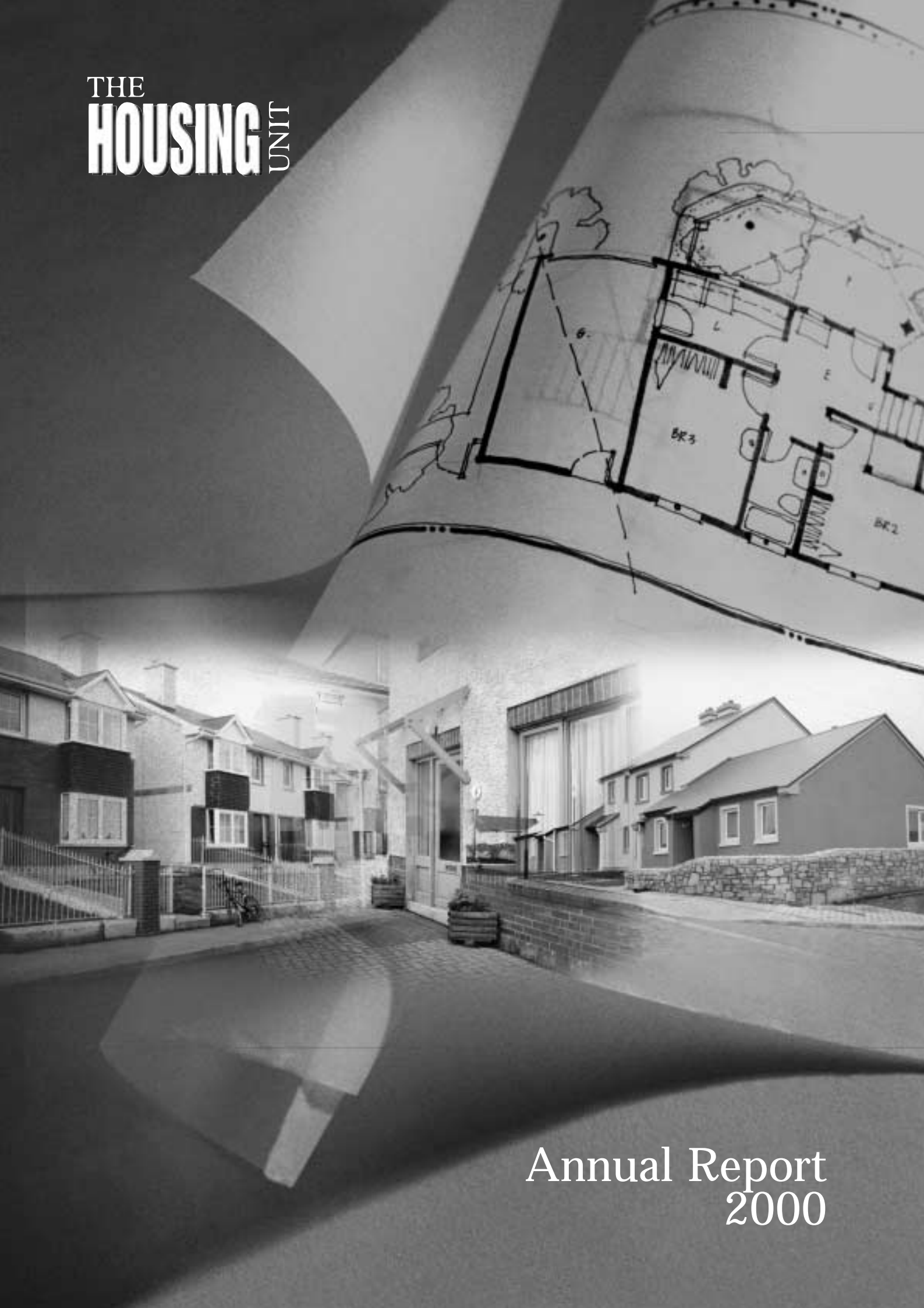


THE HOUSING UNIT



Annual Report
2000



Foreword

The year 2000 was a very productive one for the Housing Unit and significant progress was made in carrying its mandate. Therefore, I am pleased to present this report of its activity to the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, Mr Robert Molloy, TD. In so doing, I would like to thank the Minister for his ongoing support, both personal and financial, and his commitment to the Unit's work and objectives.

The appointment of a full-time Director and Administrator earlier in the year facilitated the preparation and implementation of a comprehensive work programme as detailed in this report. In addition to the organisation of specific training programmes and events, particular attention was paid to developing the Housing Practitioner Networks that are an important resource for the Unit and the Department. The first in a series of good-practice guides *Repair and Maintenance of Local Authority Dwellings* was published in October 2000 and these will be followed by the publication of further guidelines in 2001. This is an essential part of the Unit's remit to improve the management of local authority housing.

The progress achieved in 2000 provides a sound basis to further develop the Unit's activities in 2001 and an ambitious work programme is planned.

I appreciate the support and guidance provided by my colleagues on the Consultative Committee and look forward to their continued input in the year ahead. My sincere thanks go to the Unit's Director, Dr Michelle Norris, and her team without whose hard work the progress to date could not have been achieved.



Aidan Kinch
Chair
Housing Unit Consultative Committee



Unit Profile

The Housing Unit was established in 1998 in response to one of the recommendations of the Housing Management Group – an initiative undertaken by the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal.

The Housing Unit is funded by Local Authorities and the Department of the Environment and Local Government and is housed at the Institute of Public Administration.

Mandate

The overall purpose of the Unit is to facilitate the improved management of the public and social housing sector by improving the capacity of local authorities to develop a more responsive housing service and by providing a focus for greater co-operation with the voluntary housing sector and other social housing interests

Within this general aim the Housing Unit also works to achieve the following specific objectives:



Delegates at the Annual Housing Practitioners Conference

- to work with local authorities and other social housing sectors to identify training needs for both staff and tenants;
- to devise programmes and strategies to meet these needs;
- to promote a more strategic operational approach by local authorities to the delivery of



their housing management services having regard to the general policy framework;

- to develop links with the voluntary housing sector;
- to build on the work commenced by the Housing Management Group in identifying and promoting best practice in housing management;
- to develop links with professional bodies, academic institutions and accreditation bodies to investigate the possibilities and, if appropriate, provision of a range of formally accredited courses;
- to develop strategic links with other agencies delivering training in relevant areas, such as tenant participation in housing management.

Housing Unit Consultative Committee

The work of the Housing Unit is directed by a Consultative Committee which is made up of representatives of a broad range of agencies and interests in the social housing field.

The committee's remit is to:

- agree a work programme for the Housing Unit and oversee its implementation;
- ensure the achievement of the functions of the Housing Unit;
- promote appropriate responses by the Housing Unit and others to training and developmental needs in all areas of housing;
- formulate and administer, in co-operation with Unit staff, a system of training and education standards, evaluation and accreditation;
- evaluate outcomes agreed annually.

The current membership of the Consultative Committee is as follows:

- Mr Aidan Kinch, (Chairperson) Department of the Environment and Local Government
- Mr Bernard Thompson, National Association of Building Co-operatives (NABCO);
- Mr Donal McManus, Irish Council for Social Housing
- Fr Patrick Cogan, Respond! Housing Association
- Ms Anne O'Keeffe, Institute of Public Administration;
- Mr Brian Swan, Representative of County and City Architects Association;
- Mr Maurice Moloney, Cork County Council, Representative of County and City Managers Association;
- Mr Michael Malone, Laois County Council, Representative of County and City Managers Association;
- Mr Tom Carey, Clare County Council, Representative of County and City Engineers Association;
- Mr Gerry Gilroy, Donegal County Council, Representative of Local Authority Housing Practitioners;
- Mr Jim Carson, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Representative of Local Authority Housing Practitioners;
- Councillor Joe Burke, Appointed by the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal;
- Mr John Boland, O'Malley Park Estate Management Project, Representative of Local Authority Tenants and Residents;
- Mr Noel Martin, Ballymun Housing Task Force, Representative of Local Authority Tenants and Residents;
- Mr Brendan Kenny, Dublin Corporation, Representative of Local Authority Housing Practitioners.



Delegates at the Annual Housing Practitioners Conference

Housing Unit Staff

The Housing Unit currently employs three staff:

Dr Michelle Norris,
Director

Ms Mary Bruton,
Administrator

Ms Lisa Deegan,
Executive Assistant (half time)

Two sub-committees of the Consultative Committee have also been established. These committees work with the Housing Unit staff to address the issues of good practice in housing management and the accreditation of training standards.

Activities

Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks

Background

Since September 1998 the Housing Unit has convened or attended a series of regional networks of local authority housing practitioners made up of almost 100 local authority senior housing personnel, both administrative and technical.

Each regional network meets on a quarterly basis at a venue that revolves among the local authorities. The agenda for these meetings addresses current housing management issues and other issues decided by the network.

In addition, each network nominates two members to the National Local Authority Housing Practitioners Forum, which meets quarterly, and the urban local authority housing managers have established an Urban Network to discuss the challenges of public housing management in urban areas in Ireland.

Membership

Membership of the Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks is based on the principle of one senior nominee from the administrative side of the main housing authorities and one nominee from the technical side, usually a senior executive engineer or architect. Full details of the current membership of all of the networks are set out on pages 5 and 6.



At a meeting of the National Network held in Kilkenny, back row, left to right: Martin Judge, South Dublin County Council, Declan Wallace, Dublin Corporation, Niall Morrissey, Laois County Council, Chris Glennon, Offaly County Council and Richard Brady, Fingal County Council. Front row, left to right: Bernadette O'Reilly, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Charlie Brohoon, Fingal County Council, Mary Bruton, Housing Unit, Michelle Norris, Housing Unit and Martin Mullally, Kilkenny County Council.

Work Programme 2000

Network meetings addressed a wide range of issues during 2000. Many of the meetings focused on local issues in the different network regions and, in addition, network meetings addressed current national policy developments in the housing field including: the preparation of integrated strategies to combat homelessness, the expanded local authority house-building programme, the role of the non-profit and co-operative housing sector and the provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

In addition, the members of the networks worked with the Housing Unit staff on the following issues:

- A sub-committee of the regional housing practitioner networks helped to design the programme for the Annual Housing Practitioner Conference and network members presented papers to the conference and chaired conference workshops.





Membership of Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks

Region	Local Authorities Represented	Staff Nominated to the Network
Dublin	Dublin Corporation Fingal County Council South Dublin County Council Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	Declan Wallace - network secretary. Charlie Brohoon - network chairperson, Richard Brady Martin Judge Bernie O'Reilly
Midlands / East	Laois County Council Offaly County Council Kildare County Council Meath County Council Louth County Council Dundalk Urban District Council Cavan County Council Monaghan County Council Drogheda Corporation Wicklow County Council Bray Urban District Council	Niall Morrissey - network chairperson, Dan McInerney Chris Glennon, Network Secretary, Brendan Clarke Phil Hickey; Chris Marshall Larry McIntee, Joe Boyle Patsy Fitzsimons Jim Byrne Michael Geelan, Charles O'Donoghue Rosemary McManus, Frank Snowden Joe Meagher Frank Clarke, Rosemary Dennison Leonora Earls
South East	Kilkenny County Council Kilkenny Corporation Tipperary (South Riding) County Council Waterford County Council Waterford Corporation Dungarvan Urban District Council Wexford Co Council Carlow County Council Carlow Urban District Council Clonmel Corporation	Martin Mullally - network chairperson, Pat Foley Anne Marie Doheny John O'Mahoney - network secretary, Jim Keating John Aherne Fergus Galvin, John O'Brien Joe O'Flaherty Niall McDonnell Eamonn Brophy Michael Brennan Clare Curley
South West	Midleton UDC Kerry County Council Limerick County Council Limerick Corporation Clare County Council Cork County Council Cork Corporation Tipperary (North Riding) County Council Youghal Urban District Council Mallow Urban District Council Ennis Urban District Council	Joe McCarthy - network chairperson Joan McCarthy - network secretary Kieran Lehane Con Murray, Joe Delaney Simon Moroney, Declan O'Regan Larry Cunningham, Paul Lane, David Daly James Keane. Olibheir O Gabhann Eamonn Brennan, John Gaffney Ned Brennan Sharon Corcoran Tomas Ryan
West	Donegal County Council Longford County Council Sligo County Council Sligo Corporation Galway County Council Galway Corporation Leitrim County Council Roscommon County Council Mayo County Council Westmeath County Council Athlone Urban District Council	Gerry Gilroy - network chairperson, Michael Swanton James Clarke - network secretary, Gerard Murtagh Joe Gethin; Pdraig Flanagan John Moran Danny Barrett, Jerry Dunne Ciaran Hayes, John Looby Billy Lowe Majella Hunt, Kieran Madden Martin Keating, Norman Lonergan Danny Devanney, Hugh O'Reilly Billy Coughlan

Region

Urban Areas

National Network

■ Network members also have a central role in the design of the Housing Unit's work plan for 2001.

Local Authorities Represented

Galway Corporation
 Limerick Corporation
 Waterford Corporation
 Fingal County Council
 Dublin Corporation
 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
 South Dublin County Council
 Department of the Environment & Local Government

Fingal County Council
 Midleton UDC
 Kilkenny County Council
 Donegal County Council
 Tipperary (South Riding) County Council
 Offaly County Council
 Louth County Council
 Dublin Corporation
 South Dublin County Council
 Fingal County Council
 Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Staff Nominated to the Network

Ciaran Hayes - network chairperson
 Ann O'Donnell - network secretary
 Fergus Galvin
 Dick Brady
 Brendan Kenny
 Jim Carson
 Martin Judge

 Aidan Kinch, Peter McCann, John Murphy

Charlie Brohoon - network chairperson
 Joe McCarthy
 Martin Mullally
 Gerry Gilroy
 John O'Mahony
 Chris Glennon
 Patsy Fitzsimmons
 Declan Wallace
 Martin Judge
 Dick Brady

 Jim Carson



During May and June 2000, Housing Unit staff facilitated a series of meetings between the staff of the Rent Assistance Section of the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the members of the five Regional Housing Practitioner Networks and the Urban Network. These meetings provided an opportunity for housing practitioners to contribute to the Department's plans for the proposed transfer of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent and Mortgage Assistance from the health boards to the local authorities. The Housing Unit's Director attended these meetings and prepared a report collating the views of network members. This report was adopted by the National Housing Practitioners Forum meeting and submitted to the Planning Group on Local Authority Rental Assistance, Department of the Environment and Local Government in July 2000.

Launch of *Good Practice Guidelines in the Repair and Maintenance of Dwellings*: Minister Robert Molloy, guest of honour, Charlie Brohoon, Fingal County Council, Michelle Norris, The Housing Unit, and Aidan Kinch, Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Also, during 2000, the members of the local authority housing practitioner networks were appointed to two important national housing bodies. Richard Brady of Fingal County Council and the National Housing Practitioner Network was appointed to the National Housing Forum which was established under the terms of the latest national agreement - *The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. Niall Morrissey from Laois County Council, Gerry Gilroy from Donegal County Council and Pat Lane from Cork County Council were appointed to a steering committee which was established to advise the Local Government Computer Services Board on the selection of a local authority housing management computer package.

Publications

Newsletter

During 2000, the Housing Unit's newsletter – *Housing Ireland* – was revamped, redesigned and extended and two 12-page issues of the newsletter were produced by the Housing Unit's staff. These issues examined current developments in the housing field and highlighted the work of the Housing Unit and the Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks. In addition, the newsletters contained special features on various important developments which took place in the housing field during the year, including: details of research by Threshold on private rented housing in Dublin and by the National Youth Council of Ireland on young people's housing needs; the publication of the Ombudsman's investigation into local authority housing loans and the launch of the National Economic and Social Forum Report on social and affordable housing.

The newsletter is currently circulated to 800 individuals and organisations working in the social housing field including: local authority housing practitioners, non-profit and co-operative housing associations and staff of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

Good-practice Guidelines

In October, Minister Robert Molloy officially launched the first of a series of Housing Unit guidelines on good practice in local authority housing management. This first edition of the guidelines, which addresses the issue of good practice in the maintenance and repair of dwellings, was written by Mr Brian Brennan, County Architect with South Dublin County Council, and was edited by the Housing Unit's Director.

To date, 1,100 copies of the guidelines have been circulated free of charge to local authorities and non-profit and co-operative housing agencies and the publication has received a very positive response in the field. In early 2001, it is planned to follow up the launch of the good practice guidelines with relevant training for repair and maintenance staff to ensure that the guidelines have a significant impact on housing management practice.

A range of guidelines on other aspects of local authority housing management is currently in preparation under the direction of the Housing Unit Good Practice Sub-Committee. Guidelines on the following issues will be launched in 2001:

- Rent Assessment, Collection, Accounting and Arrears Control;
- Void Management;
- Tenant and Resident Participation in Housing Management;
- Addressing Anti-social Behaviour on Local Authority Estates.



Website

A website for the Housing Unit was set up in 2000 and can be found at

www.housingunit.ie

The website contains a range of information on the management and staffing of the Housing Unit, Housing Unit events and the activities and membership of the Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks. In addition, all Housing Unit publications, including the *Housing Ireland* newsletter and the good-practice guidelines, can be downloaded from the website. The website is updated on a regular basis by the Housing Unit's staff.

Training Events and Seminars

The Unit organised a number of seminars and training events during 2000 which addressed the following issues.

Stress Management

Four training sessions on stress management techniques were provided during the year and were specifically tailored to address the needs of counter staff and estate-based staff within the local authorities. These sessions took place in Mallow, Tullamore, Dublin and Waterford and they were facilitated by the Respond! Voluntary Housing Association and the Institute of Public Administration.

Preparation and Implementations of Integrated Strategies to Address Homelessness

This seminar was held at the request of the members of the housing practitioner networks and was organised by the Housing Unit in conjunction with the Housing Construction Section of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.



Stephen Karney, Valarie O'Sullivan and Ciaran Hayes, speakers at the seminar on the Preparation and Implementation of Integrated Strategies to Address Homelessness.

The one-day seminar took place in Tullamore in September. It was addressed by a range of speakers from the Department of the Environment and Local Government, local authorities, health boards and the voluntary housing sector.

Seventy-nine delegates attended the seminar from the local authorities and health boards, and many participants commented that similar training on policy implementation should be provided more regularly for senior staff in the housing service. This issue is addressed in the Housing Unit work plan for 2001.



Housing Estate Management

The Housing Unit, in partnership with the Local Government Unit of the Institute of Public Administration, facilitated a one-day event for Westmeath County Council. A mixture of residents of local authority estates and local authority staff participated in this training day.

Building and Maintaining Tenants and Residents Associations

These two training sessions, which targeted staff working as tenant participation officers and community development workers were held in November. The events, which were facilitated by Mr David McCarthy, an independent community development consultant, took place in Tullamore and Mallow. The training days were positively received and the results of the evaluations indicate that there is a demand for further training for staff working in this area. The Unit will address this demand during 2001.

Attendance at Housing Unit Training Events and Seminars

All of the training events and seminars organised by the Housing Unit during 2000 were well supported by a wide range of local authorities and other agencies working in the social housing field. Details of attendance at each of these events are set out below.

Participants

Event	Participants	Participants	Number Attending
Managing Stress – Dublin	Dundalk UDC Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown CC Meath County Council	South Dublin County Council Wicklow County Council Total Attendance	14
Managing Stress – Mallow	Clare County Council Cork Corporation Cork County Council	Kerry County Council Youghal UDC Total Attendance	15
Managing Stress – Tullamore	Mallow UDC Offaly County Council	Westmeath County Council Total Attendance	9
Managing Stress – Waterford	Carlow County Council Kilkenny County Council	Waterford Corporation Total Attendance	5
Housing Estate Management	Westmeath County Council	Total Attendance	20
Preparation and Implementation of Integrated Strategies to Address Homelessness	Ballina UDC Ballinasloe UDC Bray UDC Carlow County Council Carlow UDC Castleblaney UDC Cavan County Council Clare County Council Clones UDC Cobh UDC Cork County Council Donegal County Council Drogheda Corporation Dublin Corporation Dublin Docklands Development Authority Dundalk UDC Enniscorthy UDC Fermoy UDC Galway Corporation Kerry County Council Kildare County Council Kilkenny County Council Kinsale UDC Laois County Council Leitrim County Council Limerick Corporation	Limerick County Council Longford County Council Longford UDC Louth County Council Macroom UDC Mallow UDC Meath County Council Midleton UDC Monaghan County Council Monaghan UDC Naas UDC Roscommon County Council Skibbereen UDC Sligo County Council Sligo Corporation South Dublin County Council South Eastern Health Board Tipperary NR County Council Tipperary SR County Council Tullamore UDC Waterford Corporation Waterford County Council Westmeath County Council Wicklow County Council Youghal UDC Total Attendance	78
Building and Maintaining Tenants and Residents Associations –Mallow	Clare County Council Dublin Corporation Kerry County Council Limerick Corporation	Waterford Corporation Wexford Corporation Wexford County Council Total Attendance	12
Building and Maintaining Tenants and Residents Associations – Tullamore	Carlow County Council Carlow UDC Dublin Corporation Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Kildare County Council Kilkenny County Council Laois County Council Longford UDC	Offaly County Council South Dublin County Council Tipperary (North Riding) County Council Tullamore UDC Waterford Corporation Westmeath County Council Wexford County Council Total Attendance	19





Annual Housing Practitioners Conference

The Annual Housing Practitioners Conference is organised by the Housing Unit in partnership with the Local Authority Housing Practitioner Networks. The conference took place in October in the West County Hotel, Ennis, County Clare and focused on the theme of housing and disadvantage.

It was addressed by a range of speakers, including housing practitioners and local authority staff, representatives of the Combat Poverty Agency, the Economic and Social Research Institute and the non-profit housing sector.

A total of 130 delegates attended the conference. Representatives of most local authorities were present, as well as housing practitioners from non-profit housing associations and colleagues from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland branch of the Chartered Institute of Housing. Details of the attendance are set out below.

The conference was well received by participants and the information meetings with the Department of the Environment and Local Government proved to be a particularly successful new feature. These examined a range of current housing policy developments.

The conference papers published by the Housing Unit were circulated to delegates, members of the local authority housing practitioner networks and interested groups in November 2000.



Delegates at the Annual Housing Practitioners Conference

Attendance at Annual Housing Practitioners Conference

Participants	Participants	Number Attending
Athy UDC	Local Gov. Computer Services Board	
Carlow County Council	Longford County Council	
Carlow UDC	Louth County Council	
Cavan County Council	Macroom UDC	
Clare County Council	Mallow UDC	
Clonmel Corporatio	Mayo County Council	
Cork Corporation	Meath County Council	
Cork County Council	Middleton UDC	
Department of the Environment and Local Government	Monaghan County Council	
Donegal County Council	New Ross UDC	
Dublin Corporation	Northern Ireland Chartered Institute of Housing	
Dublin Dockland Authority	Offaly County Council	
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	Roscommon County Council	
Dundalk County Council	Skibbereen UDC	
Dungarvan UDC	Sligo County Council	
Ennis UDC	South Dublin County Council	
Fermoy UDC	St. Pancras Housing Association	
Fingal County Council	The Homeless Initiative	
Galway County Council	Thurles UDC	
Galway Corporation	Tipperary NR County Council	
Kerry County Council	Tipperary SR County Council	
Kilkenny County Council	Tralee UDC	
Kilrush UDC	Waterford Corporation	
Kinsale UDC	Waterford County Council	
Laois County Council	Westmeath County Council	
Leitrim County Council	Wexford County Council	
Limerick Corporation	Wicklow County Council	
Limerick County Council	Youghal UDC	
	Total Attendance	130

Research

Mr Simon Brooke, Independent Housing Consultant has been contracted by the Housing Unit to carry out a research study on the Department of the Environment and Local Government's Housing Management Initiatives Grants Scheme. This research is intended to evaluate the achievements of the various projects which have been funded under this scheme of grants and to assess the scheme's impact on improving public housing management.

Building Links in Social Housing

During 2000, significant progress was made in building links with other organisations working in the social housing field both within Ireland and abroad – a process which was greatly assisted by the presence on the Housing Unit Consultative Committee of representatives of many of the most significant Irish social housing agencies.

During the year the following initiatives contributed to building closer links between the Housing Unit and other agencies working in the social housing field:

- The Respond! Housing Association was commissioned by the Housing Unit to provide three sessions of training on stress management and to conduct research on tenant and resident participation in housing management which will provide the basis for the development of guidelines on good practice in this area of work.
- Mr Brian O'Gorman, Director of the St Pancras Housing Association was invited to address the Annual Housing Practitioners Conference, the Respond! Housing Association provided a stand at the conference and staff from several non-profit housing associations attended the conference.
- A regular feature on new co-operative and non-profit housing developments funded under the Department of the Environment Capital Assistance Scheme was included in the Housing Unit's newsletter and the newsletter and other Housing Unit publications were circulated free of charge to voluntary housing agencies.
- Mr Maurice Jennings and Mr Maurice Rooney of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive were appointed as project advisors for the preparation of the Housing Unit's good-practice guidelines.
- The Housing Unit's Director and the Chairperson of the Housing Unit's Consultative Committee held meetings with staff of the UK Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Northern Ireland Branch of the CIH.



Guest of Honour, Minister Robert Molloy and speakers Deirdre Finnerty, Sligo County Council and Professor Brian Nolan, ESRI, at the Annual Practitioners Conference.



Other Activities in 2000

The Housing Unit's Director was appointed to the working group to advise the Local Government Computer Services Board on the selection of a local authority housing management computer package.

The Housing Unit's Director participated in the project team which drew up the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) Report No. 18 – *Social and Affordable Housing and Accommodation: Building the Future*. Together with Dr Cathal O'Connell of the Department of Applied Social Studies at University College Cork she produced a report for the NESF project team entitled *Public Housing Management in Ireland: Framework for Research on Good Practice*. In addition, she carried some of the field research for this project with staff from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Economic and Social Research Institute.

The Unit's Director gave an address on tenant participation and estate management to the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council annual tenants and residents association evening on the 14th of June.

The Unit's Director gave an address on tenant and resident participation in estate management to a meeting of the Department of the Environment and Local Government Traveller Accommodation Committee in May. She subsequently presented a longer paper on the same issue to two seminars on the management and maintenance of halting sites for travellers which were held by the Traveller Accommodation Unit of the Department of the Environment and Local Government in November.



Gerry Gilroy, Donegal County Council, asks a question at the Annual Housing Practitioners Conference.

The Unit's Director presented a paper entitled *Improving Local Authority Housing Management: Progress to date and Impediments to Future Progress* to the Cork County Council Chairman's Conference on the 20th of June.

An article by the Unit's Director analysing the third report on the housing market by Peter Bacon Economic Consultants appeared in the Summer 2000 issue of *Local Authority Times*.

An article on the role of the Housing Unit and the launch of the good-practice guidelines on the repair and maintenance of dwellings appeared in the Winter 2000 issue of *Local Authority News*.



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