



Respond! Profile
on the occasion of our visit to
His Excellency President of
Ireland Michael D. Higgins



Respond! was founded in 1982 from Franciscan sources and still retains its primary focus of concern for those who are living in low-income estates or who live on the fringes of our society.

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Corporate Information:

Respond! Housing Association is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, Ireland.

Registration Number: 90576

Charity Number: CHY 6629

Registered Office: Airmount, Dominick Place, Waterford, Ireland.

Directors: Michael O' Doherty, Brian Hennebry, Tom Dilleen, Patrick Cogan, ofm, Deirdre Keogh and Joe Horan.

Auditors: Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Ballycar House, Newtown, Waterford, Ireland.

Solicitors: Bowe O' Brien Solicitors, 1 Adelphi Quay, Waterford, Ireland.

Bankers: Ulster Bank, 97/98 Custom House Quay, Waterford, Ireland.

Respond (Support) Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, Ireland.

Registration Number: 206013

Charity Number: CHY10864

The Respond Group consists of:

- Respond! Housing Association Ltd
- Respond (Support) Ltd
- The Respond! Trust

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Carraig Liath in Midleton, Co Cork is an integrated estate designed and built by Respond! Housing Association with the support of Cork County Council and kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The estate contains 41 family homes and 19 homes for older persons managed by Respond! Housing, 21 family homes managed by Cork County Council, 10 affordable homes and communal facilities for residents.

FOREWORD

Today, March 13th 2013, Respond! Housing Association is honored to visit Áras an Uachtaráin at the invitation of His Excellency, the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

We are grateful for the recognition his invitation affords our organisation, our staff and our residents across the country. We understand that President Higgins is complying with the agenda he set for himself in his Inaugural Address of November 11th, 2011, when he nominated a 'Creative Society' as one of his primary aims:-

"I will champion creative communities who are bringing about positive change at local level by giving recognition to their achievements on the national stage. I believe that when we encourage the seedbed of creativity in our communities and ensure that each child and adult has the opportunity for creative expression, we also lay the groundwork for sustainable employment in creative industries and enrich our social, cultural and economic development."

President Higgins, Inaugural address, 11 November 2011

Respond!, in seeking to provide inclusive and integrated accommodation for older persons and families, homeless persons, members of the travelling community, and persons with special needs, is one of those 'creative communities who are bringing about positive change', of which the President was speaking. This celebratory booklet sets out our basic governance and accountability structures, as well as the range of services and supports we offer.

We are grateful that the President has undertaken a championing role in his parallel initiatives and we are optimistic that, working together on this shared agenda, we will bring about social creativity and advancement of equal opportunity for all in our community.

Patrick Cogan, ofm
Chief Executive Officer



MISSION & ETHOS

The following excerpts from the Respond! Memorandum and Articles of Association (1982) indicate the core rationale and approach of our work.

To "prevent and relieve hardship and distress amongst those who are homeless and amongst those in need who are living in adverse housing conditions. To empower individuals and develop their skills for the benefit of the community as a whole."

To "advance education, relieve poverty and to further other charitable purposes beneficial to the community."

We do this through the provision of housing in supported communities and, where possible, in integrated estates. We recognise the advancement of community development, and educational and training opportunities as core in relieving poverty.

Respond! has Franciscan roots, with Franciscan founding-directors in Waterford. While being non-denominational in operation, our goals and objectives are based on the concept of social justice. Principles of quality influence all of the services we provide to residents and communities.

Parnell Estate in Mulhuddart, Co Dublin is an integrated estate that was designed and built by Respond! Housing Association. The estate was built with the support of Fingal County Council and kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Parnell Estate contains 63 family homes, 35 homes for older people or those with special needs, 178 affordable homes, one group home and communal facilities for residents.



Some of our younger residents from Baile O' Dubhda in Listowel, Co Kerry taking part in an 'Estate Enhancement Day'. Baile O' Dubhda were winners of the 'Best Kept Medium Estate' in the National Tidy Towns Competition for the past 3 years.

CORE VALUES

Our mission and ethos inform the core values of the work of the organisation. These core values, underpinning the organisation, are:

- Equality and human rights: This is central to our rights-based approach
- Common good: This is core to all services and policy development
- Customer Focus: Putting residents and communities at the heart of our services
- Integrity: Ensuring activities are open, honest, accountable and transparent
- Sustainability: Offering value and quality in service provision, while respecting and protecting the environment
- Continued Learning: Fostering continuous improvement in service delivery, and understanding and developing options to sustain best service provision
- Volunteerism: This is core to the Respond! philosophy of improving communities



Respond! aims to create sustainable communities and the "Go Green Go" initiative in Co Louth is an example of residents coming together to improve and sustain their own estate.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Joe Horan (Chairman):

Joe is also a newly appointed Director. He has huge experience in the public service, especially in the Local Authority sector where he has led a distinguished career. He recently retired as County Manager of South Dublin County Council where during his ten-year tenure he pioneered extensive reform of the Local Authority services, especially at the point of delivery. He also instigated overseas twinning between his Council and a district in Ethiopia where significant support services were delivered.



Patrick Cogan, ofm (Chief Executive Officer):

Patrick, a Franciscan, is a founder-director of Respond! Housing Association since 1982. He is also a director of Sivile, a housing association which Respond! Housing Association set up in Kokstad, South Africa. He served for three terms, as a Ministerial appointee, on the benchmarking Quality Action and Performance Verification Groups of the Local Authority sector and has just completed his fourth term as a member of the Board of Directors of the Housing Finance Agency.



Michael O'Doherty:

Michael, lay Franciscan, is one of the founding members of the organisation and has helped develop and progress the organisation since 1982. A retired builder, Michael has more than 40 years experience in the housing and construction sector and played an important role in the development of the organisation over the past 30 years. He is also a director of Sivile.



Brian Hennebry (Company Secretary):

Brian is a Chartered Accountant and founder of Brian Hennebry Associates Tax Consultants based in Waterford, with nearly 30 years experience in the financial sector. Brian joined Respond! Housing Association as a Board member in the 1980s when he was asked to assist with the development of the organisation. His experience is invaluable to the Board of Directors and he continues to play a pivotal role in the organisation. He is also a director of Sivile.



Tom Dilleen:

Tom was formerly District Inspector of Taxes with the Revenue Commissioners for more than two decades in Waterford before his retirement in 2002. Tom was the longest ever serving District Inspector of Taxes in Waterford and has more than 40 years experience in the financial sector. Tom joined the Board of Respond! Housing Association in 2006. He is also a director of Sivile.



Deirdre Keogh:

Deirdre is a newly appointed director. She is the Assistant General Secretary of the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) with whom she has been working since 1998. The IVEA is the national representative body for Ireland's 33 VECs. Deirdre is also qualified as a second level teacher and has experience in HR and strategic planning.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Patrick Cogan, ofm:

Patrick a Franciscan, is a founder-director of Respond! Housing Association since 1982. He is also a director of Sivile, a housing association which Respond! Housing Association set up in Kokstad, South Africa. He served for three terms, as a Ministerial appointee, on the benchmarking Quality Action and Performance Verification Groups of the Local Authority sector and has just completed his fourth term as a member of the Board of Directors of the Housing Finance Agency.

Ned Brennan:

Ned is Chief Operations Officer of Respond! Housing Association with responsibility for human resources, production, special projects, customer care, education and estate management. Ned previously worked as Town Clerk with Youghal Town Council and as a Staff Officer with Kilkenny County Council. Ned was educated in Presentation College, Bray, University College Dublin, the Honourable Society of King's Inns and holds a Masters Degree from University College Cork. Ned was a member of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government Working Group for the Co-operative & Voluntary Sector from 2002 to 2009. Ned is currently a member of the Board of the Irish Council for Social Housing he is also a member of the Board of the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH).

Ray Fanning:

Ray is Company Treasurer of Respond! Housing Association since May 2010. Prior to joining Respond! Ray had been employed in the private commercial sector for over 25 years and held a number of senior finance positions. He previously worked as Financial Controller for ACEC Ireland Ltd / ABB Transformers. He was Group Financial Controller for Fyffes Produce UK, Management Consultant with Kromberg & Schubert (Ireland) Ltd and Group Financial Controller of Avglade Limited. Originally from Waterford, Ray also represents Respond! on the Finance Sub Committee of the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH). He is also a director of Sivile.

Jill Jackman:

Jill is Legal Manager of Respond! Housing Association and has been with the organisation since 1999. Jill is responsible for legal and administration matters within the organisation including the acquisition of properties and development sites, litigation and the insurance portfolio. With more than 35 years experience in the legal profession, Jill previously worked with Nolan, Farrell & Goff Solicitors (1976 to 1983) and with Kinsella Heffernan & Foskin Solicitors (1983 to 1999).

Parag Joglekar:

Parag is Head of Property and Design with Respond! Housing Association. He is a Chartered Architect in Ireland and the UK and holds a Masters degree in Urban Settlements. Parag has worked in both the private and semi-private sector in Ireland, UK and India with extensive experience in Urban Design, Housing, Regeneration, Commercial, Health Care and Civic Buildings. He heads the Property & Design and Overseas Development Aid arm of Respond!. Parag is a member of the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) and the Architects Registration Board (ARB) in the UK.

Dr. Deborah Butler:

Deborah is Registrar and National Quality Assurance Manager with responsibility for academic standards within Respond! Education. Her professional Doctorate was completed in 2010 and focused on understanding "professionalism" in social housing provision and the role of academic qualifications in terms of career progression, experiences and recognition of housing professionals. Prior to joining Respond! Deborah lectured in Economics/Finance and was involved in the accreditation of diploma, degree and MBA programmes.

Tom Power:

Tom is Regional Manager of the Southern Region and has worked with Respond! Housing Association since 1997. He previously worked in London with the Charity Commission for ten years. He holds a degree in Housing and Community Studies. He is also sits on the Board of Waterford Area Partnership.

Paul Hargaden:

Paul is Regional Manager of the Western Region and has worked with Respond! Housing Association since 2005. He has worked in the voluntary sector for over 25 years and has extensive experience in the area of community work and in the social housing sector at regional, national and international level. Paul's current role with Respond! involves overall operational control for all estate management, community development and design/production activities and projects in the west of Ireland.

Padraic Brennan:

Pádraic is Regional Manager for the East and Midlands. He graduated from Sligo Institute of Technology and Galway Mayo Institute of Technology and is a qualified Contracts Manager in Civil Engineering and Construction Management. Pádraic worked within engineering consultancy practice (Thomas Garland Partners Dublin) before entering the construction industry contracting discipline. He has spent over 25 working within the construction and development industries in Dublin, New York and London, including 16 years with McCabe Builders (Dublin) Ltd as a Contracts Director.

Seán Regan:

Seán is Community Development Manager with Respond! Housing Association with responsibility for community development and community education services. Prior to joining Respond! in 2007 Seán worked as National Co-ordinator with the Community Worker's Co-operative. He has also worked on a number of EU programmes throughout Ireland and as Community Development Co-ordinator with the Connamara Gaeltacht Area Partnership. Seán has a B.E. in Industrial Engineering from University College Galway and Masters Degrees in Computer Aided Manufacturing (M.Eng.Sc), Hydology (M.Sc) and in Rural Development Planning (M.A.).



Ardrew Meadows in Athy, Co Kildare is a collaborative project between Respond! Housing Association, Kildare County Council and Athy Town Council and management of the estate is shared between the three organisations. This integrated estate was kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Ardrew Meadows contains 18 Respond! family homes, 14 homes for older people or those with special needs, 27 Local Authority family homes, 21 affordable homes, 6 Traveller homes and communal facilities for residents.

Ardrew Meadows was also the recent recipient of an Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) National Community Housing Award for excellence in design, management, community development and sustainability.

CULTURE

Informed by a social justice perspective, Respond! seeks to tackle the root causes of poverty and hardship more than the presenting problems, of homelessness and housing need. The development of a responsive social housing and support service model has played a significant role in our work and development as we seek to create the conditions for human dignity and social empowerment. Respond! places the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people at the forefront of society and policy-making.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Respond! supports inclusive communities where individuals' talents and contributions are valued. To ensure this is achieved, we are community focused seeking to become the service provider of choice. Respond! has three main strategic objectives of building excellence in service provision, statutory compliance and advocacy.

1. Building Excellence in Service Provision:

- Delivering customer and community focused housing and supports
- Setting and achieving services excellence targets
- Investing in integrated communities and housing stock to ensure standards and quality
- Involving communities in service provision decision making
- Working in partnership to ensure service quality and community well being
- Investing in building greener communities and driving sustainable growth
- Achieving value for money and operational efficiencies in developments
- Generating surpluses and reserves to fund future needs
- Empowering and inspiring those we work with, including residents and staff

2. Statutory Compliance:

- Ensuring compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements
- Maintaining standards in all areas including governance and customer service
- Developing a performance management culture that strives for excellence
- Promoting the highest standards of child protection in line with national guidelines

3. Advocacy:

- Advocating for a comprehensive National Housing Policy
- Engaging in advocacy to protect vulnerable people in Irish society
- Promoting support programmes for vulnerable people and communities

OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Ireland faces significant challenges and uncertainty over the course of our strategies, plans and operations. Respond! will remain flexible to adapt to the fast moving climate, continuing to support vulnerable and marginalised people.

Key among the challenges identified are:

- Identifying and securing resources for new and existing communities
- Increased need due to reductions in social welfare payments, wages and increased unemployment
- Challenging working environment with less funding and increased demand in such areas as housing provision and the delivery of childcare services
- An uneven housing market with clear regional disparities in supply and demand
- Significant risk attached to investing in the Social Housing Leasing Initiative (SHLI) and the consequent risk of creating segregated communities, compounded by State subsidies for the private rental market
- Oversupply of new finished and unfinished houses, which adversely impact on the economies of investing in such housing stock
- Proposed regulation of the social housing and charity sectors

The overall challenges and timescales for resolution vary regionally. Some areas of the country will lag in benefiting from improvements, while other specific groups and sectors remain less exposed to the challenges generally.

The net effect of these and wider socio-economic challenges mean that housing providers face difficulties in planning investment in new or existing housing stock. Achieving greater efficiency and better outcomes, with limited resources, and managing change will be difficult.

More sustainable and farsighted priorities which address societal inequalities are necessary. This requires a significant reorientation of effort both collectively and at organisational level. Opportunities exist to improve organisational performance, and Respond! believes that it is critical for Government and its Departments to develop a comprehensive National Housing Plan that provides a holistic vision for housing policy and provision in Ireland.



Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan, T.D. at the official opening of St Francis Farm in Tullow, Co Carlow. St Francis Farm Residential Drug Treatment Centre in Tullow, Co Carlow, is a collaborative project between Respond! Housing Association and Merchants Quay Ireland. The centre treats people who are homeless and who wish to become drug free in a rural setting. With 28 bedrooms, the centre offers one to one counselling, group therapy, educational and personal development programmes, as well as work experience in farming and general care.



At the official opening of Friary Gardens in Carrick on Suir, Co Tipperary are (l-r):

Caoimhín O' Laoide (former Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Order), Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Phil Hogan, T.D., and Patrick Cogan, ofm.

Friary Gardens was designed and built by Respond! Housing Association with the support of South Tipperary County Council and was kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The estate was built on lands kindly donated by the Franciscan Order and contains 9 homes for older people, as well as an 8-bed group home and communal facilities.



Cork Jubilee Celebration August 2012

PARTNERSHIPS

Respond! effectively partners and collaborates with key stakeholders. This is an area which is becoming increasingly essential and mutually beneficial. We will work towards maintaining and developing joined-up approaches to progress the future of housing in Ireland, and meeting the needs of vulnerable members of Irish society more broadly.

Key stakeholders include:

- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government
- Residents, communities and staff
- Local Authorities
- Health Service Executive (H.S.E.)
- National Government and Government Departments
- Local and National elected officials and policy makers
- Other Voluntary and Community groups
- Private sector partners and funders
- Further and Higher Educational Institutions and bodies
- Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH)

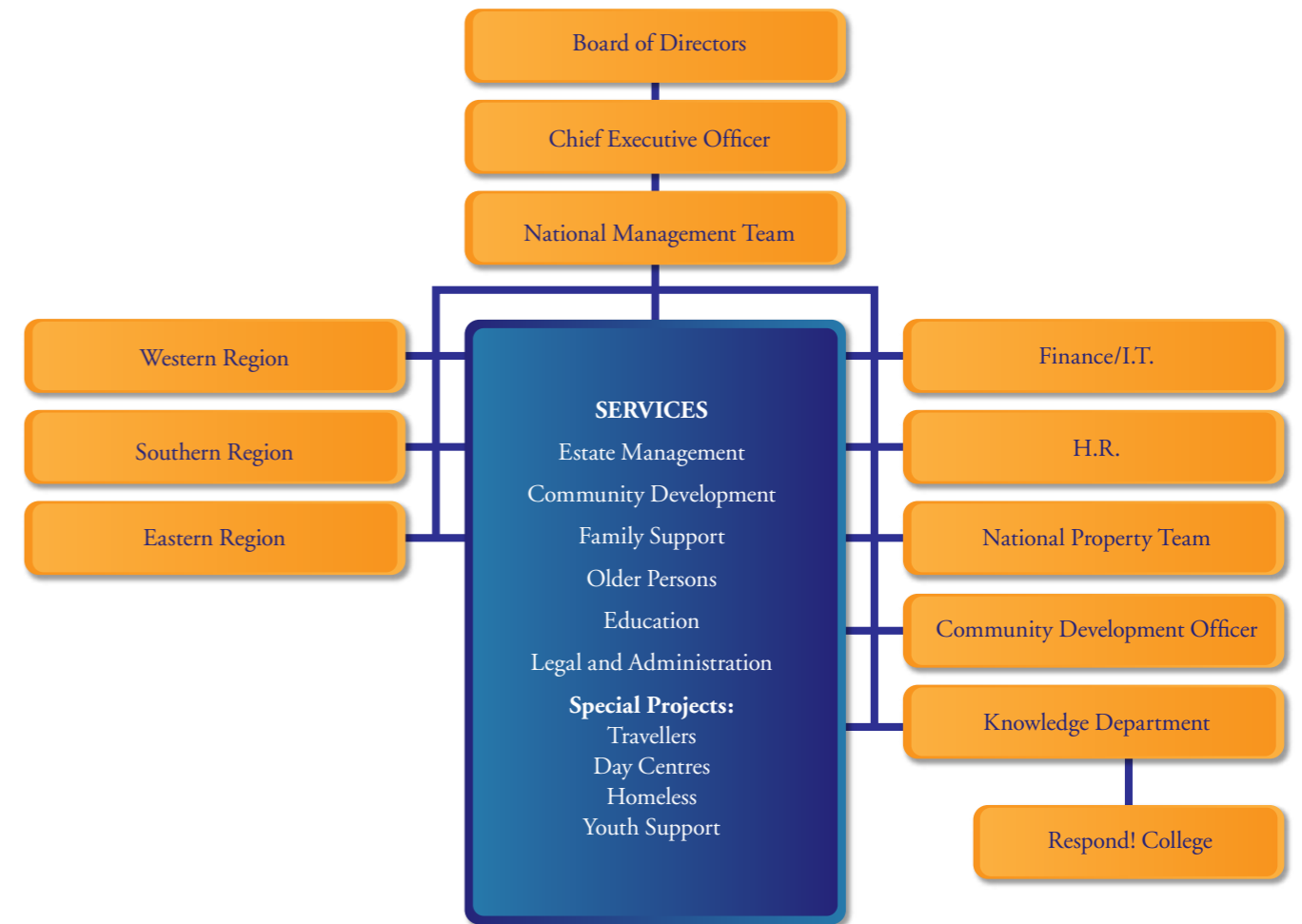


Gleann na hEorna, Springfield, Tallaght is an example of a collaborative project between Respond!, South Dublin County Council and St John of God Trust. This integrated estate contains 156 social and affordable homes, a Respond! Group home for women and children, a Respond! Family Resource Centre, an 8-bed group home and 2 health care / community facilities managed by St John of God Trust. This development was kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.



CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Governance Structure of Respond! is as follows:



This three year Corporate Strategic Profile covers the commitment by the Board of Directors and the National Management Team (NMT) to work with residents, staff, funders and other stakeholders to ensure the association is well run, accountable and meets its objectives.

Respond! has 7 offices nationwide; in Waterford, Dublin, Galway, Cork, Limerick, Navan and Tullamore.

Our staff number some 300 people working in many different capacities: Design, Production and Maintenance/Management, Community Development, Childcare, Family Resources and Finance, Human Resources, I.T., Legal, Education and Research and Development.

Respond! is complemented by almost 500 volunteers nationwide.



The former Glen Flats during demolition.

With the support of Cork City Council, Respond! Housing Association designed and project managed the regeneration of the former Glen flats in Blackpool, Cork in 2006. Kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, St Francis Gardens now contains 12 family homes, 39 homes for older persons or those with special needs, a 12-bed group home managed by the Cope Foundation and a Day Care Centre managed by Respond! Housing Association.

The regenerated St Francis Gardens, Blackpool, Cork.



Corporate governance and accountability is achieved through a variety of structures, including the Board of Directors, external and internal auditors, Finance and Risk Committee, annual returns, approved sectoral systems of housing and performance management systems and the National Management Team. In addition to these governance and accountability measures, Respond! advocates co-regulation as the optimal regulation model of the voluntary and co-operative housing sector.

- The Board meets monthly and receives reports from managers within the organisation, including the CEO and the Company Treasurer, as well as the internal and external auditors. These reports display current work, as well as proposing new developments.
- The external auditors are Price Waterhouse Coopers. The Independent Internal Auditor for Respond! Housing Association, David O' Neill (O' Neill Foley Chartered Accountants) measures and reports on organisational compliance with key protocols and processes, particularly in financial accounting, property acquisition, design and planning, and child protection systems.
- A Finance and Risk Committee, inclusive of external independent members, meets every two months.
- Annual returns are provided to the Companies Office and all Local Authorities who request these.
- Respond! complies with approved sectoral systems of housing and performance management.
- The National Management Team meets fortnightly and receives reports from line and department managers of other sectors of the organisation.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Underpinning the three year profile, our finance plan anticipates at a minimum:

- Investing €53m in new build and acquisitions over the period
- Raising €34m in private finance, matched by a significant contribution from Respond!'s own resources
- Investing €20m in upgrading existing stock, €10m of which will be accessed in energy efficient grant funding to retrofit and upgrade stock
- Increasing our annual turnover from €15.8m to €18.7m
- Supplementing our sinking fund by a further €6m, to a total of €17m by 2015

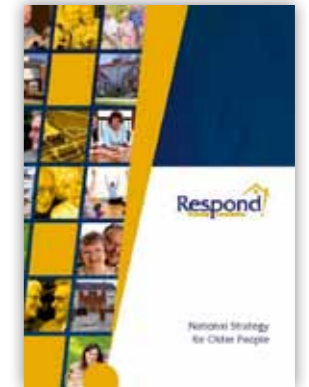
In spite of financial and economic challenges there is potential to expand the quality and scope of housing services we provide, in line with the finance plan. The company currently has a sinking fund of €11 million for long-term refurbishment of housing stock. In addition, there is €8 million provided for ongoing outreach services.¹ Cash flow is carefully monitored to ensure investment levels are maintained and risk is managed. To develop this process further, internal staff are developing financial procedures including financial planning processes and modeling, and treasury management functions.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES

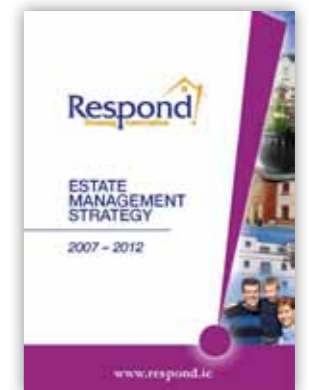
The Corporate Strategic Profile indicates our key objectives to continue and enhance our service delivery over the next three years. Departmental objectives are set out for each section of the organisation and are guided by the following principles:

- Legislative and regulatory compliance
- Integration (the development of integrated housing estates)
- Inclusiveness, customer focus and service excellence
- Financial sustainability and long term viability
- Efficiency, effectiveness and value for money
- Partnership and networking
- Access to advanced technology
- Clear communications and advocacy

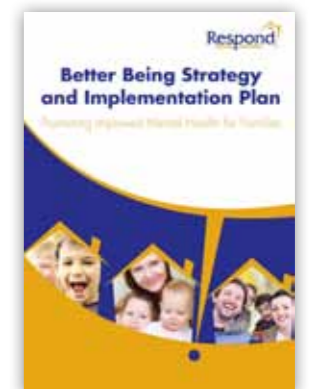
Some of Respond! published strategies and research to date:



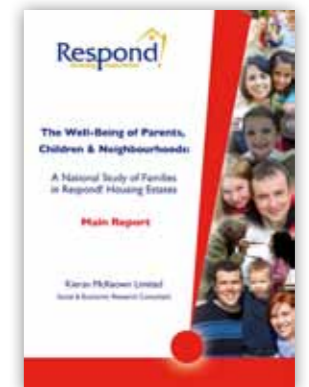
National Strategy for Older People



Estate Management Strategy



Respond! Better Being Strategy and Implementation Plan



The Well-Being of Parents, Children & Neighbourhoods; A National Study of Families in Respond! Family Housing Estates

¹ Family support, homelessness, women's refuge, better-being mental health, education and overseas aid



Bridgefield Close was built by Brideview Developments Ltd and completed in 2009. Respond! Housing Association, with the support of Cork County Council and funding from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, acquired 24 houses and apartments in the estate under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2002.

PROPERTY & ASSET MANAGEMENT

In the period 2012 - 2015, Respond! sets itself to:

- Add a minimum of 500 units to our stock
- Achieve a minimum of C3 Building Energy Rating (BER) for existing stock
- Achieve aggregate minimum of A3 BER rating on new builds and acquisitions
- Reduce energy consumption across all operations by 30%
- Achieve ISO 14000 environmental standards in offices and communal facilities
- Implement a national asset management strategy by 2013
- Achieve annual efficiencies/ cost reductions of 5% across all operations

STAGE	UNITS
Dwellings Completed to February 2013	5,283
Dwellings Next for Construction/ Acquisition	233
Dwellings in Initial Planning	452
GRAND TOTAL	5,968

ESTATE MANAGEMENT

In the period of 2012 - 2015, Respond! sets itself to:

- Invest €10m in planned and cyclical stock maintenance
- Increase sinking fund by €6m
- Implement KPIs by 2013, achieving performance targets by 2015, involving:
 - ~ Upgrading ICT to provide fully integrated real time monitoring/ reporting
 - ~ Rent arrears targets of 1.5% for current tenants and 0.5% for ex tenants
 - ~ Void target 2%
 - ~ Re-let repairs target time of 1 week
 - ~ 80/20 expenditure on reactive/ void versus planned/ cyclical maintenanc

Gleann na Bearú in Bagenalstown, Co Carlow was designed and built by Respond! Housing Association with the support of Carlow County Council and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. This integrated estate contains 131 homes including 34 homes managed by Respond!, 62 homes managed by Carlow County Council, two 8-bed group homes managed by Beam Services, 19 affordable homes and communal facilities for residents.



Dr William Slattery current Archbishop of Pretoria with residents from Millenium Court in Kilkenny who were the first recipients of the Respond!-pride in our Community Award.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Respond! seeks to provide communities, not just housing. For this reason, Respond! invests in community development activity to build the capacity of residents for local leadership. Respond! also provides family resource support, believing that the family is at the centre of a holistic approach in the development of communities. It is widely appreciated that in times of economic difficulty community development is essential. Respond! is committed to implementing our National Community Development Strategy.

Guiding Principles

- Tackling poverty and combating disadvantage
- Breaking dependency culture through the provision of education and training
- Promoting participation and inclusion
- Focus on equality
- Multi-sectoral approach
- Partnership, both at local, regional and national level
- Strategic planning to attain best use of available resources

Targets

- To focus on increasing the capacity of 80% of family estates
- To ensure a weekly visit to all estates and households by a Resident Support Worker
- To develop targeted annual plans for each estate and quarterly plans for to achieve objectives
- By the end of 2012 to achieve higher capacity in 28 low “capacity 2” estates
- By the end of 2012 to achieve “capacity 2” in 22 “capacity 1” estates
- Similar targets to be reviewed and set for 2013 and 2014
- To pilot the Respond! Family Support Strategy on 16 estates in 2012
- To organise parent and child programmes on 8 estates in 2012/13 and support existing parent and toddler groups
- To co-facilitate programmes with proven successful outcomes with other partners and to identify and partner other groups to advocate for supports for low income families
- To develop family rooms or designated areas for families in community buildings
- Support individuals and families presenting with support requirements
- Ensure that all staff understand and conform to the Respond! Child Protection Policy



The Respond! Community Development Strategy details the following:

- ‘Passive’ estates are where there is no community development support, activities or interest.
- ‘Capacity 1’ estates are where almost all residents see themselves as individuals; there is no sense of community as an integrated concept.
- ‘Capacity 2’ estates are those which range from some support for community development, where some potential participants have been identified, and some residents are engaged in non-mandatory self development or educational activities, to estates where most complex community development activities are taking place with more complex roles being played by residents.
- ‘Capacity 3’ estates are capable and willing to take responsibility for information provision and management of community development activity on the estate

BETTER BEING STRATEGY

In recent years, Respond! has identified the need for a therapeutic response to the mental health difficulties of some families living in our estates. This occurred through a two stage process involving:

- Surveying a representative sample of Respond! households to determine the level of well-being among mothers and children, and
- An in-depth assessment by a clinical psychologist, in association with other Respond! staff, to identify households where there was evidence that mothers and/ or children have mental health difficulties

The aims of the strategy:

- Develop and pilot a model of accessible community-based mental health supports for those living in disadvantaged communities
- Improve mental health amongst residents living, and using our services in the nominated pilot estates
- Provide a support service offering information and links to existing mental health services
- Offer access to a counselling service for one-to-one, couple and family, and group therapy
- Offer a case management approach to dealing with clients referred to the service
- Develop a monitoring and evaluating process to oversee the pilot programme
- Work with the statutory and non-statutory services to support and advocate for the implementation of the 2006 national mental health policy, *A Vision for Change*

The Better Being Strategy has developed a three-year implementation plan, subject to funding and the experience of the pilot phase. The pilot is taking place initially across seven estates in Co. Waterford. So far, the project has focused on developing a reflective teamwork approach in implementing the strategy. The pilot has offered both advocacy and therapeutic support through counselling and psychotherapy with consenting residents. A focus has been given to staff training for those involved at different levels of implementation. The project is underpinned by the principles of best practice, with a research and evaluation process to assess the project’s effectiveness and refocus objectives appropriately. External supervision is provided to the Clinical Psychologist as Clinical Leader.

Respond! has advised the Government that for a small amount of finance, the organisation could produce a study of well-being on Local Authority estates, similar to that conducted on Respond! estates in 2007. This would act as a comparison of well-being between Local Authority and Respond! residents. A similar pilot Better Being Programme could then be run on Local Authority estates (one urban and one rural) if required.

Some of the findings of *The Well-Being of Parents, Children & Neighbourhoods: A National Study of Families in Respond! Estates* include the following:

- The breakdown of two and one parent families in Respond! estates is 60/40 compared to 80/20 in Ireland
- 70% of residents have medical cards compared to 30% in Ireland
- 22-30% of mothers on Respond! estates have depressive symptoms which is higher than would be expected in the population
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of mothers have a disability compared to 10% of women in Ireland (please note disability is one of the criteria for eligibility for social housing)
- Scores for life satisfaction are in the average range
- Support networks are stronger than average
- The parent – child relationship is better than average
- Relationship skills are stronger for those living with a partner than those without
- Education levels are lower than the average Irish adult



Former Olympic Boxer Francis Barrett and sports broadcaster Jimmy Magee at the launch of the Respond! Traveller Accommodation and Support Services Strategy.

SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

The delivery of services and support to vulnerable and disadvantaged members of Irish society is a key priority for the organisation. Respond! provides supports to Traveller families, homeless persons and 18-23 year olds leaving care. Respond! sets itself the following targets in respect of each of these services.

Traveller Services

- Develop three group housing schemes in partnership with Local Authorities by Quarter four, 2012
- Provide Traveller accommodation project management services to Local Authorities nationally
- Offer tenancy management services for Traveller sites to three Local Authorities by Quarter two, 2013
- Provide training to Travellers living on Respond! estates and / or halting sites

Homeless Services and Care Leavers

- Develop our women's refuge service at Tallaght as a model of best practice and fully grant funded by Quarter 3, 2012
- Develop housing and after care services to 18-23 year olds leaving HSE care and provide a fully funded housing and aftercare service in three Respond! locations by the start of 2013

Other Special Projects

- Work collaboratively to develop four vacant Respond! properties for disadvantaged groups by Quarter three, 2012
- Develop new and unique options for voluntary housing and revenue streams

Andrew Meadows in Athy, Co Kildare is an integrated estate containing social, affordable and Traveller accommodation. The Traveller specific accommodation was designed by Respond! Housing Association in consultation with local Traveller families who were residing in a nearby halting site. This Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) Award winning development was built with the support of Kildare County Council, Athy Town Council and was kindly funded by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.



OLDER PEOPLE

Respond! aims to facilitate independent living by empowering older residents to continue engagement and participation with families, communities and wider society. In line with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2012, Respond! seeks to empower older people by providing quality, adaptable and appropriate accommodation and services, including day centres, in supportive communities.

The provision of older persons' services will adhere to the following five principles:

1. **Independence:** Independence is facilitated by safe, secure and accessible communities, and support services
2. **Participation:** Residents are encouraged to volunteer and participate in the development of services affecting them
3. **Care:** Respond! provides support and links to appropriate providers to meet the care needs of older residents
4. **Self-fulfillment:** Older residents are assisted to achieve their full potential through activation, education, recreational and socialisation programmes.
5. **Dignity:** Respond! seeks to ensure environments are free of exploitation, abuse and discrimination

Respond! aims to provide services for older residents to facilitate successful independent living for as long as is practically possible. This means providing accommodation, support and ancillary services. These services, and our targets within, are set out below.

Accommodation & Support Programmes

- Provide accommodation to enable independent living for as long as possible
 - ~ Ensure quality accommodation refurbishment, including Smart Home Technology
 - ~ Build accommodation close to community services and amenities to alleviate the threat of social isolation
- Programmes for older people encourage critical thinking for advocacy, community development and leadership skills
- Inter-generational programmes that create age-friendly communities are encouraged, particularly in integrated estates
- Respond! links with the relevant statutory, community and voluntary agencies providing care and other support programmes
- Collaborative education and activation programmes for older residents through community-education, allowing for personal fulfillment and accreditation

Day Care Centres:

- Respond! day care centres provide activation programmes based on the residents' personal profiles, as agreed with the residents
- Respond! works with the HSE and HIQA to ensure best practice and high standards in day care centres



Some of our older residents enjoying activities on our estates.



The first BSS students on their Graduation Day in University College Dublin in 2007.



Former Minister for Housing and Local Services Michael Finneran with Joanne Richards, BSS Degree Programme Leader at the launch of the BSS Alumni in Dublin.

EDUCATION

Respond! appointed its first Education Officer in 1992, when it began pioneering pre and post tenancy training programmes. Since then the organisation has developed to work with a host of stakeholders, offering estate level, area-based training and a range of third level programmes. Respond! has over 20 years' experience in designing and running training and education in housing and community studies, working with residents, staff, Local Authorities, community organisations and other service providers.

Respond! places an emphasis on education as a tool for social transformation, breaking the cycle of poverty, and enhancing economic and social inclusion. Respond! has worked in partnership with University College Dublin, National University of Ireland, Maynooth and other higher educational providers for many years, delivering an array of third level courses to both housing professionals and residents.

Respond! College is an operating agent of Respond! Housing Association, having received HETAC institutional validation in 2011 and has a number of programmes currently under construction. Programmes are developed for accreditation by the Knowledge Department and offered through Respond! College.

The goals of Respond! Education include the following targets:

Residents:

- Provide training and support to meet the needs of the residents, with mechanisms to support their participation
- Foster confidence, capacity-building, and social inclusion for the common good
- Offer education and training opportunities to residents and the wider community, in accordance with Respond! regional implementation plans
- Provide accredited and non-accredited training and education in housing and community development, governed by quality assurance procedures
- Encourage an input into local and national housing policy formation and to create a career pathway in housing

Policy Makers and the General Public:

- Offer skills in social analysis and critique grounded in practice, with a view to building a more just and inclusive society
- Increase awareness of the need to develop and support progressive policies in housing, education and community development

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering is key to the work of Respond! Housing Association. On our estates, we work with hundreds of our residents who volunteer on a daily basis for the benefit of their communities. These people are involved in resident committees, after-schools programmes, youth clubs and activities, community gardens and environmental enhancement, women's groups, men's sheds projects, arts groups, etc. Some volunteers play key leadership roles in their communities, while others volunteer on an occasional basis. The core of Respond!'s Community Development Strategy is to support this participation and build the capacity of our residents to take more effective roles in their communities.

Respond! also provides volunteering and internship opportunities for non-residents to get involved in our work. Some of these roles include volunteering in our Childcare Centres, volunteering as Care Assistants, volunteering with our Older Persons Programme, etc. Respond! also welcome volunteers to work with our projects in South Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA

In 2005, Respond! Housing Association was invited to South Africa by the Diocese of Kokstad (KwaZulu Natal Province) to assist them in developing supports and services for those in need in its area. Following extensive research and consultation, Respond! Housing Association identified key facilities and supports that needed to be provided, including:

- Housing
- Training and educational facilities
- Recreational and sporting facilities
- Crèches
- Day Care Centres
- Medical Facilities

Working with the provincial Government, the local community, specialist consultants and Respond! Housing Association staff based in South Africa, we have focussed our building, training and development work on delivering much needed services in the communities we are involved in. Central to all of our work in South Africa is the objective of sustainability. To assist with these projects, Respond! works in partnership with Yondlabantu, Amawele, Friends in Ireland, the Diocese of Kokstad, the Greater Kokstad Municipality (GKM) and other local groups. To help us carry out our work in South Africa we established Sivile as a local housing association that carries out many of our projects. Established in December 2008, Sivile is the South African branch of Respond! Housing Association that works with the local community on our behalf.

For the period 2012 – 2015, Respond! aims to achieve the following:

- Provide a training centre in the social precinct in Shayamoya, Kokstad
- Provide vocational training in construction skills and employment
- Capacity building for local NGO and development groups
- Provide education and training supports to staff working with vulnerable and orphaned children in a respite care centre in Hardenburg,



Respond! is supported in many local communities by voluntary groups who assist us with the management and maintenance of our estates. Friends of Respond! in Youghal and Ennis are two such groups who assist us with the services we provide in their local community.



The Community Centre in Hardenburg which contains a respite centre, consulting rooms, a dispensary, ablution offices, catering facilities and waiting areas for residents.



Members of the local community who will benefit from the new Hardenburg Community Centre.



Official Openings of Two Franciscan Properties donated to Respond!
- May 6, 2011

Francis Gardens in the old Franciscan Friary, Carrick-on-Suir, and St. Francis Farm, Tullow, Co. Carlow.

With Franciscan Provincial, Fr. Caoimhin O'Laoide, ofm

CORPORATE SERVICES

The continued development of good quality, responsive support services is the cornerstone of the Corporate Strategic Profile. The delivery of personnel support in Respond! is essential to ensuring effective work practices both among colleagues and stakeholders. Personnel support, to facilitate objectives and standards set out in this strategy, is provided variously through the following departments of the organisation.

COMMUNICATIONS

As one of Ireland's leading housing associations, it is important that Respond! is able to communicate with all its stakeholders and plan strategically for the future in the way that it positions itself in the voluntary sector, the image it wishes to portray and the mediums it uses.

Communication objectives for 2012 – 2015 include the following:

- Continued development of the Respond! brand
- Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders
- Raise and improve the profile of Respond! amongst residents
- Increased focus on internal communications
- Maintain advocacy and lobbying activity
- Development of a Crisis Management Strategy
- Continued focus on media relations
- Development of a new Social Media Strategy

HUMAN RESOURCES

Key to the delivery of our organisational vision is our people. Our people are our ambassadors and it is their competence, commitment and skills that are fundamental to the successful achievement of our goals and most importantly, to creating a positive future for communities.

Since Respond!'s beginnings in 1982 we have had to grow and learn fast. In particular, the last few years have been a busy and dynamic time as well as been a time of significant change. Because, more than ever, changes in our external environment are presenting new challenges and if we are to continue to meet the real and ever changing needs of our clients we must embrace these changes.

Today, over 300 people work creatively within our framework of shared values and social goals. Our in-house team is spread throughout Ireland and includes architects, accountants, site agents, quantity surveyors, psychologists, nurses as well as educational, research, finance, legal, administrative, IT, childcare and resident support personnel. In addition to this, hundreds of volunteers, whose dedication and vision has been the foundation of our success, freely give their time to the benefit of the community.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATION

Respond! delivers valuable and timely legal and administrative services as part of our Corporate Services to support personnel. This includes:

- Ensuring proactive compliance with all regulatory and statutory requirements
- Delivering compliance through cost effectiveness and value for money
- Implementing and reviewing mechanisms for monitoring legal cases
- Providing services that are responsive to identified legal and regulatory needs
- Providing professional and accessible administrative supports
- Ensuring innovative and flexible service delivery in an effective environment

INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY

The vision of the Respond! Information Systems and Technology department is to employ the latest technologies to deliver cost effective, productive and accessible services desired by staff and essential to the smooth and efficient delivery of services to our residents.

The main priority for IT is to provide staff with accurate and timely information on Housing Management issues such as allocations, rents, voids, reactive & planned maintenance and on a more strategic basis to provide forecasting models for the long term sustainability of our housing stock.

In addition to this the IT system is expected to provide technological support for the delivery of our Outreach Initiatives through our Community Development, Family Support, Better Being, Older Persons and Education strategies throughout Respond! estates and the wider community.

The on-going need for IT to support changing business strategies allied with the ever changing IT marketplace is of utmost relevance to Respond! By providing these services in this fashion we will ensure that IT is seen as a 'value-adding' service for Respond!

The key IT technologies that will be employed to deliver the services required are:

- Agile Working (mobile and remote working)
- Housing Management Systems
- Customer Relationship Management
- Document Management
- Business Intelligence
- Performance Management
- Unified Communications
- Further adoption of Cloud Computing
- Virtualisation
- Web Enabled Services for our staff and tenants
- Energy Efficient Computing

Respond! has plans in the immediate term to upgrade its existing bespoke housing management system to a fully integrated model incorporating CRM, Mobile Working, Asset Management and Document Management and discussions are currently taking place with a number of recognized specialist providers with a view to advancing these proposals.



The Corporate Strategic Profile sets the overall direction for Respond! Housing Association, within a three year timeframe. It sets out a number of goals and objectives. As part of the process, detailed departmental, service, and operational plans, as well as a monitoring process, involving a formal annual review of progress, will be developed.

A major element of these detailed plans will be key performance indicators and targets. The Board of Directors and National Management Team (NMT) have responsibility for identifying measures of key performance indicators and mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and lead progress.

To achieve the aims and objectives of the Corporate Strategic Profile, the following actions will ensue:

- The NMT will decide policy, strategic and resource allocation on specific services
- Department Managers ensure implementation and delivery of thematic objectives
- Line Mangers lead day-to-day implementation and delivery of specific aims
- Ongoing delivery of the corporate plan will be reviewed in our annual reports

President Higgins Celebrating the Aontas Award Intergeneration Programme, in December 2011. Respond! in association with St. Brigid's Family Resource Centre, Waterford.



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