

(MUST, www.musthostel.co.uk) was set up following deaths from exposure in the area offering accommodation and other support for residents.

offers a drop-in day centre for foreign nationals, destitute foreign nationals and street outreach services for anyone sleeping rough in Belfast.

Homeplus (homeplus.org.uk)

Philanthropic Challenges

There is concern that public expenditure cuts will impact severely on the housing and homeless sector which is particularly dependent on public funding. Small organisations providing accommodation and other services for the homeless lack the capacity and time for fundraising or to prepare applications to charitable trusts and foundations. The few larger, higher profile organisations have had some success in accessing funding from charitable trusts and from private (including corporate) donors. The primary needs in the voluntary and community sector relate to:

- ❖ Maintenance of sustainable services to meet accommodation and other needs of the homeless;
- ❖ Support for advocacy work and user involvement;
- ❖ Research;
- ❖ Crisis response for particular groups, notably those restricted from accessing public funds and support e.g. certain non-UK nationals (depending on factors such as their immigration status and employment history).

The **Funders' Brief** series has been compiled by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland with support from the Santander Foundation (formerly the Abbey Charitable Trust) as part of an initiative to increase understanding of needs and issues, and funding from Charitable Trusts.

¹ Including the Homeless, A Strategy to Promote the Inclusion of Homeless People and those at Risk of Becoming Homeless in Northern Ireland, DSD, 2007.

² The Homelessness Strategy, NIHE, 2003.

³ Homelessness Statistics, NIHE statistical data for 2008-09, Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland, 2010.

⁴ Shelter Northern Ireland, Press Release, 28 May 2008.

⁵ Addressing Homelessness, Simon Community Northern Ireland, 2003.

⁶ A Guide to Publications on Homelessness in Northern Ireland, CHNI / RIS, 2008.

⁷ No Home from Home: Homelessness for People with No or Limited Access to Public Funds, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 2009.



The
Community Foundation
for Northern Ireland

Homelessness

Northern Ireland - Funders' Brief

- ❖ The number of households presenting as homeless in Northern Ireland peaked in 2006 and has decreased since to 18,076 in 2008/9 (approximately half being accepted as Full Duty Applicants)
- ❖ The most common reasons for homelessness are family conflict and partner dispute. In the last year however there was an 80% increase in mortgage default as a reason for homelessness and the largest increase (over one third) over the past five years was due to 'unreasonable accommodation'.
- ❖ There is a relatively small number of rough sleepers the majority originating from EU A8 countries. (Simon Community reported that last year 17% of their presenters had slept rough at some point in the previous 2 weeks - a fall of 3% on the previous year)

Context

The Department for Social Development, is responsible for the financial, legislative, and policy framework in which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Housing Association movement

operate. The Department for Social Development is also leading on taking forward "Including the Homeless"¹. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has had statutory responsibility for dealing with the homeless since 1988 i.e - to secure that accommodation becomes

available for eligible applicants who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Those that are deemed 'intentionally homeless' must be provided with temporary accommodation plus advice and assistance to enable them to make their own housing arrangements. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive published The Homelessness Strategy and Services Review in 2003². The Review recommended strategy, planning and service delivery in respect of three key strands:

- ❖ Primary prevention
- ❖ Provision of high quality temporary accommodation
- ❖ Provision of appropriate support

The most recent statistics from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive show that 18,076 households presented as homeless in 2008/9 – half of whom were deemed to be statutorily homeless (Full Duty Applicants, FDA) and were entitled to full support. Whilst the data compiled from Northern Ireland Housing Executive data by the Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland³ shows continuing decline in the number of people presenting as homeless, the waiting list for social housing is growing. Shelter Northern Ireland Director, Tony Mc Quillan, said "the list of people waiting for social housing increased by over 3500. Within that list, the number of those applicants living in housing stress

rose by 1,661 to set a new record number of 21,364 at the end of March 2008. This important measure of housing need has more than doubled in 7 years"⁴.

According to the **Simon Community** the incidence of homelessness is nearly double that of England⁵, the major contributor being a lack of suitable affordable housing. Furthermore with economic downturn and associated rising unemployment the likelihood of increase in mortgage default.

The stock of hostel accommodation in Northern Ireland is of good quality and is sufficient to meet current demand. However the Housing Bill amendment, currently being considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly, which amongst other things seeks to provide safeguards for homeless people in circumstances where the Housing Executive decides to discharge its homelessness duty by securing accommodation in the private rented sector may encourage a shift from hostel provision to private rental. It will be important that any review and comparison considers cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the value of holistic support. Furthermore, with the 'Supporting People' budget having been frozen and further public expenditure cuts inevitable, it is anticipated that hostels may be forced to close or divert

the use of facilities towards other vulnerable groups.

Practice and Issues

The Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland (www.chni.org.uk) is the umbrella body for homeless organisations. It provides training, technical support, research and information, and networking opportunities for its 97 members across the voluntary and community, statutory, and private sectors. Together with the Resource Information Service it has collated a comprehensive Guide to Publications on Homelessness in Northern Ireland⁶.

There is an increase in the prevalence of non-UK nationals who can not access services. The majority of rough sleepers are migrants from EU A8 countries.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC, www.nihrc.org) recently examined the law in relation to homeless non-UK nationals and considered policy and practice responses⁷. Based on primary research, the NIHRC concluded that the numbers in Northern Ireland of non-UK nationals experiencing destitution is likely to be in the high hundreds, rather than thousands. The report makes the Economic as well as

Human Rights case for legislative amendment and identified specific areas of concern including exploitation, domestic violence, racial intimidation, ill-health and disability, as well as asylum seekers and refugees. Currently ineligible applicants are often sign-posted to voluntary and community sector organisations which are effectively providing emergency housing and support with no public funding.

Homeless Northern Ireland, a web-based resource, (www.homelessni.org) has information on over 400 services that can help homeless people and those at risk of homelessness ranging from floating support, through advice, to provision of accommodation.

Examples include, **Shelter NI** (www.shelterni.org) which focuses on campaigning but also provides an accommodation and support service for young people in the Omagh area through the SL-eight project.

Simon Northern Ireland (www.simoncommunity.org) provides a range of services for the homeless and undertakes preventative work and research, often funded by charitable trusts and private and corporate donations.

The Mid Ulster and South Tyrone Association for the Single Homeless