



# FOCUS

Ireland

**Challenging  
homelessness.  
Changing lives.**

**Annual  
Report 2019  
Summary**



**Challenging  
homelessness.  
Changing lives.**





A man with a shaved head and multiple ear piercings is sitting at a wooden table, looking down at papers. He is wearing a grey t-shirt. In the background, there are shelves with toys, including a small horse figurine and colorful blocks. A white mug is on the table in front of him.

# Annual Report 2019 Summary

**2019:**

Our services supported approximately

**1,800 families** and **4,300 children**

who were homeless or at risk.



In Ireland in 2019, every day  
**three families**  
lost their home.

# Contents

- 5 Foreword
- 6 Company information
- 7 Our vision, mission and values
- 8 Focus on 2019: Our impact in numbers
- 10 Messages from chairpersons
- 12 Overview of 2019

## Family homelessness

- 15 Supporting families nationwide
- 16 Challenging family homelessness
- 17 Resource for primary teachers
- 18 Investing in Children Membership Award
- 19 The Family Centre
- 20 Emma's story

## Youth homelessness

- 23 Prevention
- 24 Youth housing
- 25 Aftercare
- 26 Challenging youth homelessness
- 27 Limerick Youth Housing: Johnny's story

## Single people with complex needs

- 31 Challenging homelessness for single people with complex needs
- 32 Julie's story
- 35 Housing First
- 35 Housing First: Limerick
- 36 Housing First: South East

## Focus Housing Association

- 39 New homes
- 40 Grange Cohan, Co. Waterford
- 42 Paul's story
- 44 John's Lane West
- 47 Research and submissions
- 49 Finance summary

Note: Throughout the report, some names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals. Changed names are marked with an asterisk.

# 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.



# Company information

## Focus Ireland Company Limited by Guarantee

### Directors

#### Focus Ireland Board

Sr Stanislaus Kennedy  
(Founder and Life President)  
Mr Michael Layde (Chairperson)  
Mr John O'Haire (Appointed 29 April 2019)  
Ms Susan O'Connell  
Mr Conor Jones (Appointed 25 February 2019)  
Mr Tony Fahey (Appointed 14 March 2019)  
Mr John Moloney

#### Focus Housing Association Board

Mr Diarmuid Burke (Chairperson)  
Ms Fionnuala Meehan (Appointed 8 March 2019)  
Mr Mark Dunleavy (Appointed 25 February 2019)  
Ms Patricia Crisp (Appointed 15 March 2019)

#### Members of both Boards

Mr Andrew Gunne (Appointed 22 February 2019)  
Mr Declan O'Flaherty  
Ms Anna Lee  
Mr Fergal O'Dwyer (Appointed 26 July 2019)

### Chief Executive Officer

Mr Pat Dennigan

### Secretary and registered office

Ms Pamela Keenan (Appointed 26 July 2019)  
Mr Kevin Gregory (Resigned 26 July 2019)  
9–12 High Street, Dublin 8, D08 EIWO

### Registered no.

106149

### Independent auditors

PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Chartered Accountants and Statutory Audit Firm  
1 North Wall Quay, North Wall Docks,  
Dublin 1

### Solicitors

Arthur Cox  
Ferrys Solicitors  
McCann FitzGerald  
Mason Hayes & Curran  
Clohessy Minihane  
MM Halley & Sons  
Holmes O'Malley Sexton  
O'Donnell Breen-Walsh O'Donoghue  
Hogan Dowling  
Byrne Wallace  
Kilcullen and Associates

### Bankers

Bank of Ireland  
Allied Irish Bank plc  
Ulster Bank Ireland Limited  
Housing Finance Agency

### Company

Focus Ireland  
Focus Housing Association  
The Caretakers Project  
Excellent Common Areas

### Revenue registered charity no.

CHY 7220  
CHY 9040  
CHY 15489  
Not registered

### CRA registered charity no.

20015107  
20022624  
20053604  
Not registered

# Our vision, mission and values

**Focus Ireland works with people who are homeless or at risk of losing their homes across Ireland.**

## Our vision

Focus Ireland believes that everyone has a right to a place they can call home.

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## Our mission

We are driven by the fundamental belief that homelessness is wrong.

Wrong because it is a failure of society that creates victims out of ordinary people and robs them of their potential. Wrong because it can be prevented, it can be solved but is allowed to continue and in doing so, undermines society.

We need to challenge our society to think and act differently. We are committed to challenging everything about homelessness; the causes, systemic failures, people's perceptions and how it is tackled.

And we challenge ourselves in how we allocate resources to maximise our ability to prevent people from falling into homelessness and to help people find and keep a home.

Homelessness is wrong and we have to make that felt in everything we do and say.

## Our values

Focus Ireland's models for service provision are dictated by the needs of our customers.

We believe that the quality of service delivery is as important as the kind of service we provide.

There are nine primary values that underpin our models of service delivery, both to our staff and our customers:

- › Respect
- › Safety
- › Quality
- › Partnership
- › Accessibility
- › Integration
- › Advocacy
- › Empowerment
- › Stewardship

# Focus on 2019:

## Our impact in numbers



Approximately **14,200** customers engaged with our services



Over **810** families supported out of homelessness



Approximately **1,800** families engaged with our services



**425** young people supported by our youth services



Nearly **4,300** children supported across our services



Over **640** households supported to keep their homes



Approximately **425** adults supported into PETE\* programmes

\* Preparation for Education, Training and Employment



Approximately **410** children supported in TSS\* services outside Dublin

\* Tenancy Sustainment Support



Over **1,150** households supported to settle into a new home or supported on a pathway towards sustaining an exit



Over **5,000** customers engaged with our A&I\* services

\* Advice and Information



## Focus on our:

- › Peer researchers – page 18
- › Volunteers – page 24
- › Preparation for Education, Training and Employment services – page 29
- › Coffee Shop – page 31
- › Advice & Information services – page 36



Sr Stan launches Focus Ireland's Christmas appeal 2019 with 3-week-old Amélie Cooney, daughter of Focus Ireland staff member Aoife Cooney.

# Messages from chairpersons

**This publication is the 2019 joint report from the two independent charitable companies – Focus Ireland and Focus Housing Association.**

The details of the finances and governance of the two companies are set out on pages 48–113. The two separate companies provide an integrated service to people who face, or have faced, homelessness, and the personal stories and scale of the impact of this integrated approach are set out in the rest of the report.

The Chairpersons of the two independent Boards set out their messages for stakeholders.

Michael Layde  
Chairperson of Focus Ireland

Every day, Focus Ireland sets out to *Challenge Homelessness and Change Lives*, and 2019 again demonstrated a remarkable level of achievement of these goals against the backdrop of a national housing and homelessness crisis. These human stories at the front line are what makes Focus Ireland impactful and meaningful. And these stories can only happen if the solid work of good governance – and what our values refer to as ‘stewardship’ – is happening in the background. This too has always been a strength of Focus Ireland.

In 2019 we achieved records in fundraising. Also, in a very demanding context of competitive tendering in the sector, we grew our contracted services with statutory bodies across the country. This provides us with a firm basis of engagement with statutory partners, balanced with our own independence to innovate and ‘go the extra mile’ with the people who need our help.

In 2019 we saw significant changes at the senior level of the organisation, with long-serving

Directors of Services, Fundraising and Human Resources moving on or retiring. I want to thank the departing staff for their contribution over the years, and it is tribute to the reputation and health of the organisation they helped to build that we have been recruiting and promoting such effective replacements.

At the time of writing, the even greater challenges of 2020 are already apparent – with the Covid-19 pandemic closing down much of our society. The Focus Ireland Board is confident that our legacy of good governance will provide us with a strong basis to meet this new situation, and the deep understanding and loyalty of our donors will continue to provide us with the resources we need. This will allow the skills and commitment of our staff across the country to shine out, providing help and hope during what we expect to be a year in which our services are more needed than ever.



**These human stories  
at the front line are  
what makes Focus  
Ireland impactful  
and meaningful.**



Pauline McLynn lends her support to the Great Get Together fundraising initiative for Focus Ireland in March 2019



**Diarmuid Burke**  
Chairperson of Focus Housing Association



It was a milestone year in 2019 for Focus Housing Association as we completed the demanding process through which Focus Housing Association became established as a fully independent Approved Housing Body. Since 1988, Focus Housing has been a distinct company, with Approved Housing Body status, but since 1995 the two organisations have operated with a single Board and Chair.

Approved Housing Bodies now play a crucial part in the Government's plans to deliver social housing and this increased role brings with it the need for stronger regulation. Focus Housing's ambitious programme requires us to borrow for investment in new homes and meet the standards of governance and transparency that statutory and private lenders require. To reach these goals, we have worked closely with the new AHB Regulator to achieve the highest new standards of governance.

As of 2019, Focus Housing now has its own Board, ready to meet the rigorous standards of the AHB Regulator and maximising our ability to invest in homes that we can rent out at

affordable prices to vulnerable individuals and families moving out of homelessness.

In 2019 we continued to meet our target of providing 99 additional homes, bringing the total number of additional homes provided in the last four years to 594. In a number of cases, once the new tenant is settled, we have decided to transfer the property out of our own stock. As a result, our impact in providing new homes for people moving out of homelessness is not fully reflected in the growth of our own stock. Our approach reflects our core philosophy of maximising the number of people whose lives we can change for the better, rather than adding to our housing stock.

It was great to see tenants moving into our landmark new development in John's Lane West in 2019, with the project later winning a prestigious Community Housing Award. This completed the phase in our development in which we build on land acquired before the 2008 crash. During 2020 we will be utilising our new growth capacity to purchase pepper-potted new homes as well as exploring new ways in which we can contribute to the building of high-quality, secure homes for people moving out of homelessness.

**Our approach reflects our core philosophy of maximising the number of people whose lives we can change for the better.**

# Overview of 2019

**After six years in which the number of people forced into homelessness kept rising, 2019 at last saw the numbers stabilise, presenting the hope that – if we redouble our efforts – we can begin to turn the tide. There is still a long way to go, but now is the time to talk about ending the scourge of homelessness – rather than managing the damage it does.**



Pat Dennigan  
CEO  
Focus Ireland

This report tells the story of how Focus Ireland and Focus Housing Association played a key role in the achievements of 2019. The report sets out the numbers, images, experiences of staff and, most important, the stories of the people we supported. We want to explain the work we do and the difference we make. So, the report is structured not around our own internal organisational units, but around the people we work with. In the section on families, we cover the work that our prevention services, housing services, research and advocacy staff, and housing team undertook to assist families – and the key donors who made that work possible. All our work with young people and with single people with complex needs is reported in the same way.

Of course, the details of *how* we deliver this work are important too – for transparency and accountability. Therefore, at the core of this report is the comprehensive financial report, which allows you to understand how we deployed our resources to the greatest effect during the year.

As the number of people looking for our support grew in recent years, we recognised the risk that we might interact with more and more people but to less and less effect. To

overcome this challenge, our services have moved to intensify their support with each person we work with. As a result, for the first time in many years, we worked with fewer people than previous years – but the benefits of the shift are clear in our impact. We supported a **record 1,790 households** to avert a risk of homelessness (prevention) or move to a new secure home (exit from homelessness). This reflects our philosophy that what matters is not the number of people who cross our threshold but the number of lives we can help change.

There are many routes into homelessness, but every route out involves an affordable home. For thirty years, a key part of Focus Ireland's contribution has been to add to the number of affordable homes through our housing arm, Focus Housing Association. During 2019 we directly provided 99 additional homes. And 2019 also saw the much-anticipated opening of our award-winning development of 31 new homes in John's Lane West.

The belief that we can end homelessness is core to Focus Ireland, and we know that the skilled and dedicated work of our own front-line services must be underpinned by effective public policies on housing and social services. With 2019 dominated by expectations of an



**We supported a record  
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or move to a new secure home.**

imminent General Election, we made a point of engaging with politicians from government and opposition parties to highlight the policies and priorities our experience tells us are needed. We hope that our campaigns on EndYouthHomelessness, the Right to Housing, on housing building, social housing and family homelessness will also contribute to a better understanding of the solutions to homelessness among public representatives – and to more effective policies.

Since 2012, the Shine a Light CEO sleep-out has been a highlight of the year but in 2019 the sponsorship of Bord Gáis Energy helped us bring the event to a new level of impact and awareness. In particular, Bord Gáis Energy's decision to invest in broadcasting our hard-hitting 'Moving Day' advert brought home the reality of the family homelessness crisis to a much wider audience.

Increased family homelessness has been one of the most distressing aspects of the crisis, and Focus Ireland has, in collaboration with DRHE, local authorities, the HSE and Tusla, continued to lead the way in understanding and responding. In recent years, we have found it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of families and individuals at the same time in the same space in our pivotal Coffee Shop – and 2019 saw us advance plans for a new Family Centre to provide essential support

to vulnerable families. I believe that, with the support of donors and statutory partners, this new service will play a vital role in reports of our work in years to come.

Work on the new Family Centre is only one part of our planning and preparation for the future. In 2020 we will roll out our Orion project – a new system for tracking the effectiveness of our services, launching a new wave of Housing First projects in the South East and Mid-West and starting work on a new strategic plan for the organisation – a plan which we hope will move us on from struggling with ever-rising homelessness and back towards the demanding aspiration of bringing homelessness back down towards zero.

Rereading this report for publication reminds me of the huge number of people we have to thank for making these achievements possible. I want to thank our individual and corporate donors, all the statutory agencies and Local Authorities who not only funded our work but worked in partnership with us, all our dedicated front-line staff and the less visible backroom staff too. I also want to thank the members of our two Boards – Focus Ireland and Focus Housing Association – who continue to give their time, commitment and wisdom to us on a voluntary basis.

As we send the 2019 report to the printers, the unique challenges of 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic are already upon us. If there is one Covid-19 lesson that we can learn from 2020 and apply to the future, it is the value of partnership. At Focus Ireland, partnership has always been a core value, and we know that it is essential to solving homelessness. The pandemic reminded us all how important it is to renew this value and how effective that can make us.

**I also want to thank the members of our two Boards –  
Focus Ireland and Focus Housing Association –  
who continue to give their time, commitment  
and wisdom to us on a voluntary basis.**





**2019:**

**We assisted**

**810 families**

**across the country to find a home,**

**and we supported another**

**640 households**

**to keep their homes.**



# Family homelessness

## Supporting families nationwide

**Focus Ireland has been the lead organisation working with families that are homeless since this form of homelessness first began to emerge in the 1980s.**

**Focus Ireland support can involve finding a new home for a family – and sometimes it can involve getting a family back together again.**

Since the current and unprecedented family homelessness crisis began to emerge around 2014, we have worked with partners all around Ireland to apply our expertise and experience to help families. As always, our efforts are directed at preventing homelessness, where possible, and supporting the fastest exit from homelessness where it occurs. With family homelessness we also have the crucial role of helping families protect their children from the potentially life-long harm that homelessness can do.

Throughout 2019 our services across the country supported approximately 1,800 families and 4,300 children, who were living in a range of emergency accommodation (such as hotels), own-door accommodation and family hubs. Focus Ireland has a proud track record of helping families out of homelessness. During 2019 we assisted 810 families across the country to find a home, and we supported another 640 households to keep their homes.

In Dublin, the Focus Ireland Family Homeless Action Team (FHAT) continued to be the lead service working with homeless families during 2019, as part of the Dublin Region Homeless Executive response to homelessness. The aim of FHAT is to help families move out of homelessness into long-term homes. Working with the local authorities and others, our FHAT team supported a record 330 families to move out of homelessness in 2019. When families are overwhelmed by the trauma of homelessness, it is much harder for them to find and sustain a new home. This is why our FHAT team works with families to develop the *accommodation pathways* that will assist them in finding a home and reduce the chance of them becoming homeless again.

Outside Dublin, our Tenancy Sustainment Support services worked with many different City and County Councils to support 410 children in nearly 200 families. Focus Ireland support can involve finding a new home for a family – and sometimes it can involve getting a family back together again.

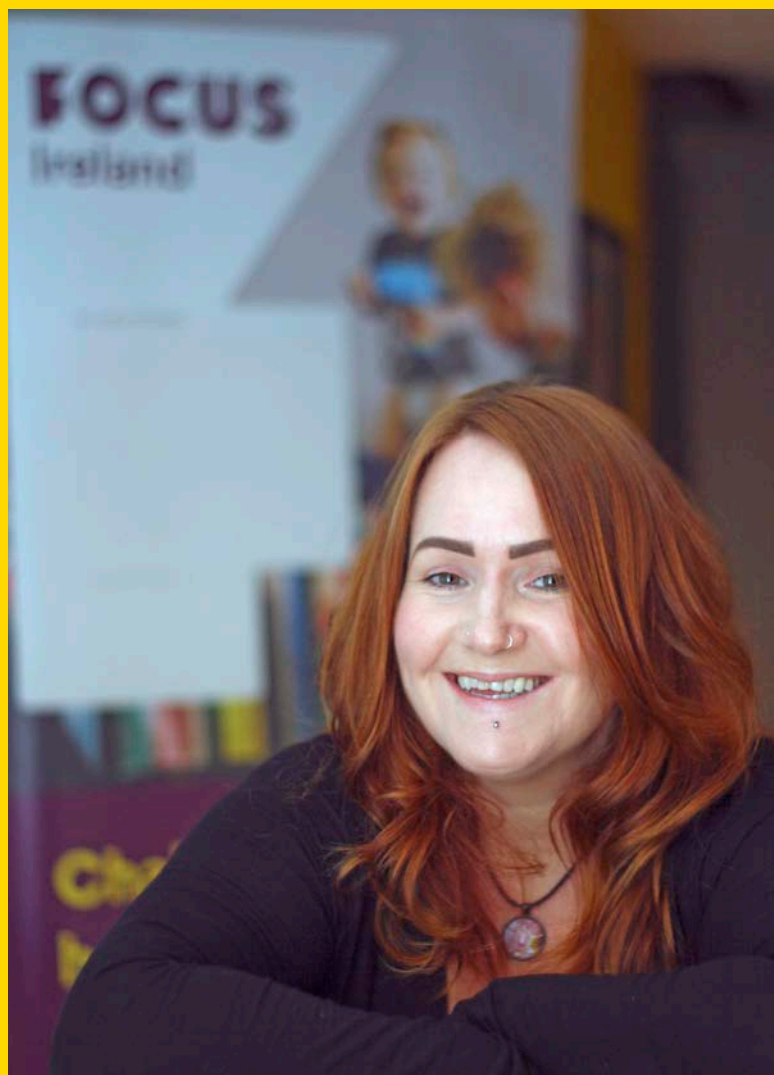
In Cork, we were able to offer several families new homes in 2019. One of these families was to a mother who was supported to create a stable home environment in the home she rented from us. This enabled her to be reunified with her children, who had been in foster care for a number of years.

In Waterford, Focus Ireland supported a new initiative from the local City and County Council to provide a response to homeless families that is better than B&Bs, hotels or hubs. In this new approach, the local authority ring-fences 20 of its ordinary council houses for short-term emergency use by homeless families. We supported these families working to rapidly re-house to long-term homes through the government's Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) or social housing – moving on after an average of just 10 weeks. This reduces trauma and distress for families. It enables them to live normal family lives and, at the same time, get the support they need to move on.

Funding from Bord Gáis Energy allowed us to offer families activities including day trips (with lunch vouchers) to centres such as Fota Wildlife Park. This important initiative allowed hard-pressed families to take part in normal, everyday activities without undermining their precarious weekly budget.

‘The main aim of our short-term accommodation is to empower families with the tenancy skills to move on and sustain long-term accommodation. My relationship with the families I work with is a key part of my job. It’s important that there’s a level of trust between us. I’m entering into their homes and their family life, so trust and confidentiality is vital.’

**Lorraine Kelly, Short-Term Accommodation for Families, Focus Ireland Sligo**



## Challenging family homelessness

A crucial part of our support for families is to commission **high-quality research to further our understanding** of the causes of homelessness and the practices and policies that are most effective in ending it. During 2019, a publication in our well-regarded *Insights in Family Homelessness* series showed that families living in the private rented sector are continuing to bear the brunt of the deepening housing and homelessness crisis.

The researchers interviewed 237 families who were homeless in Dublin and found that 68% of them (161 families) had their last stable home in the private rented sector. Over half these families (86 out of 161) became homeless because their landlord stopped renting out the property – either selling the property, moving into the

property themselves, or seeing the property repossessed by the bank.

The report shows that the majority of families who became homeless had had stable housing histories: 9 out of 10 respondents had lived in their last stable home for over a year, and 33% had lived in their last stable home for over six years. The report also highlights the enormous effort families took to find new homes.

Focus Ireland would like to thank Bord Gáis Energy for funding this research and report. Focus Ireland’s partnership with Bord Gáis Energy focuses on two specific areas within the charity’s range of services: preventing family homelessness and providing support to families who are homeless.

Focus Ireland participated in the National Homeless Forum’s working group on family homelessness, convened by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, which expects to report in 2020.





Pictured at the launch of *Homelessness in the Classroom* are Feargal Brougham, INTO President; Mike Allen, Director of Advocacy, Focus Ireland; and Sarah Jane O'Grady, Child Support Worker, Focus Ireland.

## Resource for primary teachers

In 2019, Focus Ireland and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) produced a guidance resource for primary school teachers who are supporting pupils and families who are homeless or at risk, called *Homelessness in the Classroom*. The guide highlights the reality of homelessness and its impact on children's education. It offers practical suggestions

about how schools can support pupils, and also shares examples of good practice already happening in many schools. The new resource was launched at St. Joseph's National School, Macroom Road, Bonnybrook, Dublin 17.

Throughout 2019, Focus Ireland called for the government to review its policies dealing with child homelessness and stated that such a review must examine very carefully how children are being treated in the homelessness crisis.



'A school principal told me that he didn't fully understand the impact that homelessness can have on children, and that reading *Homelessness in the Classroom* really opened his eyes to the impact of homelessness on children's mental health, their attendance and participation in school, and the barriers to their basic needs.

Children experiencing homelessness may have to travel long distances to get to school. They may not have space to do their homework in emergency accommodation. They may not have any space to play outside. This principal and the teachers at the school are now using our resource guide to implement additional facilities in the school to support these children and their families.'

Amanda Leenheer, Focus Ireland  
Child Support Worker, Dublin



Focus Ireland's peer researchers  
(L-R) Emma, Paul and Kathlenna

## Focus on: Peer researchers

An important feature of our research programme has been the involvement of researchers with lived experience of homelessness. Our peer researchers have supported our work by contributing their insights and understanding of the issues facing people experiencing homelessness, as they have previously experienced homelessness themselves. A core part of this work is building the confidence and skills of our peer researchers, with the goal of further work opportunities. A highlight of our research programme in 2019 was our hosting of a seminar entitled *Peer Research and Understanding Homelessness* in partnership with The Housing Agency. The seminar was attended by over 60 participants from government agencies, NGOs and academia. It featured presentations by experts from around Europe, including the Focus Ireland team of peer researchers.

## Investing in Children Membership Award

At Focus Ireland, we were proud to be awarded the *Investing in Children Membership Award™* by Tusla for our work with children at the Horizon Hub. The project was the first homeless hub in Ireland to be awarded this accolade. This is a testament to the hard work

and innovative approaches of Focus Ireland and Horizon House staff. The award was in recognition of **imaginative and inclusive practice** and is awarded to organisations that demonstrate a commitment to dialogue with young people that leads to change.







Focus Ireland  
Family Centre

## The Family Centre

The Focus Ireland Coffee Shop in Temple Bar has been at the heart of Focus Ireland services for over 30 years. In recent years, as family homelessness soared, the Coffee Shop had found it increasingly difficult to meet the wide-ranging needs of people seeking support. Early in 2019, we began to work on establishing a new dedicated service for parents and children, which would allow the Coffee Shop to continue to support single people with complex needs. Towards the end of 2019, the doors opened to Focus Ireland's new Family Centre.

Like all Focus Ireland services, the Family Centre is dedicated to helping families exit homelessness, dealing with all the problems

that stand in the way of these families finding a secure home. When it is fully operational, the Family Centre will bring together the following services in one location: Advice and Information, case management, key workers and child support workers. It will also provide the daily needs of a family, such as **warm nutritious meals, a safe space to sit together to eat and laundry facilities**. It will also provide a unique and specially designed **childcare service**. Here, parents can be certain their children are being looked after, while the parents concentrate on sessions with a case manager or work to secure a new home. We would like to thank Sodexo, CRH and the Little Company of Mary who have generously invested in the Centre to ensure its success.

'The best part of my job is working with a family, getting to know them, trying to empower them and help them through a tough time. It's amazing to see how resilient people are. There's nothing better than when you get a call from them saying they got the keys for their new home. The excitement for the kids about the simple things – having a bedroom, having space for toys again, having friends over. There's nothing better.'

**Nicola Stewart, Focus Ireland  
Family Centre, Dublin**





**Emma remembers how difficult it was to raise a baby in emergency accommodation, and the isolation she faced.**





# Emma's story

**Emma is a 20-year-old lone parent who never thought she would have to endure the heartbreak of homelessness. When she first entered emergency accommodation, she was seven months pregnant and her life faced a crisis. Her son was born into homelessness. For 18 months, Emma had little belief she would find a home, as she was unemployed and had no history of renting.**

Explaining the circumstances which led her to homelessness, Emma recalls: 'I left my mum's house to move in with my ex-boyfriend. Then everything went wrong. I decided to leave him, but I couldn't go back to my mum as I had fallen out with her.'

Emma remembers how difficult it was to raise a baby in emergency accommodation, and the isolation she faced.

'If I wanted to go home to see my friends and family in Ballyfermot, it would take three buses to get there from my emergency accommodation. Sometimes I wouldn't even

affected the baby's development: he didn't even have room to move.'

Despite the trauma Emma experienced on becoming homeless, Focus Ireland's Family Action Team were – and still are – a crucial form of emotional support for the young mother. Emma said: 'They helped me face both homelessness and personal issues. My project worker, Lisa, was great as she advised what to do and say when looking for a new home. The emotional support was also great. I hadn't realised Focus Ireland would be able to help me so much with personal issues.'

With assistance from Focus Ireland, Emma found a two-bedroom house in Clondalkin through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) after 18 long months without a home. 'I now live just down from the estate where I grew up as a child. It's great because I'm closer to all my family and friends. My son is also much happier. He now has lots of space to move around and develop, which he never had before,' she said.

The young mother was forced to drop out of college due to homelessness but is now looking to continue her studies, with the hope of finding a job looking after older people as a carer.

Emma believes that Focus Ireland have helped change her life for the better. 'Having a good relationship with my key worker was so important. She was always there for me. She saw me cry. She saw when I was happy. I was given motivation to keep trying, which helped me find the home I'm in now.'

**'They helped me face both homelessness and personal issues. My project worker, Lisa, was great as she advised what to do and say when looking for a new home. The emotional support was also great. I hadn't realised Focus Ireland would be able to help me so much with personal issues.'**

bother leaving the room with my baby and I'd just stare at the four walls. I remember not even being able to have visitors – and this wasn't helping my mental health.'

She also noticed how her time in emergency accommodation was adversely affecting her son. 'I found my baby was falling behind, he wasn't even walking and I was very worried. Being in that small room

A young man with dark, curly hair is shown in profile, looking out of a window. He is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved t-shirt with a subtle pattern. The window is large, and the view outside is bright and slightly blurred, showing some greenery and buildings. The lighting is soft, coming from the window, creating a contemplative mood.

**2019:**

**425 young people**

**were supported by our  
youth services.**



# Youth homelessness

**Young people who are homeless in Ireland have remained a largely forgotten group and there are few dedicated homeless services to meet their particular needs.**

Young people with experience of state care can face particular risks of homelessness and have been a particular concern of Focus Ireland over many decades. Focus Ireland research has confirmed international evidence that many young people avoid homeless services by 'sofa surfing' or living in insecure arrangements. This means that the official figures do not reflect the true depth of the problem.

Focus Ireland provides a range of services for young people across the country, including Aftercare, Residential Aftercare, family mediation, day services, youth housing and Housing First for Youth, some of which are provided in partnership with Tusla, HSE, local authorities and other state agencies.

We could not operate our youth services without the generous support of our donors. We would like to thank all our donors who support youth services – in particular the Applegreen Charitable Foundation and members of the Women's Philanthropy Circle, whose support in 2019 helped prevent young people from becoming homeless.

## Prevention

With the support of Tusla, Focus Ireland has been gradually increasing the range of its successful family mediation services. During 2019, we managed the **Intensive Home Support Service** in Dublin South Central, funded through Tusla's Creative Community Alternatives funding stream. The service was a **high-level prevention project aimed at children aged 12–17 who were in care or on the edge of care**. It provided intense support to children where the relationship with family or caregivers has severely broken down. Such an intensive service can only work with a few children, but they are the ones who are too often forgotten, and the beneficial impact can last a lifetime, potentially averting a life of homelessness.

Partnership is key to effective prevention. In Limerick in 2019 a new Steering Committee was formed to improve partnership with other agencies. The Steering Committee includes staff from Tusla, Aftercare, Limerick Homeless Action Team and Focus Ireland.

**Focus Ireland research has confirmed international evidence that many young people avoid homeless services by 'sofa surfing' or living in insecure arrangements. This means that the official figures do not reflect the true depth of the problem.**

## Focus on: Volunteers

Volunteers have always been vital to the work of Focus Ireland and we are grateful for the commitment and expertise that our volunteers bring to the organisation. Throughout 2019, our volunteers provided valuable support to the Coffee Shop and our Advice & Information services across Dublin. Volunteers supported our work across the country by acting as School Visit Ambassadors, a programme which aims to encourage secondary schools to become actively involved around the issue of homelessness in Ireland. Volunteers also offered support to Focus Ireland by undertaking roles such as Befrienders, Literacy Tutors and Art Tutors in 2019. At year end, there were 70 long-term volunteers involved with Focus Ireland. In 2019 alone, we received nearly 270 applications for our volunteer roles.

‘I decided I wanted to do something, however small, to help alleviate the homelessness crisis and I joined Focus Ireland as a Schools Ambassador. It has been a hugely interesting and rewarding experience speaking to students, from all ages and backgrounds, about the causes and effects of homelessness. At the end of every talk, I know I am helping in some small way to push back against the growing tide of homeless children.’

**Frank Fitzpatrick, School Visit Ambassador, Dublin**

## Youth housing

Focus Ireland continues to provide safe and supported housing to young people based on their individual needs. In response to a Focus Ireland proposal, a programme to ring-fence funding from the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) to purchase homes to be rented to vulnerable care leavers was introduced in 2017. By the end of 2019, Focus Housing Association had purchased **37 housing units** using this Tusla CAS programme, allowing young people leaving care to move into long-term, secure housing.

The Limerick Youth Housing Service took on four new Tusla CAS properties in 2019 and expanded in the county, taking on cases outside the city for the first time.

In Waterford, Housing First for Youth worked with 36 young people in 2019 and supported 30 young people into their own homes – half these homes are Focus Ireland properties.

Cork Youth Housing also had a case load of 30 young people. The Youth Housing project in Cork linked in with our Great to Train programme – an initiative that provides education and training for marginalised people. Educational courses are directed towards young people who are most excluded from education. Courses are provided in the education ‘black spots’ identified by the Education Training Board (ETB) in Cork city. In 2019, through this partnership, 15 young people benefited from a combination of training courses.

**Many of these young people successfully took up employment for the first time or successfully re-entered employment.**

During 2019, Focus Ireland supported several young people to receive counselling, and others were supported towards primary drug treatment, secondary treatment, harm reduction and maintaining recovery.

**By the end of 2019, Focus Housing Association had purchased 37 housing units using this Tusla CAS programme, allowing young people leaving care to move into long-term, secure housing.**



## Aftercare

On behalf of Tusla in Dublin and the South East, Focus Ireland provides Aftercare support for young people leaving care. In 2019, Focus Ireland responded to the growing number of care leavers and the high demand for aftercare services. We funded two additional aftercare workers in Dublin. These workers supplement and offer additional support to our Tusla-funded Aftercare Support and Settlement teams.

In Waterford and Wexford, after detailed discussions, Tusla agreed to transition the residential aftercare service there into a Housing First for Youth model. This will use Tusla CAS and existing Residential Aftercare properties to provide long-term homes with support. The project worked with 44 young people in 2019 and will be evaluated as part of a European Housing First Hub initiative on Housing First for Youth.

Tusla's new national Aftercare Framework is based on legislation which reflects years of Focus Ireland advocacy. The framework heralds a new phase of aftercare provision in Ireland. As a contribution to documenting the effectiveness of this new approach, Focus Ireland commissioned the University of York to consult care leavers and aftercare workers about a comprehensive approach to measuring outcomes. The report, *Brighter Future for Care Leavers*, provided a solid base for a new approach to collecting information and tracking outcomes for care leavers in a collaborative way. Over the coming years, Focus Ireland will build on this work with a pilot project entitled Leaving Well.

Focus Ireland continues to be an active member of the **Irish Aftercare Network** and **sponsored their conference in May 2019** on the theme of trauma-informed practice.

**Tusla's new national Aftercare Framework is based on legislation which reflects years of Focus Ireland advocacy.**

'I provide ongoing support to young people who are transitioning from the Care System to adulthood. This involves assessment and formulation of an aftercare plan that is based on the needs of each individual young person. It is crucial that the young person plays a central role in the formulation of their aftercare plan from the beginning.

On a day-to-day basis, my role can entail responding to immediate crises, but mostly involves contacting and meeting young people I work with and engaging in key working sessions to discuss the progress of their aftercare plan, formulate new goals, and get a sense of current goal progress. I advocate on behalf of the young people with state and other agencies with a view to supporting them with needs such as housing, mental health supports, physical health and their financial entitlements and requirements.

Lastly, and most importantly, my role is to build strong and enduring relationships with the people I work with and be a consistent presence in their lives.'

**Daniel Keogh, Focus Ireland Aftercare Worker, Dublin**



## Challenging youth homelessness

Focus Ireland's work in services was supported by our advocacy work, as part of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness. In June 2019, Focus Ireland was Body & Soul Festival's 10th anniversary charity partner. At the festival, we launched our **#EndYouthHomelessness** campaign calling on the government to introduce a specific youth homelessness strategy. The **#EndYouthHomelessness** campaign received significant support from the Union of Students in Ireland, Love Sensation Festival, Mother, BeLong To Youth Services and Dublin Flea Market. Focus Ireland and a group of supporters delivered a petition with over 10,700 signatures calling on all political parties to include a commitment to a national youth homeless strategy in their manifestos for the General Election. On 3 October, outside Leinster House, the petition was delivered to the Children and Youth Affairs spokespersons of all the political parties.


Focus Ireland was nominated to a position on the advisory committee for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People. This provides a stronger emphasis on measures to tackle youth homelessness.

Focus Ireland's Annual National Conference was held in October 2019 on the theme of Ending Youth Homelessness – Practice, Policy and Campaigning. **The conference was opened by Dillon Nolan, a Master of Social Work student who has lived experience of residential care and housing insecurity. Dillon was previously supported by Focus Ireland and went on to secure his own home.** The Focus Ireland conference heard from national and international speakers who delved deep into our understanding of youth homelessness and what solutions are on offer. This included conference keynote speaker Dr Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. The conference also included Kate Polson, CEO of the Rock Trust, who outlined how their organisation's Housing First work is helping to tackle youth homelessness in Scotland.

Focus Ireland delivers a petition signed by over 10,700 people calling for a National Youth Homeless Strategy in September 2019.







When he turned 18, he had no option other than to move out of residential care into homeless emergency accommodation in the city.

## Limerick Youth Housing: Johnny's story

Focus Ireland Youth Housing Service started working with Johnny\* when he was 18 years old. Until he turned 18, Johnny was living in residential care. He had no family support. When he turned 18, he had no option other than to move out of residential care into homeless emergency accommodation in the city. Since that time, Johnny has engaged well with the youth housing programme and has engaged in various forms of training, education and employment.

In 2019, having worked with the service for nearly three years, Johnny moved into one of our Tusla/CAS properties. This will be his long-term home. Johnny still requires support. He is continuing to develop his independent living skills and is working on his personal development. The stability of having his own home has enabled Johnny to do this. It is this stability that makes such a significant difference in a young person's life.



**2019:**

**We worked with**

**425 people**

**in our Education services in**

**Dublin, Waterford and Limerick.**



# Single people with complex needs

People with complex mental health, addiction and behavioural challenges have always been at an increased risk of homelessness. As the housing crisis has deepened, more people dealing with these issues are becoming homeless.

Facing page: Artwork by a student of Focus Ireland's PETE Art and Design course

These people can get trapped and lost in the system. This makes their situation worse – unless there is a **targeted response** to help them.

It has always been a central part of the Focus Ireland mission to respond to the needs of people with complex problems. We have a long track record of pioneering a range of housing-led approaches: long-term supported housing, tenancy sustainment and Housing First.

During 2019, Focus Ireland continued its work as one of Ireland's leading providers of Housing First. Towards the end of 2019 we finished off our current involvement in Dublin Housing First, having provided approximately 200 formerly homeless households with a secure home over our five-year involvement. During the year, we started work with local authorities

in Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Tipperary and Kilkenny to provide Housing First programmes as part of the national Housing First strategy. Housing First services in Cork and the South East are delivered in partnership with the Simon Community.

**Housing First** differs from traditional approaches: rather than offering a bed in a treatment facility or a hostel, we work to provide an **appropriate long-term housing solution with support**. In 2019, we supported approximately 50 people in our Housing First programmes. Our Housing First teams support entrenched rough sleepers and long-term emergency accommodation users to move into a new home, and sustain their tenancy through the provision of ongoing, time-unlimited, intensive support.

## Focus on: PETE

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 to help build confidence and gain skills to enable them to remain in their homes. Our Preparation for Education, Training and Employment (PETE) provides a number of accredited courses at QQI level 3 and a high range of non-accredited courses to suit every level. In 2019, we worked with 425 people in our PETE services in Dublin, Waterford and Limerick. Thank you to ReThink Ireland (formerly the Social Innovation Fund of Ireland) for their continued support of PETE. In 2019 we collaborated in our third year of partnership on this project.

**Focus Ireland played a key role in developing the Housing First Hub's highly regarded training programme, and in exploring best practice in Housing First for Youth.**





## Challenging homelessness for single people with complex needs

Focus Ireland also continued to chair the European Housing First Hub, which is based in Helsinki and draws on the success of the Finnish approach to ending homelessness and to promote high-fidelity Housing First

across the EU. Focus Ireland played a key role in developing the Housing First Hub's highly regarded training programme, and in exploring best practice in Housing First for Youth. **Focus Ireland made this work available to other homeless organisations in Ireland via the Irish Housing First platform.** Here, we share **best practice** on Housing First across all the voluntary and statutory sectors.

## Focus on: The Coffee Shop


The Focus Ireland Coffee Shop in Dublin is where Focus Ireland began, and it continues to be a first point of contact for people who are homeless in Dublin. Like all Focus Ireland services, the primary objective of the Coffee Shop is to prevent homelessness or support people into secure homes. The service also helps people deal with the crisis of homelessness, and in 2019 the Coffee Shop served over **47,000 inexpensive, nutritious meals**. Advice & Information services are provided by our own staff, who also deal with the thousands of queries we receive online. Where more complex legal issues arise, there are weekly clinics and follow-up legal representation through an innovative partnership with A&L Goodbody and Mercy Law Resource Centre, which was supported and facilitated by the Public Interest Law Alliance. In April 2019 we published a full report on the service: *Housing Rights & Homelessness: Lessons from a Pro Bono Partnership* (available at <https://bit.ly/2Qb73X7>). We also facilitated a well-attended workshop on the model at the FEANTSA Policy Conference in Porto, Portugal.

‘My main role is managing the catering teams at the Coffee Shop and our new Family Centre, which includes ensuring all food safety and hygiene standards are adhered to. We are held to the same standard as any commercial kitchen and we take pride in the fact that we go above and beyond regarding food safety and food quality for our customers.’

**Alison Cullen, Focus Ireland Coffee Shop and Family Centre**







**‘Focus Ireland saved my life and gave me  
a chance I never had before.’**



# Julie's story

**Julie\* is a member of the settled Traveller community who has battled mental health problems and suicidal thoughts. Julie tells the story of how Focus Ireland helped give her life a new chance through the Housing First scheme.**

**My kids now look at me and say: 'Mam, you have turned your life around since you got involved with Focus Ireland.'**

## **Becoming homeless**

I'm from Carlow and many years ago I thought I was moving to a better life down the country; however, my life took a turn for the worse. I suffered domestic violence and ended up in hospital where, thankfully, my daughter was able to help me.

I came back to Carlow as I had nowhere else to go and, luckily, I was able to stay with my sister. At that time, life was getting too much. I was battling mental health problems. Eventually, I had to leave my sister's house after staying with her for three months. I was now homeless.

I made contact with the council and that's when things began to change. The council knew that I was well behaved and had never committed a crime. I had pictures to show them the domestic abuse I had experienced, but I didn't need the pictures as they knew I was genuine and homeless. At that time, my mental health was so bad that I was actually suicidal. I have previously lost two brothers to suicide, and 14 years ago my son died of a drug overdose. I've been through a lot.

I ended up in a lovely B&B in Carlow. The people there were so nice but then I went to a hotel with people who had lots of problems and I was put on blood pressure tablets as a result of the stress. Again, my mental health suffered and again suicide seemed like an option. My daughter would often come to the hotel to check if I was still alive. It was the lowest point of my life. I felt I had nothing to offer anybody. I thought I was useless and no good as a mother. All this time, my son and daughter were really supportive of me but had their own families so I couldn't live with them.

## **Focus Ireland came into my life**

Then Focus Ireland came into my life. I'd never heard of them before. I was asked to go to an interview where I met the support worker with my daughter, and I explained everything I had been through. They listened to every word I said and they were great. Lo and behold, not long after that first meeting, I got a phone call from Focus Ireland saying I got a place! I was over the moon – literally shaking with disbelief!

When I first saw my new home, I couldn't believe it. I looked out the windows and said to my daughter: 'Is this really my home?' There was a time I thought I would never live again. And then I moved into this beautiful place just two days before my fiftieth birthday, and right before Christmas. It's the best present I ever got. From that day, my life changed for the better.

Focus Ireland saved my life and gave me a chance I never had before. I now have a support worker and can pick up the phone to her any time and tell her about my troubles. I wrote a letter to my support worker just to say thank you to Focus Ireland for giving me a life.

Growing up in the Traveller community, we weren't allowed to speak about certain things – but I trust Focus Ireland with my life.

All I ever wanted was to have a home, but this is something I could never have dreamed of when I was younger because I couldn't afford it. My kids now look at me and say: 'Mam, you have turned your life around since you got involved with Focus Ireland.' My children now have a home to come to, and so do my grandchildren. I couldn't be happier.



**For Housing First tenants, gradually their experience of homelessness becomes a chapter in their past.**





# Housing First

**Housing First differs from traditional approaches: rather than offering a bed in a treatment facility or a hostel, we work to provide an appropriate long-term housing solution with support. Housing First recognises that people with experience of entrenched homelessness and rough sleeping need to be supported into a home without any pre-conditions around mental health or addiction treatment in order to exit homelessness.**

## Housing First: Limerick

Housing First Limerick works with people who have experienced long-term homelessness and who have complex support needs. It offers people a tenancy with the wraparound health supports and connections to community supports that are needed to ensure people maintain their housing and improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Housing First Limerick is part of the National Housing First strategy and is a partnership between HSE Midwest Community Healthcare, Limerick City and County Council and Focus Ireland. The project will operate over a three-year period. It offers long-term accommodation to 30 individuals who, up to now, have experienced long-term homelessness. Limerick City Council and Focus Ireland aim to source 30 units of housing over this three-year period – and 14 properties have already been sourced. Properties have been acquired through local authorities, long-term leasing, the social rental model and Capital Acquisition Scheme (CAS).

This project began in February 2019 – and the first customer took up their tenancy that very month. The Housing First Team initially comprised an Assistant Project Leader, a Dual Diagnosis Worker and a Project Worker, all under the guidance of a Project Leader employed through Focus Ireland. In October 2019, the team was widened to include a HSE Health Coordinator employed directly by the HSE. Limerick City and County Council give excellent ongoing and strategic support through the Coordinator of Homeless Services. **All three agencies work in a collaborative and supportive manner** to address any issues that arise in the course of the project.

By the end of 2019, Limerick Housing First was successfully providing a permanent, safe and secure home to 9 individuals across the City and County. The tenants are men and women with an age range of 23–63 years old. Our staff are trained through the European Housing First Hub training programme, which Focus Ireland helped to design. Staff provide vital day-to-day intensive supports to customers to help them manage their home, health and wellbeing. With the support of the HSE Health Coordinator, Focus Ireland staff continually develop links with well-established Primary Care Teams, Mental Health Services, Addiction Services and Community Organisations in Limerick. This is vital to the long-term success of these tenancies, as Housing First tenants are gradually introduced to mainstream services, which reduces their reliance on the Housing First team. In the long-term, tenants can rely on mainstream local supports as they settle in their new home and community. For Housing First tenants, gradually their experience of homelessness becomes a chapter in their past.

Focus Ireland's Housing First team in Limerick (L–R): Kate McGrath, Rebecca O'Donoghue, Mairead Cummane, Jerry Leo



## Housing First: South East

Focus Ireland has delivered its housing-led approach to homelessness in Waterford and the South East for many years. In 2019, as part of the national Housing First strategy, we developed a refined partnership approach, working closely with the Simon Community and the Good Shepherd to provide a full Housing First service in local authorities in the South East from summer 2019. The regional service includes Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford, South Tipperary and Carlow. By the end of 2019, our partnership teams in each area have identified a total of 84 people to avail of the service.

Housing First training in the region, using the European Housing First Hub programme, is planned for the new year.

**In 2019, as part of the national Housing First strategy, we developed a refined partnership approach, working closely with the Simon Community and the Good Shepherd to provide a full Housing First service in local authorities in the South East from summer 2019.**

## Focus on: Advice & Information

Our Advice & Information services straddle both prevention and sustained exits – in line with Focus Ireland’s strategy. Our A&I team offer much needed support and guidance to anyone with a housing or homelessness query. In 2019, our team provided support to over 5,000 customers, the majority of whom were homeless and in need of support to exit homelessness. Customers sought support to navigate the homelessness system and access emergency accommodation, as well as information and advocacy around housing supports and social welfare. We worked with 471 people through our A&I Prevention Case Management service in 2019, to support them in maintaining their home.

‘Our Advice & Information service is open to anyone. Many of the calls we get are in relation to dealing with landlords or eviction notices. Other calls relate to looking for accommodation. We will make referrals to other services, point people in the right direction or provide direct support to people with filling applications and finding accommodation. I attend lots of meetings, which gives us the opportunity to advocate for our customers and to ensure that they have the best move-on option for their circumstances.’

**Julie Talbot, Focus Ireland Advice & Information, Limerick and Tipperary North**







**2019:**

**Our A&I team provided support to over**

**5,000 customers,**

**the majority of whom were homeless**

**and in need of support to exit homelessness.**



**2019:**

**Focus Housing Association delivered**

**99 new homes**

**for rent to people moving out of  
or at risk of homelessness.**





# Focus Housing Association

**An adequate supply of social housing is vital if we are to provide sustained exits out of homelessness. The delivery of housing remains a core part of our strategy and is a cornerstone in our work of challenging homelessness and changing lives.**

## New homes

In 2019, Focus Housing Association – the Approved Housing Body which is the property arm of Focus Ireland – delivered an additional 99 new homes for rent to people moving out of or at risk of homelessness. Focus Ireland itself provided the necessary supports to these tenants to help them sustain the tenancy and move on with their lives.

The new housing was delivered through a mixture of acquisitions, long-term and short-term leases and rentals. This brings to **594** the number of homes that Focus Ireland has provided in the last four years.

Not all the new units become part of our own long-term housing stock, as one model we successfully use is to sub-let a property from a private landlord and then rent the property to a person moving out of homelessness. This **social rental model** reduces the risk to the landlord and to the tenant, and has proven highly effective, particularly in the South West.

After the tenant is settled, they take on the lease agreement directly with the landlord and the unit is then no longer counted as part of Housing Association's stock. Focus Ireland continues to provide support for as long as needed. The success of this model means that, over the years, our work in securing homes is not fully reflected in the overall growth of our stock. But since we are more concerned with ensuring people have homes of their own than building up a big portfolio ourselves, this fulfils our mission.

By the end of 2019, we were well on track to hitting our target of acquiring 750 homes by the end of 2020. Focus Housing Association stock comprised 1,042 homes. We owned, leased or managed homes in Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council, Fingal County Council and in counties Kildare, Carlow, Wexford, Kilkenny, Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Clare, Sligo and Tipperary. Focus Ireland provides tenancy support and other services as required to the tenants of all these homes.

**'For myself, the real feel-good moment has to be on move-in days, when I get to hand over the keys. When you see the joy in people's eyes and their smiles, it never fails to make my day!'**

**Anthony Daly, Focus Housing Association  
Property Management Officer, Dublin**

## Improving housing quality

Focus Housing Association is committed to a rolling programme of upgrading its housing. In 2019 we continued to avail of the SEAI Community Fund. In addition to the Grange Cohan project in Waterford, energy efficiency retrofitting projects were undertaken in Dublin and in Douglas, Cork. As well as improving energy efficiency, these projects have had a very positive impact on our tenants' comfort in their homes and has reduced their utility costs.

### Grange Cohan, Co. Waterford

Grange Cohan in Waterford has been Focus Ireland's flagship housing project in the South East for more than 20 years. It has provided high-quality homes to hundreds of vulnerable households over that time. In recent years, Focus Ireland developed a plan to bring the housing units up to contemporary standards of insulation and energy efficiency. In 2019, Minister of State for Training and Skills, John Halligan TD, formally launched the completed redevelopment. It involved a complete energy efficiency retrofitting of

Grange Cohan. The project was supported by the SEAI Community Fund, and Bord Gáis Energy, who were our energy partners during the redevelopment. The redevelopment includes new doors and windows, cavity insulation, new air-to-water heat pumps, LED lighting and new solid fuel stoves in 68 units. Lighting and heating upgrades were also carried out in the crèche and office areas of the Grange Cohan estate. It is hoped that the redevelopment will go a long way towards improving our residents' comfort, utility costs and energy efficiency, as well as reinforcing pride in the estate.

Focus Ireland's Grange Cohan estate in Waterford: before (inset) and after the complete energy efficiency retrofitting





## What happens after people leave homelessness?

Providing a home is the first step in supporting families or individuals leaving homelessness. However, ongoing tenancy sustainment support can be vital to help people sustain their tenancy and avoid re-entering homelessness. Focus Ireland provides tenancy support services for Focus Housing Association around the country to support vulnerable people to live independently in their new homes. As well as tenancy sustainment support, we work with our tenants to address their specific needs and goals by connecting them with education, training and employment support services, including specialist services run by Focus Ireland.



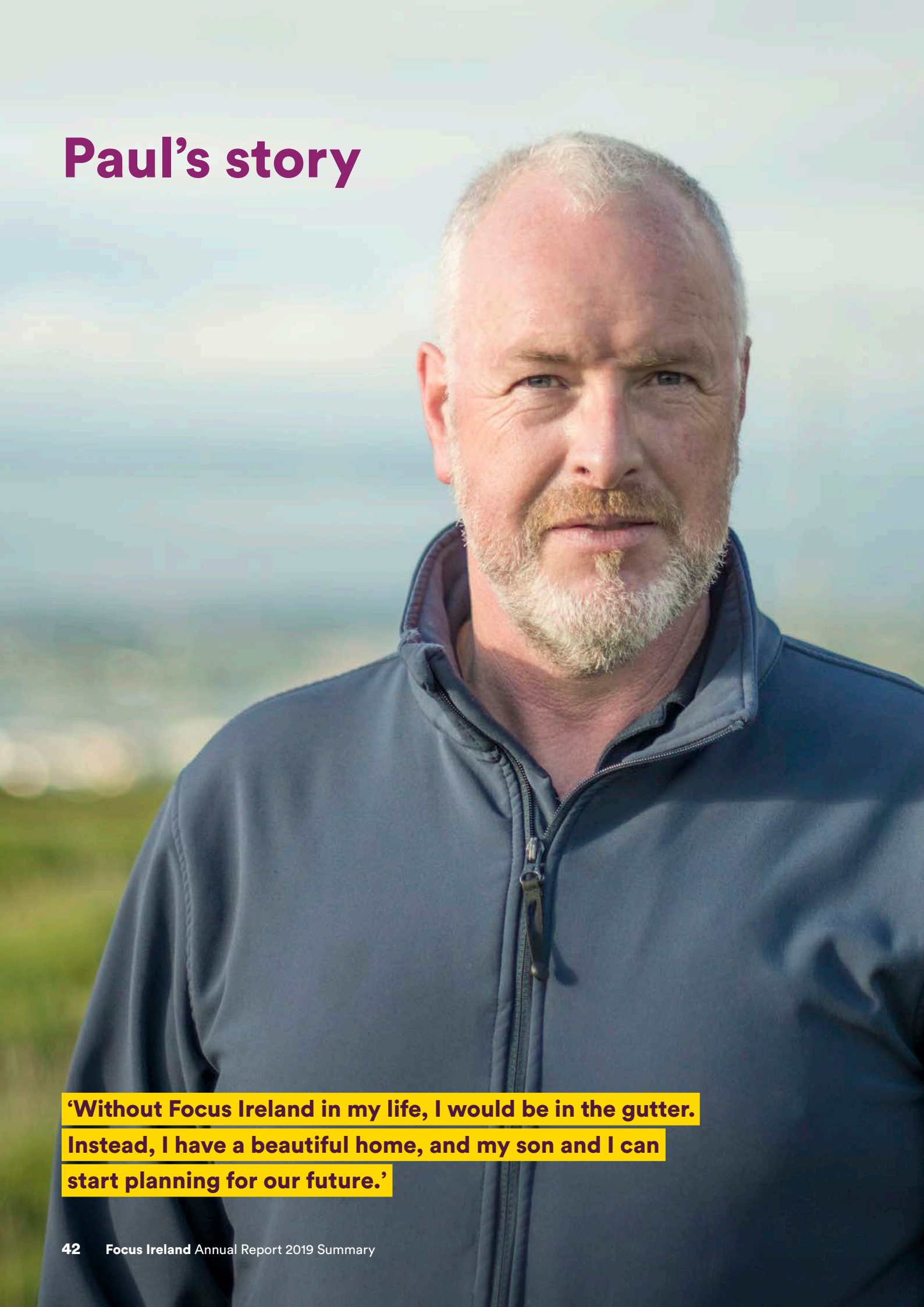
Artworks by Seán\*, Kildare Housing



‘This year is the start of my third year living in a property with Focus Housing Association. I first started painting at age 21, as I found it positively benefited my mental health. Focus took this into account when they were allocating a property for me. Now I can paint in my own home.’

**Seán\*, Kildare Housing**

# Paul's story

A portrait of a middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green grass and a blue sky.

**'Without Focus Ireland in my life, I would be in the gutter. Instead, I have a beautiful home, and my son and I can start planning for our future.'**



**My son always wanted to learn the piano and I surprised him with a small piano for his birthday. He is hoping to start taking lessons soon. We never would have had the space or peace for this in our last apartment.**

Paul\* (50) lives in a Focus Housing Association property in Dublin City Centre with his son James\* (14) and receives visiting support from Focus Ireland's Dublin Offsite Housing Support team.

I am the youngest child from a large Midlands family. Growing up as the youngest, I was spoiled by my siblings and parents. I had a very happy childhood; however, when I was 16, my mother died and my life was never the same again. Three weeks after my mother died, I took the boat to England and worked on building sites and drank in the evening, which eventually led to an addiction. Within a few months, I was back home and in the first of many detox admissions.

Eventually, I returned to Dublin and was working on sites around the city and also battling my alcoholism. I ended up losing my job and home and finally ended up in emergency homeless accommodation. I entered detox for the last time and, after going through this programme, I was offered a place in Focus Ireland temporary supported accommodation in George's Hill. I then got my own long-term one-bedroom home with visiting support from Focus Ireland.

During this period, I had a son but the relationship with his mother was volatile because of her ongoing drug issues. Eventually, we split up – and I lost access to my son. When my son was 11, he contacted me because his home life was very chaotic and he wanted to come live with me. I was eventually granted full custody of my son, but my home was unsuitable and too small for the two of us. I gave up my bedroom for my son and started sleeping on the sofa in the sitting room.

When my son came to live with me, he was very withdrawn and was displaying signs of the emotional trauma and chaos he had experienced during his life. My Focus Ireland support worker referred my son to counselling and play therapy, and I was able to offer my son the stable life he needed. During this time, I was feeling overwhelmed and stopped caring for myself, as my housing situation was affecting

both my mental health and physical health. I continued to maintain a good routine for my son, but it was clear to me that the unsuitability of the accommodation was impacting on the wellbeing of both of us.

In November 2019, I finally got the call that Focus Ireland could offer us a two-bedroom apartment in a small, quiet block near where we lived. We moved in here just before Christmas.

The changes in our lives have been so massively positive since moving here. For the first time in years, I feel at peace. My whole demeanour has changed and I don't lose my temper as much. My son has completed counselling and is thriving in his transition to secondary school. He has had friends come to visit with us and has been able to have sleepovers for the first time in his life.

Now we are settled in our new home, I feel ready to start looking for work. My physical health is not great, so I know I can't return to building sites. I've been referred to Focus Ireland PETE (Preparation for Education, Training and Employment) service, and will work with them to prepare a CV, do some training courses and apply for jobs. The future is looking much brighter.

**I want to share my story – not just as a warning, but also to give hope to others who may be battling an addiction or may be in despair. I am now in my own family home and, for the first time, I am at peace.** Thirty years ago, I never would have imagined that I could have ended up homeless. I came from a good family with a strong work ethic, but my mother's death sent me into a spiral of self-destruction. I credit Focus Ireland for doing Trojan work and for helping people up when they've fallen down with their struggles. Focus Ireland have always been there to support me and have pushed for the best for me. Without Focus Ireland in my life, I would be in the gutter. Instead, I have a beautiful home, and my son and I can start planning for our future.

Thank you to Focus Ireland and everyone who supports them.

## John's Lane West

In May 2019 the Minister for Housing, Eoghan Murphy TD, officially launched our brand-new housing development at John's Lane West, Dublin 8. This development is the most tangible manifestation of **our long-term vision and strategy**, which is focused on **prevention and providing people with a sustained exit from homelessness**.

The site, which was purchased by Focus Ireland over 20 years ago, had previously provided youth services, food services and, for a few years, emergency hostel beds. But it had always been the intention that it would deliver permanent homes for people who had experienced homelessness or were at risk.

The development now provides 31 permanent homes for families and individuals.

John's Lane West is a 'bricks and mortar' manifestation of our belief that it is better to provide homes than emergency beds. The apartment building was designed to ensure that each home has its own front door. This is not only a great design: it also means so much to people who have been homeless – or moving from place to place for many years at risk of becoming homeless – to have a place that is truly their own. The people living in our new development are supported to live independently by Focus Ireland tenancy sustainment support workers.

John's Lane West was built with the support of the Department of Housing and Dublin City Council, as well as financial support from the Housing Finance Agency and assistance from generous donors to Focus Ireland.

Pat Dennigan, Sr Stan and the Minister for Housing, Eoghan Murphy TD, at the launch of John's Lane West in May 2019







## John's Lane West: Winner of Best Social Housing 2019

The Community Housing Awards is a biennial competition run by the Irish Council of Social Housing. The competition celebrates excellence within the social housing sector and highlights exceptional housing quality, innovation and partnership.

At the 2019 Community Housing Awards, Focus Housing Association won two awards – Best Homeless Housing Award and Overall Winner – for our innovative John's Lane West development. It was wonderful that our efforts were recognised, and that our vision for John's Lane West was independently evaluated and awarded.

**The most important thing is that our new development has ended homelessness for 31 households who now have a place to call home.**





# Research and submissions

Focus Ireland's research supports and informs our organisation's provision of housing and services to out-of-home people, and it also strengthens our work in lobbying, campaigning, policy and education.

## Focus Ireland research

- › *Brighter Futures for Careleavers – A Consultation on Outcomes and Aftercare for Young People Leaving Care in Ireland* (Dixon, Ward and Stein 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Dixon-et-al-2019-Brighter-Futures-for-Careleavers-Report-Full-PDF.pdf>
- › *Housing Rights & Homelessness: Lessons from a Pro Bono Partnership* (A&L Goodbody, Mercy Law Resource Centre and Public Interest Law Alliance, 2019)  
[https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Housing-Rights-Homelessness\\_web.pdf](https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Housing-Rights-Homelessness_web.pdf)
- › *Family Homelessness in Dublin: Causes, Housing Histories, and Finding a Home* (Long, Sheridan, Gambi and Hoey, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Long-et-al-2019-Insights-Vol-2-No-1-Family-Homelessness-in-Dublin---Full-Report.pdf>
- › *Homelessness in the Classroom – A Resource for Primary Schools* (Focus Ireland, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Homelessness-in-the-Classroom.pdf>
- › *Establishing Guidelines for Local Authority Staff Responding to Families Who are Homeless* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Guidelines-on-supporting-homeless-families.pdf>
- › *Delivering on Social Housing: What Councillors Can Do* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Delivering-on-Social-Housing-What-Councillors-Can-Do.pdf>
- › *Focus Ireland Submission to the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government: Family & Child Homelessness* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Focus-Ireland-Submission-to-Committee-on-Housing-June-19.pdf>
- › *Focus Ireland Response to Office of the Children's Ombudsman report No Place Like Home* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Focus-Ireland-response-to-OCO-Report-to-Oireactas-Committee-on-the-Family.pdf>
- › *Proposal for a commission on housing: Commission on Housing in Ireland* (Focus Ireland et al., 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Commission-on-Housing.pdf>
- › *Recommendations to Government: Budget 2020* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Budget-2020-Policy-Document.pdf>

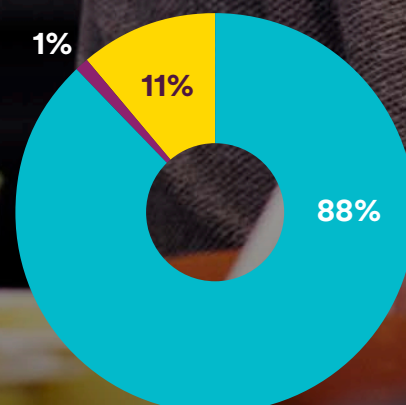
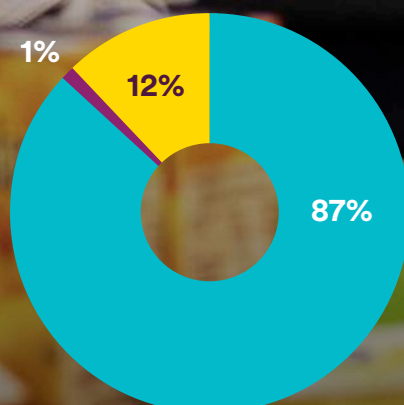
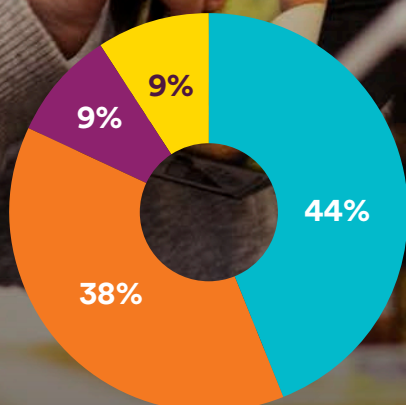
## Focus Ireland submissions

- › *Submission to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government – Public Consultation on Proposals to Modernise the Electoral Registration Process* (Focus Ireland, 2019)  
<https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Electoral-Registration-Submission.pdf>



**2019: 87c**

**of every euro received was  
spent directly on our services to  
combat and prevent homelessness.**



2019: Mix of income		€m
Grant income		14.03
Fundraising income		12.05
Rental income		2.67
Other income		2.91
<b>Total income</b>		<b>31.66</b>

2019: Mix of expenditure		€m
Direct charitable activities costs		27.37
Governance and support costs		0.30
Fundraising and events costs		3.66
<b>Operational expenditure</b>		<b>31.33</b>

2019: Mix of expenditure (Excluding retail)		€m
Direct charitable activities costs		27.37
Governance and support costs		0.30
Fundraising and events costs		3.42
<b>Operational expenditure</b>		<b>31.09</b>

Note: Pie charts were created using exact figures, then rounded to the nearest whole percentage for illustration purposes.



# Finance summary

## Consolidated statement of financial activities

for the financial year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 Unrestricted funds €	2019 Restricted Funds €	2019 Total €	2018 Unrestricted funds €	2018 Restricted funds €	2018 Total €
<b>Income from:</b>							
Donations and legacies	4	10,479,849	1,565,203	12,045,052	10,023,802	1,383,815	11,407,617
Charitable activities	5	–	14,031,566	14,031,566	–	13,197,619	13,197,619
Other	6	5,586,693	400	5,587,093	4,443,891	3,468	4,447,359
<b>Total income</b>		<b>16,066,542</b>	<b>15,597,169</b>	<b>31,663,711</b>	<b>14,467,693</b>	<b>14,584,902</b>	<b>29,052,595</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>							
Raising funds	4	3,656,743	–	3,656,743	3,152,300	–	3,152,300
Charitable activities	7	12,343,310	14,811,316	27,154,626	11,516,463	13,535,362	25,051,825
Interest on borrowings	8	518,185	–	518,185	386,199	–	386,199
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>16,518,238</b>	<b>14,811,316</b>	<b>31,329,554</b>	<b>15,054,962</b>	<b>13,535,362</b>	<b>28,590,324</b>
<b>Net (expenditure)/ income before taxation</b>		<b>(451,696)</b>	<b>785,853</b>	<b>334,157</b>	<b>(587,269)</b>	<b>1,049,540</b>	<b>462,271</b>
<b>Taxation</b>	13	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>		<b>(451,696)</b>	<b>785,853</b>	<b>334,157</b>	<b>(587,269)</b>	<b>1,049,540</b>	<b>462,271</b>

There are no other recognised gains or losses other than those listed above and the net movement for the financial year. All income and expenditure derives from continuing activities.

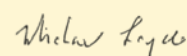
For Focus Ireland's full Reports and Financial Statements for the financial year ended 31 December 2019 go to <https://www.focusireland.ie/annual-reports/>

# Consolidated balance sheet

as at 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Fixed assets</b>			
Fixed assets – properties	15	115,494,808	102,259,785
Other tangible assets	16	791,054	148,217
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		<b>116,285,862</b>	<b>102,408,002</b>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash at bank and in hand		7,862,643	10,562,882
Debtors	17	2,440,364	1,826,037
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>10,303,007</b>	<b>12,388,919</b>
<b>Creditors:</b>			
amounts falling due within one financial year	18	(4,717,775)	(5,854,552)
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>5,585,232</b>	<b>6,534,367</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<b>121,871,094</b>	<b>108,942,369</b>
<b>Creditors:</b>			
amounts falling due after more than one financial year			
Capital Assistance Scheme Loans	19	(83,822,663)	(73,362,458)
Capital Advanced Leasing Facility Loans	20	(3,464,705)	(3,267,168)
Bank Loans	21	(15,784,847)	(13,848,021)
<b>Total creditors falling due after more than one year</b>	22	<b>(103,072,215)</b>	<b>(90,477,647)</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>18,798,879</b>	<b>18,464,722</b>
<b>The funds of the charity</b>			
Restricted income funds	23	4,257,309	3,471,456
Unrestricted funds	24	8,669,724	7,501,351
Capital grants and donations	25	3,281,581	3,301,650
Unrestricted capital reserves	26	2,590,265	2,590,265
Designated funds	27	–	1,600,000
		<b>18,798,879</b>	<b>18,464,722</b>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors on 27 August 2020 and signed on its behalf by:



**Michael Layde**  
Director



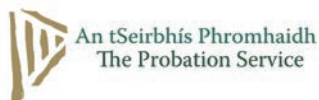
**Declan O'Flaherty**  
Director



# Our funders in 2019

In 2019 we worked in collaboration with a range of statutory partners who funded our work, these include:

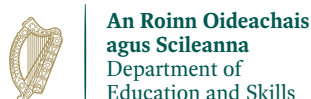
## State agencies



## Local authorities and agencies



## Government departments



# FOCUS

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