



Offaly County Council Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022-2027



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Offaly County Council

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Foreword

A Chara,

As Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council, I am pleased to introduce the Offaly County Council *Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022-2027*. This Strategy, drafted by the Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group, sets out clear goals and objectives that will support persons with disabilities to secure suitable accommodation which will meet with their housing and personal needs.

The supports will be provided by Statutory Agencies including Offaly County Council; the Health Services Executive; Approved Housing Bodies and Disability Support Services. The efficacy of the implementation of the Strategy will be dependent on the provision of the necessary financial and human resources along with the continuing co-operation of the members of the Steering Group.

Housing for All – A new Housing Plan for Ireland, launched in September 2021, includes a commitment to increasing Housing Supports for People with a Disability. It acknowledges the role of the Housing and Disability Steering Group within our Local Authority area and its role in implementing both national and local policy on disability.

This Strategy is the collective commitment of the members of the Steering Group to continue working collaboratively in an effort to improve housing supports for persons with disabilities living within our County. I look forward to seeing the positive impact its implementation will have for people with a disability and thereby our wider community.

Councillor Declan Harvey
Cathaoirleach,
Offaly County Council

A Chara,

I am delighted to present the Offaly County Council's *Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022- 2027*. The Strategy identifies the nature of disabilities to include persons with physical, mental, intellectual and sensory challenges and in its development it has had regard to a number of national policies.

This is an action focused strategy which aims to ensure that there is a comprehensive and integrated approach to the provision of suitable housing supports for persons with disabilities.

Offaly County Council in leading this Strategy, look forward to working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders through the Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group to progress the actions identified.

I acknowledge the valuable work already achieved by Statutory Agencies, Approved Housing Bodies and Disability Service Providers throughout the county and look forward to building on these strong foundations for our work going forward and thereby helping to realise for the needs of our community.

**Anna Marie Delaney,
Chief Executive,
Offaly County Council**

Offaly Strategic Plan for Housing People with a Disability 2022 - 2027

Offaly County Council's *Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 – 2027* sets out the overall plan for the provision of housing options to support independent living for those persons with a disability.

It has been prepared in accordance with the various National Strategies, including:

- The *UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability* which was ratified by Ireland in 2018. Article 19 (a) addresses independent living and “*recognises the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community*”, including by ensuring that: “*Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live...*”
- The *National Housing Strategy for People with Disability 2011 – 2016* and the associated framework, are joint publications by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Health. The Strategy sets out the Government's broad framework for the delivery of housing for people with disabilities. Developed as part of a coherent framework, in conjunction with “*A Vision for Change*”, *National Mental Health Policy*, and a “*Time to Move on from Congregated Settings*,” they strive to support people with disabilities in community based living to have maximum independence and choice.
- The *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011 – 2016*, extended to 2020, was re-affirmed in *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* in July 2016.
- *Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland*, launched in September 2021, acknowledges the need to prioritise the delivery of an appropriate range of housing types and related support services, in an integrated and sustainable manner, recognising that it is critically important in order to promote equality of opportunity, individual choice and independent living for people with disability.

Objective 7 of *Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland*, identifies six key deliverables to increase and improve housing options and supports for people with a disability. A new *National Housing Strategy for People with Disability 2022 – 2027*, is currently being jointly prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Health. Stakeholder and public consultation are ongoing and it is anticipated that it will be published by the end of 2021. A key focus of the national strategy will be to detail the co-ordination and alignment of housing, health and community supports.

Offaly Strategic Plan for People with a Disability 2022 - 2027

This Strategic Plan will support and guide Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group to advance collectively appropriate housing solutions for persons with a disability in County Offaly. The development of the objectives is informed by the Disability Steering Group

members - be that persons representing ‘lived experience’, sectoral group interests, representatives of various HSE divisions, and the social housing delivery providers, i.e., Offaly County Council and Approved Housing Bodies. Over the five-year span of the Strategic Plan, specific strategies will be developed to meet the identified need for persons in each of the four categories of disability i.e., sensory, mental health, physical and intellectual.

It is hoped that this Plan will be a ‘living document’, that the objectives and actions will be responsive and readily adaptive to the changes and needs of those it aims to support. This Strategic Plan will be reviewed to take account of the policies and objectives of the *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2022 – 2027*, when same is finalised and adopted.

Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland

Housing Policy Objective 7: Increase and improve housing options and supports for people with a disability			
No.		Timeline	Lead
7.1	Deliver a new National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (2022 – 2027) following stakeholder and public consultation and with a range of actions which will detail co-ordination and alignment of housing, health and community supports	Q4 2021	DHLGH, DoH
7.2	Local Authority Housing Delivery Action Plans will set out how dedicated social housing provision appropriate to the needs of people with a disability will be delivered matching the scale and extent of housing need identified for people with a disability	Q4 2021	LAs
7.3	Local Authorities will consider the housing needs of people with a disability through the Housing Need and Demand Assessment Framework and feed that into their Housing Strategies as part of their Development Plan process	Ongoing	LAs
7.4	Review the range of housing grants available to assist with meeting specific housing needs, including the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, and implement relevant changes	Q4 2021	DHLGH
7.5	Nominate Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisors in each Local Authority	Q4 2021	LAs
7.6	Housing and Disability Steering Groups will report quarterly on the implementation of their local strategic plans regarding housing for people with a disability to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Policy Committee	Q1 2022	DHLGH, LAs

Offaly Housing & Disability Steering Group – An Interagency Approach

Offaly Housing & Disability Steering Group

Offaly Housing & Disability Steering Group, established under the aegis of Offaly County Council, provides a forum for collaboration and co-ordination across the various stakeholders and disability service providers. The membership of the Steering Group consists of Local Authority, HSE, Disability Sector and Approved Housing Bodies. The Group will arrange effective communication within their representative groups, organisations and agencies to raise awareness and promote this strategy. The diverse membership provides a forum and opportunity to review policies and issues that may arise during the lifetime of the strategy.

Interagency Co-operation

Effective interagency cooperation is an essential mechanism in meeting and sustaining the housing needs of people with disabilities. All relevant stakeholders must work together to ensure that the person with a disability is placed at the centre of the process with individuals actively supported to live full, inclusive lives at the heart of the family, community and society whether the individual is transitioning from congregated setting or living in the community. This strategy has been developed in consultation with the bodies below and outlines the supports provided by each:

- Offaly County Council
- HSE Mental Health, Physical and Intellectual Disability Services
- Approved Housing Bodies (currently operating in Offaly)
- Disability Service Providers
- Disability Advocacy Groups

Offaly Housing Disability Steering Group is committed to delivering this Strategy and while a number of consultations have taken place it recognises the need for further and on-going consultation with people with disabilities.

The Strategy is underpinned by the following core values:

- Collaboration – We will work closely with all relevant statutory and voluntary stakeholders to provide appropriate housing and supports services to people with disabilities.
- Inclusion – We will endeavour to include adults, children and their families across all disabilities in the housing solution process.
- Innovation – We seek to use the latest technology to improve the quality and range of housing options for people with disabilities.
- Sustainable Development – We aspire to establish the concept of Universal Design as an integral part of our housing design process.

Roles and Responsibilities for Housing and Related Support Delivery

Housing Authorities

Local Authorities have a key role in recording social housing need and in the provision of social housing for all eligible persons including persons with a disability, those currently living independently, or with families or in other arrangements. Local Authorities fulfil many housing functions, including the strategic co-ordination of social housing provision by other stakeholders and housing providers.

In many cases the housing solution for a person with a disability will also require the support of the Health Service Executive (HSE) and in some cases for the HSE to provide a leadership role in identifying and activating a response to housing need.

Approved Housing Bodies (AHB)

AHBs are non-profit organisations whose purpose is the provision and management of housing for individuals and families who are nominated from the Local Authority Social Housing Support List.

AHBs are significant providers of social housing to people with disabilities and play a key role in working in partnership with disability support providers and other mainstream services. They are one of the main housing providers under the initiatives set out in the *Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities*, whether through Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), leasing or purchase models.

Health Services Executive (HSE)

The HSE in some cases is the direct service provider to an individual. In addition, the HSE is the current funding agency of support services provided by third parties. The HSE is also one of the main drivers of the deinstitutionalisation of residents from congregated settings.

In addition, the HSE must identify individual support costs and continue to provide funding for residents transitioning from congregated settings into their new housing environments. It has the overall statutory responsibility for the management and delivery of healthcare and personal social services. In respect of disability services, the HSE's responsibility is fulfilled by the provision of services directly by the organisation and also to a very significant extent by the funding of non-statutory organisations to provide such services on its behalf.

The HSE aims to support each individual with a disability in living as normal a life as possible, in an environment that provides opportunities for choice, personal development, fulfilling relationships and protection from exploitation and abuse. With regard to individuals currently residing in a congregated type setting, the HSE strongly supports their transition to more socially inclusive community integrated services and is fully committed to ensuring that people with disabilities will be actively and effectively supported to live full inclusive lives at the heart of their family, community and society.

Also key is the HSE's responsibility to provide personal supports for those on the Social Housing Support List who require these supports to obtain appropriate housing and to live independently.

HSE Mental Health Services

Mental health services as described in the *National HSE Service Plan 2021* are made up of:

- **Specialist mental health services** provided in local community areas. These services include acute inpatient services, day hospitals, outpatient clinics, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), general adult, psychiatry of later life services, mental health of intellectual disability, community residential and continuing care residential services and peer led services.
- **Sub-specialities** include rehabilitation and recovery, eating disorders, liaison psychiatry and perinatal mental health, peer support and recovery education. A National Forensic Mental Health Service is also provided, including inpatient and in-reach prison services with a new modern and fit for purpose facility, increasing capacity to 130 beds, opening in 2021. All mental health services are informed by a person-centred and recovery approach.

The HSE Mental Health Service is a secondary tier health care provider, which service users access by General Practitioner referral. Traditionally, housing in Mental Health Services has been provided in hostels or community residences as they will be referenced here following mass de-congregation of mental health institutions in 1984. There has been a significant change in how housing is delivered within the HSE and it is continuing to evolve and we learn from the work of Disability services that are further along in their journey.

Mental Health services support a spectrum of needs. For the purposes of the Housing Disability Strategy there are 5 broad emerging groups of people with housing needs within mental health services as identified in *Addressing the Housing Needs of People Using Mental Health Services 2012 – A Guidance Paper*:

1. Long-stay in-patients.
2. Discharged long-stay service users.
3. New long-stay service users.
4. New service users with severe and complex mental health problems.
5. New service users with less severe symptoms in the family home.

It is recognized that community residences are for rehabilitation purposes in order to provide support for the move into community living and are not seen as a permanent housing solution. Thus a pathway from rehabilitation residences into community living options needs to be further explored and developed in collaboration with each Local Authority.

In the context of the *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability*, housing support is seen as separate to clinical mental health support, with a focus on enabling someone to manage on a day to day basis whilst they are living in their own home. Where it exists, this type of support is usually provided by a voluntary agency who works in partnership with service users, mental health services and housing providers. Mobile support workers assist in the transition to living independently in mainstream housing from institutional settings and/or prevent issues linked to support needs that may put a tenancy at risk. Tenancy support workers usually have a formal qualification and experience in Social Care.

Mental health services are currently limited in their capacity to provide specific tenancy related support in the community. The focus is on the provision of therapeutic interventions through the Assertive Outreach, Homebase Teams and Community Mental Health Nurses within the Community Mental Health Teams. Mental Health Services recognize the need to explore a range of tenancy supports as outlined within the policy context from 24-hour support through to tenancy support worker roles in collaboration with the Housing Disability Steering group.

Service Providers

Service Providers includes HSE (direct service provision) service providers and the non-statutory service providers such as National Council for the Blind, Irish Wheelchair Association, and similar organisations that provide a wide range of personal support services. Where a person is transitioning from congregated settings, these organisations are responsible for a wide range of actions including the development of an overall project proposal to include: a person centred plan for each individual who is transitioning; provision of information with regard to housing options; supporting the individual with regard to application for assessment of housing needs; access to an external advocate; support around tenancy arrangements; care support needs identified and provided for; and, assistance with the development of circles of supports, etc. Service providers must also participate in the local implementation teams, identifying obstacles/challenges to transitions and the necessary resolutions and supports required to mitigate against their impact on the transition.

People with Disabilities and their Families

Eligible individuals with disabilities are encouraged to make an application for Social Housing Supports. Applicants, who meet the required criteria are, approved and placed on the Council's Social Housing Support List where they will be eligible for various housing supports.

Social Housing Need

The *National Guidelines for the Assessment and Allocation Process for Housing Provision for People with a Disability* states:

“People with a Disability shall not be deemed adequately housed when their current address is a congregated setting, institution, hospital/nursing home, community based group home, or when they, although an adult, remain in the family home due to their personal circumstances and or support needs.”

The housing need is defined as the type of house, size, design, location and any associated support that is required to allow the person to live appropriately. There is a legitimate expectation amongst adults with disabilities to have access to housing from which they can build their lives.

Emerging Need – People with a Disability

It is accepted by the Council, sectoral groups, and the HSE that the housing needs of people with a disability are under-represented, under-identified, and / or under recorded in official documentation. The numbers of persons with a disability approved on Offaly County Council’s Social Housing Support List at the end of November 2021 are outlined below:

Category	Nov-21	Social Housing Support List	Transfers / HAP	Tenant Transfers / LA & AHB & Leasing
Physical	68	16	32	20
Sensory	8	3	2	3
Mental Health	38	8	16	14
Intellectual	66	50	10	6
Exceptional Medical	27	3	6	18
Total Number of Disabled	207	80	66	61
Total Number Per Category		478	743	2,255 tenancies (1,944 LA Housing Units + 311 Leasing Units & Excls. AHB Stock)
Disabled as a Percentage of Category Total		16.74	8.88	2.71

There is an ongoing responsibility to ensure that needs are identified and Medical Form HDM1 are completed and returned. This will enable the Council to ensure that future capital build programmes are well informed by the specific needs of approved applicants.

As an awareness is increased through the different networks and organisations Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group expect that the percentage of applications from people with a disability is likely to increase over the lifetime of this Strategic Plan. To ascertain the current and emerging need the Housing and Disability Steering Group will undertake a data gathering exercise, (whilst respecting the requirements of Data Protection legislation), to bring together a comprehensive list of need in each of the specific categories in the county.

The Local Authority also recognise the value in establishing a baseline of information of the numbers of suitable units that are available in the current housing stock to address the needs of persons with disabilities. The Council as part of its stock condition survey will develop a register of adapted properties.

Social Housing Supports and Mechanisms of Delivery

Accommodation Delivery

Security of tenure is important to all people with a disability be it sensory, mental health, physical, intellectual and / or autism. Where an applicant is qualified and placed on the Social Housing Support List there are a number of housing options which they may qualify for:

1. Local Authority Social Housing units, owned and provided by the Local Authority.
2. Nomination by the Local Authority to an AHB housing unit.
3. Supported in private rented Housing via Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
4. Housing units provided under various leasing schemes
5. Home Adaptation Grants

Social Housing owned and provided by Local Authorities

In order to qualify to be offered and allocated a property by a local authority, an individual or household must firstly qualify for social housing support.

There are a number of criteria that need to be met in order to qualify for social housing support including income limits, being unable to provide housing from their own means and being considered to be inadequately housed in their current accommodation. Houses are allocated in accordance with the Council's adopted *Scheme of Letting Priorities*.

Social Housing provide by Approved Housing Bodies (AHB)

AHBs have become major players in the provision of social housing support to people from all sections of the community. There are a number AHBs active in Offaly currently providing 573 properties across the County with a further 173 in development. To avail of housing association owned accommodation an individual or household must qualify for social housing supports with the Local Authority and be nominated by the Local Authority to the AHB.

AHB provide the following type of accommodation: standard housing, older person accommodation, and housing for people with disabilities both independent living and shared accommodation.

Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS)

The Capital Assistance Scheme assists those with special needs such as the elderly, disabled and homeless people. An AHB, working in collaboration with the Council to meet householders needs, can receive 100% capital funding to provide housing for approved housing applicants within these categories of needs.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

HAP is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. HAP means that local authorities can provide housing assistance for households who qualify for social housing support, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients. Under HAP, local authorities make monthly payments to a landlord, subject to terms and conditions including rent limits, on a HAP tenant's behalf. In return, the HAP tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority. This 'rent contribution' is based on the household income. It is calculated in the same way as the rent paid by a tenant of a local authority owned property. A HAP tenant may also be required to pay the difference between the

monthly payment made by the Local Authority and the rent charged by the landlord, this is known as a 'top-up payment'.

Leasing and Acquisition Programmes

Both leasing and acquisitions provide additional opportunities for the Council to meet the accommodation needs of specific households with disability requirements. The Council has been successful in securing several such houses.

Recognising that the targets included in Housing for All under these delivery mechanisms will scale down as the capital build programme increases the Council is committed to continue, where approved, to progress units using these delivery mechanisms.

Part V Housing

In accordance with the provisions of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Offaly County Council may purchase a percentage of properties within private developments. As part of the Part V process, OCC will strive to include provision for disability specific accommodation having regard to the nature of the development and the specific housing needs in that area. Properties so identified and acquired can then be made available by the Council for allocation to persons on the Council's Social Housing Support List.

Offaly County Council Housing Delivery Pipeline and Housing for Disability

Housing supply is critical to providing housing options. Offaly County Council is advancing its housing capital programme under the various delivery mechanisms (direct construction, vacant units, Part V, leasing, etc.) which are subject to on-going consultation with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Furthermore, AHBs have, in collaboration with the Council, increased their delivery of social units throughout the county.

Offaly County Council Capital Build Programme 2021 - 2024

Project	Total Units in Scheme	No. Houses – Ambulant Disabled	No. Houses – Wheelchair Accessible / Universal Design	No. Houses - Medical Needs based on OT report
Raheen, Clara	38		2	1
Beechgrove, Belmont	7	4	2	1
Sr. Senan Avenue (OPD's)	4		4	
Elderberry Drive, Moneygall	4			
Circular Road, Daingean	9			1
Daingean 2	9	4	1	
Dargan Drive, Tullamore	20	4	1	1
Shannon View, Kylebeg	18			
Sycamore Drive, Ballycumber	10		2	
Rathbaun, Shinrone	15		7	
Bracknagh	7		5	
Unit, Birr	1		1	
Unit, Clara	1		1	
TOTAL	143	12	26	4
Projected % of total		8.4%	18%	2.8%

All dwellings including two storey dwellings comply with Technical Guidance Document (TGD) Part M for accessible accommodation on the ground floor whereby all visitors are accommodated.

All public spaces in housing schemes will be wheelchair accessible i.e. no steps will be provided and sloped areas will be in compliance with TGD Part M.

Offaly County Council are endeavouring to include a larger percentage of Universal Design dwelling in all new housing stock and to ensure a mix of tenure sizes in all schemes where feasible to allow future adaptability of housing stock to accommodate the changing needs of tenants as families grow and change and people age. Offaly County Council will endeavour to include practice design models as promoted by Age Friendly Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association to achieve above recommended minimum targets for accessibility.

Note: The unit in Birr and Clara are both 2 storey existing dwellings with substantial extensions to provide Ground Floor Wheelchair Accessible Accommodation comprising living area and bedroom / bathroom with level access shower. All external access doors will be level access to these dwellings.

Adaption Grants Administered by the Local Authority

Owner Occupied Stock (Private Properties)

Requirements for adaptations or alternative accommodation due to disability arise in Owner Occupier properties. Offaly County Council administers a number of grant options to assist older people and people with a disability in carrying out works which are necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for their accommodation needs. These include: Housing Aid for Older People Grant, Housing Adaptation Grant for a Person with a Disability and Mobility Aid Grant Scheme.

These grants are funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and part funded, 20%, by the Local Authority.

The table below shows the number of applicants approved under each of these schemes for the past five years. Each year the scheme is oversubscribed and a waiting list is in place.

Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People & People with a Disability	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
Housing Adaptation Grants			63	70	56	
Mobility Aid Grants			21	19	16	
Housing Aid for Older Persons			67	62	58	
Total	115	156	151	151	130	703

Local Authority Tenants with Disabilities

Offaly County Council operates a programme of adaptations for Local Authority tenants with reduced mobility. The scheme is oversubscribed and the number of applications vary from year to year. The Council endeavours to work with the tenant and the occupational therapist to facilitate to the greatest degree possible the applicant remaining in their home and to return to their home from hospital. This scheme is funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and part funded, 10%, by the Local Authority.

The table below shows number of applications approved and works completed over recent years:

Disabled Persons Grants – LA Stock	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	TOTAL
House Extensions	4	6	1	0	2	
House Adaption Works	24	5	10	18	11	
Total	28	11	11	18	13	81

Housing for All provides for the review of the range of housing grants available to assist with meeting specific housing needs, including the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability.

Housing Support Initiatives

Personal Support Initiatives

In many cases the housing solution for the individual will also require the provision of personal supports. The Health Services Executive (HSE) is committed to supporting people with disabilities in their own home by direct provision or through non HSE agencies in the area of disability. Individuals must apply to the HSE for consideration for such supports. The supports for people in their homes are Personal Assistances and Home Support. Other services such as Day Care, Respite Services and full or part time Residential Services are also provided but must also be applied for and applicants will be assessed for suitability for the applied service.

“New Directions”, a report issued by the HSE in 2012, highlighted a new approach to Adult Day Services where choice is given to the person with a disability regarding how they live their lives and how they spend their time. The guiding principle for the future of this work is that supports will be tailored to individual need and will be flexible, responsive and person centred.

The personal supports that should be available to an adult with disability are:

1. Support for making choices and plans.
2. Support for making transitions and progression.
3. Support for inclusion in one’s local community.
4. Support for accessing education and formal learning
5. Support for maximising independence.
6. Support for personal and social development.
7. Support for health and wellbeing.
8. Support for accessing bridging programmes to vocational training.
9. Support for accessing vocational training and work opportunities.
10. Support for personal expression and creativity.
11. Support for having meaningful social roles.
12. Support for influencing service policy and practice.

Personal Assistance

Personal Assistance Services provide people with the opportunity to exercise control and choice in their lives. In so doing they enable people with disabilities to be active participants within their families, communities and society. Personal assistance supports people with disabilities by the provision of direct individual one to one support.

The provision of personal assistance is based on a needs assessment and approval for funding by the supporting voluntary agency or the HSE. Applications for personal assistance can be made through the person’s supporting disability organisation or directly to the local HSE.

Home Support

The Home Support Scheme is a direct support scheme, operated by the HSE. It aims to help people who need medium to high caring support to continue to live at home independently. Home support works by the provision of a number of hours of direct care per day to help the disabled person in their daily tasks of living.

The provision of home support is based on a care needs assessment and approval for funding by the supporting voluntary agency or the HSE. Services may be provided by the HSE directly,

or by non-HSE providers. Applications for home support can be made through the person's supporting disability organisation, public health nursing service or directly by the local HSE.

Day Services

Day Services provide a range of social and rehabilitative services for disabled people by offering an opportunity to have a meaningful day, develop personal, work and independent living skills and interact with the local community. Day Services include centres that provide day activation, such as recreational, sport and leisure facilities, supported work placements and specialised clinic facilities that provide a combination of medical and rehabilitation services.

The provision of Day Services is based on an individual needs assessment and approval for funding by the supporting voluntary agency or the HSE. Applications for Day Services can be made through the person's supporting disability organisation or directly to the local HSE.

Respite Service

Respite services offer support to people with disabilities by providing short term accommodation along with any personal supports that are required. Respite accommodation can give families and the person who has the disability a welcome holiday breaks from daily routine.

The provision of respite services is based on a needs assessment and approval for funding by the supporting voluntary agency or the HSE. Applications for respite services can be made through the person's supporting disability organisation, directly to the local HSE or to the Respite Service Provider.

Age Friendly Ireland

Offaly County Council will facilitate the implementation of Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home in its new build social housing units to future proof housing for an aging population. (See appendices.).

Offaly County Council will adopt a Universal Housing Design approach in the delivery of new housing units across all social housing delivery mechanisms. Offaly County Council will also seek to identify applicants who have very particular design needs at an early stage in the process in order to provide user specific design in consultation with medical and occupational therapist personnel. Offaly County Council will support the Age Friendly Ireland Planning Guidelines pending the issue of specific statutory guidelines from the Department Housing, LG and Heritage.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people with disabilities. Assistive technology promotes greater independence by enabling people to perform tasks they would otherwise have difficulty accomplishing.

There have been major advances on assisted living technologies that support people to stay in their homes longer and to live more independent lives while having the security of the assistance of the technology. Some of the technologies that will be considered for use are:

- Living Environment Controls including access, lighting, heat
- Sensory alerts for fire alarm/door entry systems
- Person Alarm Systems
- Remote Monitoring Systems
- Fall Prevention/Detection Systems

Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027, adopted in October 2021. includes a number of policy statements to support the housing needs of Older People, People with Disabilities and/or Learning Disabilities. The Council continues to address particular identified needs through the provision of residential units built on the principles of universal design and lifelong adaptability. In an effort to ensure social inclusion the preferred locations are within settlements and with easy access to public transport, community facilities, retail and other amenities. Section 9.13 & 9.14 of the adopted Offaly County Development Plan 2021 - 2027 and associates policies address these areas. (See appendices.)

Challenges, Risks and Opportunities

Offaly Strategy for People with a Disability

There are many challenges in delivering homes for people with a disability. For those living with a disability, the co-ordination of appropriately adapted housing provision with the delivery of key health and social care supports is particularly important. It is recognised that the best results for people with a disability are achieved when there is a holistic approach and all the relevant stakeholders are actively engaged in a timely manner in the process. There is an opportunity with the development of this new Strategy to reinvigorate the work of the Housing and Disability Steering Group and commit to working together to make a real difference for people with a disability in our county over the lifetime of this strategic plan.

Aims and Objectives of Offaly Strategic Plan

The objectives and actions in Offaly's Strategic Plan are aligned to *the National Housing Strategy for People with Disability 2011-2016*, extended to 2020. These actions have been developed following consultations with the key stakeholders on the steering group. Consultations with representatives of disability groups will be an ongoing key action throughout the lifetime of this plan.

National Housing Strategy for People with Disability 2011-2020 - 9 Strategic Aims:

1. To promote and mainstream equality of access to the full range of housing options available suited to individuals and household needs
2. To develop protocols for interagency co-operation
3. To support people with disabilities to live independently
4. To address the specific housing needs of people with a disability moving from congregated settings
5. To address the specific needs of people with a mental health disability moving from low or medium support need to housing in the community
6. To promote good practice in design and co-ordination of housing and supports
7. To facilitate people with disabilities to access advice and information on housing options
8. To improve the collection and use of data information regarding the nature and extent of the housing needs of people with disability
9. To provide a framework to support delivery, monitoring and reviewing

Aims, Objectives and Implementation

The table below shows the local objectives, actions, partners and timescales for the delivery of the nine strategic aims identified in the *National Housing Strategy for People with Disability 2011-2020*:

Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
1. To promote and mainstream equality of access to the full range of housing options available suited to individuals and household needs				
To ensure ease of access to the various housing options for people with disabilities	1. Ensure effective implementation of the <i>Guidelines for the Assessment and Allocation process for Social Housing Provision for People with Disabilities</i>	OCC		Ongoing
	2. OCC to establish an internal disability working group to inform the delivery and improve the co-ordination of social housing services to people with disabilities	OCC		Q1, 2022
	3. To consider the implementation of "Offer Zone letter" to assist in the co-ordination of services for PWD	OCC		Q2, 2022
	4. Support Irish Wheelchair Associations "Think ahead Campaign"	IWA	HSE / Disability Service Providers	Ongoing
	5. To work collaboratively to hold information sessions on access to housing options for key stakeholders	OCC / AHB's		Ongoing
	6. To explore potential for increasing the supply of accessible housing options	OCC / AHB's	HSE, Service Providers	Ongoing

Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
2. To develop protocols for interagency co-operation				
To encourage and facilitate collaboration and partnership in housing delivery	1. To establish an interagency operations working group comprising of LA, HSE and Disability advocates to ensure coordination and forward planning for clients	HSE / OCC	Disability Service Providers	Q1, 2022
	2. Explore opportunities for training and information sessions and cross-organisational training	HSE	Disability Steering Group Members	Q2, 2022
	3. To ensure HDSG membership includes people with lived experience	All	Disability Sector / PPN	Ongoing
	4. To develop a process of engagement with advocacy groups/disability groups	IWA / NCB / OCC/HSE	All	Ongoing

Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
3. To support people with disabilities to live independently				
To support people with disabilities to live independently	1. Timely engagement of key stakeholders to ensure that the required supports are available to support a tenancy	HSE / OCC / Sector Providers	All	Ongoing
	2. LA seek to maximise department funding opportunities for Disabled Persons Grants and Housing Adaptations Grants for Older People & People with a Disability.	OCC	Disability Sector Providers	Ongoing
	3. LA to work with AHB's through CAS funding to provide accommodation to meet special housing needs for identified adults with disabilities.	OCC / AHB's	Disability Sector Providers	Ongoing
	4. Examine the opportunity to increase the use of technology in supporting people to live in their own homes	HSE / All	Disability Sector Providers	Ongoing

Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
4. To address the specific housing needs of people with a disability moving from congregated settings				
Where are there congregated settings in Offaly	1. To develop protocols between LA and HSE Mental Health Services with regard to people leaving communal settings to tenancy arrangements	HSE/OCC		Ongoing
Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
5. To address the specific needs of people with a mental health disability moving from low or medium support need to housing in the community				
To address the specific needs of people with a mental health disability moving from low or medium support need to housing in the community	1. Establish a Housing First Model to provide a wraparound service and supports to People with Disabilities	HSE	OCC/AHB/ Disability Service Providers	Ongoing
	2. Improve coordination between HSE and LA for people exiting hospitals and entering homeless services	OCC / HSE		Ongoing
Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
6. To promote good practice in design and co-ordination of housing and supports				
To promote and mainstream the concept of universal design and wheelchair housing	1. Explore in consultation with Age Friendly Technical Advisor on the implementation of Age Friendly's 10 Point Plan for developments and adaptations of existing dwellings to enable supported living	OCC / HSE	Disability Service Providers	Ongoing
	2. Support Age Friendly Planning Guidelines, pending the issue of statutory guidelines	OCC	AHBs	Ongoing

Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
7. To facilitate people with disabilities to access advice and information on housing options				
To facilitate people with disabilities to access advice and information on housing options	1. Develop a one stop shop webpage.	All	All, PPN	Q3, 2022
	2. Ensure relevant information is up to date and in an accessible format on all social media/websites	All	All	Ongoing
	3. Promote Offaly's Disability Strategy through the steering group members organisations	All	All	Ongoing
Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
8. To improve the collection and use of data information regarding the nature and extent of the housing needs of people with disability				
To improve the collection and use of data information	1. Work collaboratively to collate and establish the housing needs of people with disabilities.	OCC / AHBs	All	Ongoing
	2. To review and update data as part of annual review	OCC	All	Annually
Offaly Strategic Plan Objectives	Action	Lead	Partners	Timescale
9. To provide a framework to support delivery, monitoring and reviewing				
To carry out regular reviews of the Strategic Plan to assess its overall progress and outcomes achieved	1. To review the implementation of the strategy on an annual basis and to identify any barriers and impediments to its delivery	Disability Steering Group	All	Annually
	2. Quarterly report on progress of the plan to Housing Strategic Policy Committee	OCC	All	Quarterly
	3. Quarterly report to the Chief Executive via circulation of adopted minutes	OCC	All	Quarterly

Reporting

The Housing Disability Steering Group meetings will be held on quarterly basis and the schedule of meetings will be agreed at the start of each year.

The Council will undertake the role of secretariat of the Group and will circulate an agenda at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Members from each of the Stakeholders Group will report to the meeting on activities / actions for people with disabilities in their group.

Members from each of the Stakeholder Groups will provide an update to each of their parent body and where appropriate note the key deliveries and update on progress of the Housing Disability Strategy 2022 – 2027 in their annual reports.

Objective 7.6 of *Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland* requires the Housing and Disability Steering Groups to report quarterly on the implementation of their local strategic plans regarding housing for people with a disability to the Chief Executive of the Local Authority and to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee. To fulfil this objective, the adopted minutes of the Housing and Disability Steering Groups quarterly meetings will be circulated to both parties.

Offaly Housing and Disability Steering Group

Chairperson, Director of Services, Offaly County Council

Sharon Kennedy	Director of Services, Housing, Community, Culture, Emergency Services and Edenderry Municipal District Offaly County Council
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HSE Representatives

Helen Hanlon	Adult Mental Health Services- Midland, Louth, Meath/Senior Social Worker
Sinead Gorman	Project Manager Housing Mental Health Services CH08
Paul Byrne	Aftercare Team Leader, Tulsa
Brenda Colgan	HSE, Property Manager
Elaine Mulvihill	HSE, Manager of Disability Service
Claire Guinan -	HSE, Intellectual Services

Disability Sector Representatives

Josephine Kenny	Irish Wheelchair Association, Service Co-ordinator
Aileen Ahern	National Council for the Blind

Approved Housing Body's Representatives

Aishling Corcoran	RESPOND Housing Association
Catherine Dickson	CLUID Housing Association
Grainne Donnelly	OAKLEE Housing Association
Geoff Corcoran	Sophia Housing Association
Alan Sheeran	Co-Operative Ireland
Emma Keane	Midland Simon

Offaly County Council Housing Representatives

Monica Cleary	Senior Executive Officer, Housing
Deirdre Hunt	Administrative Officer, Housing
Lourda Giles	Administrative Officer, Housing

Disability Friendly Housing Technical Advisor

Noelle McGinley	Executive Architect, Housing
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Think Ahead, Think Housing

Think Ahead, Think Housing is a national campaign, which Irish Wheelchair Association will run in Q.2 2021, to encourage and support people with disabilities across all sectors to complete the social housing application form and submit it to their local authority.

The ***Think Ahead, Think Housing*** campaign will assist local authorities to identify current and emerging housing requirements which will enable them to plan for appropriate design and development of accessible housing for people with disabilities in sustainable and integrated communities nationally.

Objectives of *Think Ahead, Think Housing*:

- Provide information to people with disabilities on how to apply to their local authority for social housing.
- Provide one-to-one support to people with disabilities to consider their housing requirements and to complete the application form for social housing.
- Increase the number of people with disabilities on the housing list so they are more accurately represented.
- Build relationships with local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, Housing Agency, Irish Council for Social Housing, HSE, Citizen's Information, Disability Umbrella Bodies and others to improve access to suitable and accessible housing for people with disabilities.

Key Messages:

People with disabilities are underrepresented on the social housing list and struggle to access social housing as a result. This is leaving them vulnerable to homelessness, being forced into residential care or dependency on family for accommodation.

- 1) ***Think Ahead, Think Housing*** is a campaign run by Irish Wheelchair Association to support and encourage people with disabilities to consider their current and emerging housing requirements and to apply to their local authority for housing.
- 2) People can visit www.iwa.ie/thinkhousing for details on how to apply to your local authority for housing.

Campaign in Brief:

Local Authorities are the main providers of accommodation to people who require housing.

The housing requirements of people with a disability are under-represented on the local authority approved housing lists.

It is the responsibility of each person with a disability to make a housing application to the Local Authority so that the Local Authority can plan for their current and future housing requirements.

Having an affordable home of your own can make a difference increasing independence, a sense of security, choice and control over your life.

People with disabilities who require housing now or within the next 5 – 10 years need to plan and apply to their Local Authority now, as it can take years to secure housing due to lack of availability.

Irish Wheelchair Association and Citizen's Information can support people with disabilities with information or practical support completing the social housing application form.

Call to Action:

- 1) Share the campaign with people with disabilities and their families.
- 2) Encourage people with disabilities across all sectors (physical, sensory, mental health and intellectual disability) to think ahead about their housing requirements and to apply to their local authority if they require housing now or in the future.
- 3) Organisations to promote the ***Think Ahead, Think Housing*** Campaign with their respective service users and support them to apply for social housing.

Campaign Timeline:

Launch ***Think Ahead, Think Housing*** Campaign when the new Local Authority social housing application form is released in Q. 2 2021

Irish Wheelchair Association will run the campaign for a three-month period in 2021 and on an annual basis in Q.1 thereafter.

Context

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) includes the State's responsibility to recognise the right of people with disabilities to live in the community and to have the opportunity to choose their place of residence. Furthermore, Article 28 includes the right of people with disabilities to access public housing programmes.

According to a recent report by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), *'Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland, June 2018'*, people with disabilities are:

- More than twice as likely to report discrimination relating to housing
- Over 1.6 times more likely to live in poor conditions, such as living in damp housing, lacking central heating, or living in an area with neighbourhood problems
- More than one in four homeless people have a disability

The lack of wheelchair accessible housing is a significant issue for the membership of Irish Wheelchair Association and wheelchair users in general. Data on social housing requirements for wheelchair users does not currently exist as it has not to date been

captured by the Government. Irish Wheelchair Association welcomes the new Local Authority Social Housing Application Form due to be released by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in Q. 2 2021. For the first time, people will be able to indicate on the Application Form that they require wheelchair accessible accommodation.

Offaly County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 Extract

Housing Needs of Older People, People with Disabilities and/or Learning Disabilities

The Council continues to address particular identified needs through the provision of residential units built on the principles of universal design and lifelong adaptability. In an effort to ensure social inclusion the preferred locations are within settlements and with easy access to public transport, community facilities, retail and other amenities. Section 9.13 & 9.14 of the Current Offaly CDP 2021-2027 and associated policies address the same. See appendix nn

Relevant policies are set out below;

Older People and People with Disabilities

SICCDP-11 It is Council policy to support 'the Offaly Age Friendly County Programme 2018-2021' as implemented by the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance (and any updated editions) and any key actions in relation to the physical environment.

SICCDP-12 It is Council policy that residential care homes for older people, retirement homes, nursing homes, independent living units, assisted living units, retirement villages and sheltered accommodation are located within defined settlement boundaries and are appropriate in scale to the size of the settlement. The provision of these accommodation types within the open countryside is considered only in such cases where it is clearly demonstrated that due to the nature of the services to be provided, the open countryside is necessary and that no suitable alternative sites are available within a nearby settlement.

SICCDP-13 It is Council policy to ensure that all buildings, public open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities, having regard to;

- Part M of the Building Regulations and the requirement for Disability Access Certificates (DACs)
- Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012);
- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009); and
- Great Outdoors - A Guide for Accessibility (2018)

SICCDP-14 It is Council policy to cater for all levels of disability, through the appropriate mitigation of the built environment for example, through the selection of building materials; the provision of quiet rooms and sensory gardens where appropriate; and in the design of pedestrian facilities for the visually impaired.

SICCDP-15 It is Council Policy to promote Universal Design and well-designed lifetime adaptable and age friendly housing in accordance with best practice and the policies and principles contained in Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach (National Disability Authority, 2012) and Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area: Guidelines for Planning Authorities and its companion document Urban Design Manual (DEHLG, 2009) and particularly in infill and brownfield developments walkable to existing services and facilities.

SICCDP-16 It is Council policy to ensure that new social infrastructure developments are accessible and inclusive for a range of users by adopting a universal design approach and provide for an age friendly society in which people of all ages can live full active, valued and healthy lives.

Age Friendly Ireland Ten Point Plan for Developments

Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home in its new build social housing units to future proof housing for an aging population. The ten features for a universal designed home are as follows:

External Approach:

1. Easy to access from the front and Rear – Provide level access, shelter and accessible parking
2. Connection to the outdoors – ease of use and views/daylight

Entering and Moving around

3. Generous doorways, corridors and internal space including storage
4. Accessible Toilet and Shower room and allowance for future wet room installation

Spaces for Living

5. Guest Accommodation for relatives or future carer
6. Neighbourhood Location close to amenities and within walking distance of public transport

Elements & Systems

7. Green and Sustainable homes – Well insulated energy efficient homes to prevent fuel poverty
8. Technology for controls, heating, lighting and security and allow for future installation of assistive technology
9. Security – designed in accordance with Crime prevention through environmental design guidance
10. Accessible Fixtures & Fittings