

Activities which contribute to the above aims and objectives include:

- *informing and advising the Dept. of Justice Equality and Law Reform, PWS Management and others on the needs of homeless offenders;*
- *contributing to the development of appropriate policies and procedures so as to ensure that sentence management and discharges from prison are planned in such a way as to prevent homelessness;*
- *devising structures and enhancing partnerships to facilitate improved access by offenders to accommodation in the community;*
- *establishing, developing and maintaining appropriate links and networks, specifically with the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness, Local Authorities, Health Boards and Homeless Fora, Homeless Agency, Youth Homeless Fora and organisations in the community and voluntary sector;*
- *accessing and maximising the use of services provided by local authorities, health boards and the voluntary sector through an integrated approach with these agencies;*
- *developing appropriate liaison and referral procedures with local authorities and the voluntary sector to minimise homelessness among offenders;*

- *arranging training and information sessions in co-operation with the PWS Staff Development Units and other organisations;*
- *establishing systems to improve data and information collection;*
- *promoting relevant research projects to inform policy and best practice development;*
- *promoting awareness of the needs of homeless offenders through publication of newsletters and information bulletins.*

Contact Details

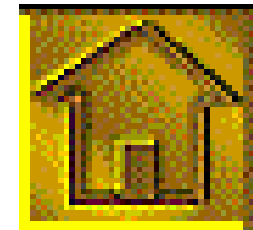
For further information relating to the work of HOST, the team can be contacted at:

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Homeless Offenders Strategy Team (HOST)



Information Leaflet

January 2005

In partnership with other statutory and non-statutory agencies, addressing homelessness among offenders and ex offenders.

Introduction

Offenders in the community, especially those who are homeless, are often among those who experience marginalisation most. In particular, those returning to the community from prison have been identified as one of the groups especially at risk of homelessness.

Access to housing for offenders and ex offenders can be difficult to achieve especially for those with other issues including alcohol and drug addictions. The housing needs of offenders is an issue for the wider community. For example, research has found that prisoners who are homeless after release are more likely to re-offend than those with a secure home.

It is in the interest of society that both policy and practice should address the issue of providing suitable housing for offenders.

Background to Establishment of HOST

The Government has formulated a national strategy to develop a comprehensive response to homelessness, incorporating health and welfare, education, other support and preventative measures.

This strategy is set out in a number of documents, including *Homelessness-An Integrated Strategy (2000)*, *Youth Homelessness Strategy (2001)* and the *Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)*.

The response of the Probation and Welfare Service to homelessness and related issues amongst offenders is fundamentally informed by

and founded on these strategies, in conjunction with the mission, strategies and business plans of the Service itself and those of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Irish Prison Service.

The Homeless Offenders Strategy Team (HOST) was established on foot of a recommendation in the *Homeless Preventative Strategy (2002)* with the purpose of assisting homeless offenders.

HOST is a small unit with a national remit and a mainly strategic focus. The team is a multi-agency accommodation directorate, with the Probation and Welfare Service as the lead agency and an Assistant Principal Probation and Welfare Officer as Director of the team. The team includes a Senior Probation and Welfare Officer, a senior administrative official on secondment to HOST from Dublin City Council and two PWS administrative posts.

The team is represented on the Cross Departmental Team on Homelessness, the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Co-ordination Group on Offender Integration, the Board of the Homeless Agency (Dublin) and the (Dublin) Youth Homeless Forum.

HOST Mission Statement

To prevent and minimise homelessness among offenders by working in effective partnership with statutory and non-statutory bodies, thus contributing to reducing re-offending, promoting community safety and social inclusion.

Role of HOST

The role of HOST is to promote measures to prevent offender homelessness and ensuring offenders, including those on supervision in the community and those leaving custody, have access to appropriate accommodation and services. In particular, it is involved in providing a probation and welfare service to homeless people on remand in Cloverill Prison.

Its overall objective is to ensure that there is ongoing and effective inter-agency co-operation between the statutory and voluntary bodies, working in the homeless sector and other services as they effect homeless offenders, including those under and over 18. The team works in close partnership with a range of community and voluntary bodies already providing valuable services to homeless offenders and those at risk of homelessness.

HOST Activities

HOST has developed a strategic plan. The main aim of this strategy is to provide for a coherent implementation mechanism that contributes to and facilitates the development of more comprehensive and integrated delivery of services to homeless offenders by all the relevant agencies.

The primary objectives of the plan are:

- 1. Preventing and Minimising Homelessness Among Offenders.***
- 2. Improving Access to Accommodation for Homeless Offenders.***