



A place to call home

Between 2016 and 2019 the number of adults in Ireland who were registered homeless grew from 3,885 to 6,363. A €150 million CEB loan to Ireland's Housing Finance Agency (HFA) is helping to deliver new social housing to vulnerable people.

A secure place to live is critical to quality of life and wellbeing. However, the after-effects of the global financial crisis have led to a tightening of the supply of housing finance in Ireland, which has contributed to increased homelessness.

A plan to address homelessness

To combat homelessness, in July 2016, Ireland's then Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Simon Coveney, launched the 'Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness', known as the RI. The RI aimed to deliver 47,000 new social housing units by 2021 and had five fundamental aims:

- to address homelessness
- to accelerate social housing
- to build more homes
- to improve the rental sector
- to use existing housing.

The Government's strategy included tasking Ireland's approved housing bodies, or AHBs, with contributing a third of the required new social housing units. AHBs are independent, not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable rental housing for vulnerable people who may be on low incomes, have additional needs, or be homeless. They work with local authorities to provide accommodation to people on social housing waiting lists.

Financing new social housing

AHBs and local authorities receive attractive long-term financing from Ireland's Housing Finance Agency (HFA), which is a state-owned organisation. The HFA uses a suite of financial products tailored to its customers' needs, which enable them to deliver the social housing required by the communities they serve.

In September 2019 the CEB approved a €150 million loan to the HFA to enable HFA customers – AHBs and local authorities – to

retrofit or build nearly 2,250 energy-efficient social housing units across Ireland by 2022. These units will provide 224,000 sqm of living space and provide a new home for 7,525 people.

Who qualifies for support?

Applicants for the new homes will generally be living in the area covered by the relevant housing authority or have a local connection. Applicants will also only be considered for social housing if the household income is less than the threshold that applies in the housing authority's area. Successful applicants are mainly, but not exclusively, social welfare recipients.

A permanent home

Thanks to the CEB loan, AHBs and local authorities are able to take advantage of long-term fixed rate financing in a market that usually operates on variable rates. This significant support is enabling the HFA and its customers to reduce homelessness across Ireland and provide thousands of individuals and families with secure permanent accommodation, thereby enhancing their quality of life.

CASE STUDY:

AHB: Respond

Project: Newpark Crescent, Kilkenny

Respond works across Ireland and has a vision that every family and individual in the country should have high-quality housing and be part of a vibrant and caring community.

Respond owns and manages 4,250 homes for some 10,378 tenants and it currently has 1,142 homes under construction. It plans to deliver 2,500 new social homes nationwide by 2023.

Newpark Crescent is a 54-home scheme that includes one-, two- and three-bedroom homes built for people with general needs and for older people. The development is ten minutes by foot from the centre of Kilkenny and is adjacent to a school and shopping centre. The HFA has part-funded the scheme that is now home to 180 tenants.

“My son has additional needs and required a bedroom of his own and more space. The move has been the best decision ever for us. Our family doctor is located across the way. I have no doubt this is the right house for me and my family.”

Amanda, tenant

(Left and below) Tenants outside their new homes. (Above) Newpark Crescent



“The quality of the house is amazing. I still walk in the door and go ‘wow’! I used to spend a huge amount of money trying to heat my own place. My electricity bill now is nothing in comparison.”

Sylvia, tenant

“Respond is very grateful to the Housing Finance Agency for their continued and ongoing support to facilitate funding through competitive finance rates. Our partners are essential to the work of Respond in delivering high quality homes and creating sustainable and safe living environments that transform people’s lives and represent value for money.”

Parag Joglekar, Architect and Head of Development, Respond



The HFA’s activity with AHBs has grown considerably in recent years with over €1.5 billion in advances supporting the development of over 8,000 homes, and a forecast €700 million in new lending for 2020. The provision of low-cost fixed rate funding to AHBs has transformed the sector, enabling AHBs to de-risk their exposure to future interest rate rises and lock in the exceptional offers available in the current low interest rate environment.

The CEB’s support has been very important to the HFA – helping us to pass on highly competitive long-term fixed rate funding to AHBs. The need for new, energy efficient homes for families and individuals on low incomes or with additional needs remains high and we look forward to working closely with the CEB over the coming years to deliver these homes.”

Barry O’Leary, Chief Executive Officer, HFA





The CEB and HFA

- **Four** loan agreements since 2008
- Total loan size: **€425 million**
- Together these loans will create nearly **3,550** new homes for over **11,000** individuals and families across Ireland who are on low incomes or have additional needs



CASE STUDY:

AHB: Focus Housing Association

Project: John's Lane West, Dublin

Focus Ireland is a leading not-for-profit that works to prevent people becoming or remaining homeless, or returning to homelessness. Through the Focus Housing Association it leases and manages properties for people who have been, or who are at risk of becoming, homeless.

The HFA has been one of the bodies that has helped to finance the building of John's Lane West, which provides 31 permanent homes for families and individuals.

The apartment building was purchased by Focus Ireland over 20 years ago, and had previously provided emergency hostel beds for homeless people. However, the intention was always that it would deliver permanent homes for people who had experienced homelessness or were at risk.

"This site at John's Lane West is a clear manifestation of our long-term vision and strategy, a strategy that is built around prevention and providing people with a sustained exit from homelessness.

The new apartment building has been designed to ensure that each home has its own front door. This is not only a great design, it also means so much to people who have been homeless or have moved from place to place at risk of becoming homeless. I know from speaking to some of our new tenants how much it means, not only to have their own home, but to also have their own front door. It is something none of us can quite put our finger on but at the same time we all know its great importance at a very human and emotional level."

Pat Dennigan, CEO, Focus Ireland

"I now don't have to ever worry about a landlord giving me notice to get out. It is a huge relief to have a home and not worry about losing my home again."

Tenant, John's Lane West



Access to adequate, affordable and stable housing is a human right and vital for building inclusive societies. The CEB is pleased to be continuing its excellent cooperation with the Housing Finance Agency to help provide thousands of people with decent, energy-efficient homes over the next few years."

Rolf Wenzel, Governor, CEB