into homelessness.

One young mother told me how she was homeless when her baby boy was born. The woman, Louise, explained: 'I had just found out I was pregnant when our landlord told us he was selling the house we were renting. Our world fell apart. We were desperate – searching day and night for somewhere new to stay.'

I am glad to say we were able to help Louise and her family, as we at least got them into proper emergency accommodation. They were still homeless for a while but we worked with them and they now have a home.

While Louise's story had a happy ending, no family should ever have to go through the trauma of losing their home and being homeless. No child should ever be born into homelessness.

Families and individuals lose their homes as they can't afford to pay the rent or the house is sold or repossessed. They have been called 'The New Homeless'. That is the people who become homeless for purely economic reasons.

I believe that, as a country, we have a duty to look after all our citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable. We must cherish all our children equally and ensure that no child suffers from being homeless.

Focus Ireland works hard to do this, and we

continue to develop realistic policy solutions to help end homelessness. We also work through over 80 front-line services in Dublin and across the country so we are there when people need us the most. This amazing work is done in partnership with the State, as well as through kind support from our generous donors.

All of us at Focus Ireland firmly believe that homelessness can be ended. We know what is working and what isn't. And we also have a very clear vision of what needs to be done by the government and all parties concerned in order to ease and then end this crisis.

This vision is outlined in this annual report and is informed directly by the amazing work our staff does as we help to support families and individuals while they are homeless. Our staff work with people to help them to find and secure a place to call home.

As I write this we are still dealing with the Covid-19 public health emergency and Focus Ireland is working more closely than ever with the State and partner organisations to protect people who are homeless. Welcome steps, such as the temporary ban on evictions and the rent freeze, had a big impact in cutting the numbers becoming homeless.

We have helped to move record numbers of families and individuals out of homelessness in this period. This work must continue. As the country opens up, we must not let homelessness be a part of our new normal. We need to move on from short-term measures and hubs to providing more social and affordable rental housing.

I would like to conclude by paying special thanks to the families and individuals who took the time to tell their own stories in our Annual Report 2019.

The outstanding work by our staff with so many means that people who feel hopeless when they are homeless can light the flame of belief in themselves once more.

They build belief that the bad times won't last forever, belief that they can come through this crisis.

Belief that we can really end homelessness.